



**MS | RISK**

## **West Africa Report**

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

**December 8 - 21, 2014**



## About MS Risk

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

MS Risk is always mindful and compliant to legislation and guidelines on the use of private security services including, but not limited to the US FCPA (1977), UK Bribery Act (2010), Canadian Bill C-48 (2007), ASX 8 Corporate Governance Principles, and the World Bank/IFC Voluntary Principles on the Use of Government and Private Security Forces. MS Risk is a signatory of the Swiss government's International Code of Conduct. It is transparent and compliant to market expectations on legal and ethical conduct in the performance of services.

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

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

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

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

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## Summary

December 8 - 21, 2014



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### Sahel Region

#### *Regional Reporting*

- **18 December 2014** – On Thursday, a summit security opened Thursday in Mauritania.
- **15 December 2014** – The United Nations special envoy to the Sahel region indicated Monday that talks to resolve a crisis in Libya have stalled, warning that several countries in the region risk being destabilized unless the crisis is resolved quickly.
- **14 December 2014** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian disclosed Sunday that over the past year, French forces have either killed or captured nearly 200 jihadists operating in the Sahel region of West Africa.

- **9 December 2014** – On Tuesday, the United Nation’s coordinator on Ebola hailed widespread progress in the fight against the deadly disease however he warned that the outbreak was still surging in western Sierra Leone and northern Guinea.

## Benin

- **11 December 2014** – Tens of thousands of people marched through the streets of Benin’s largest city on Thursday, demanding that the government schedule local elections that have been repeatedly delayed.

## Burkina Faso

### *Domestic News*

- **15 December 2014** – On Monday, Burkina Faso’s interim government announced that it was suspending the party of ousted president Blaise Compaore.

### *Regional Reporting*

- **12 December 2014** – Burkina Faso’s deposed president Blaise Compaore arrived in Ivory Coast on Friday.

## Guinea

- **16 December 2014** – Guinea’s capital Conakry has followed Sierra Leone’s example of banning public Christmas and New Year celebrations in a bid to curb the spread of the deadly Ebola virus.

## Guinea-Bissau

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **12 December 2014** – A medical official in Guinea-Bissau reported Friday that a man, who entered the West African country from Guinea the day after the border was reopened, is now being treated for suspected Ebola.

### *International Developments*

- **8 December 2014** – The onetime bodyguard to a former navy chief of Guinea Bissau has been sentenced to five years in a US prison for engaging in a scheme to import hundreds of kilograms of cocaine into the US.

## Ivory Coast

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **15 December 2014** – According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), armed gangs are increasingly becoming out of control in northern Ivory Coast, where residents are being subjected to relentless and sometimes deadly attacks.

### *International Developments*

- **8 December 2014** – On Thursday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) ordered Charles Ble Goude, a close ally of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo, to stand trial for crimes against humanity linked to the 2010 – 2011 post-election crisis.

## Liberia

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### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **13 December 2014** – Liberia has begun treating Ebola patients with serum therapy, which is a treatment made from the blood of recovered survivors.

### *Domestic News*

- **20 December 2014** – Liberians began voting Saturday in much-delayed elections to fill the seats of the Senate.
- **13 December 2014** – On Saturday, Liberia's Supreme Court ruled that Senate elections in the West African country should go ahead, effectively rejecting a petition to suspend the vote until an outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus is brought under control.

## Mali

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **19 December 2014** – The chief of the most powerful Tuareg tribe in northern Mali has died, signaling a change of leadership as Tuareg separatists are locked in peace talks with the Malian government.
- **18 December 2014** – The United Nations force in Mali confirmed Thursday that three of its peacekeepers were wounded when a vehicle carrying Chadian troops hit a roadside bomb in the country's northern region.
- **16 December 2014** – The World Health Organization (WHO) revealed Tuesday that Mali has released from quarantine the last thirteen people that were being monitored for the deadly Ebola virus, adding that the West African country could be declared free of the virus in January if no further cases are recorded.
- **12 December 2014** – According to Mali's Health Ministry, the last Ebola patient treated in the West African country has been released from hospital, leaving no known cases of the deadly virus in Mali.
- **11 December 2014** – On Thursday, the French army disclosed that a high-ranking member of jihadist group al-Murabitoun was killed in an overnight operation carried out by French forces in northern Mali.
- **9 December 2014** - A French hostage, Serge Lazarevic, seized in Mali more than three years ago has been released.

### *International Developments*

- **12 December 2014** – The Malian government confirmed Friday that the European Union (EU) has resumed aid to Mali, which was suspended in June due to suspected irregularities in government spending.

## Nigeria

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **20 December 2014** – Soldiers and witnesses reported Saturday that Nigerian troops have repelled a Boko Haram attack near the village where at least 185 people were kidnapped last week.
- **19 December 2014** – A Nigerian court has ruled that prisoners should be able to vote in all national and local elections.
- **18 December 2014** – Nigeria's Government on Friday disclosed that it is "outraged and deeply saddened" after militants attacked a remote village in northeastern Nigeria and reportedly kidnapped around 200 people.
- **17 December 2014** – On Wednesday, a Nigerian military court sentenced 54 soldiers to death for mutiny after they refused to deploy for an operation against Boko Haram militants in northeastern Nigeria.
- **15 December 2014** – Nigeria's two main oil workers' unions have begun an indefinite nationwide strike that threatens to hurt the output of Africa's largest oil producer.
- **11 December 2014** – At least thirty-one people were killed in a double bombing in the Nigerian city of Jos on Thursday.
- **10 December 2014** – At least four people have been killed and seven injured in a double attack carried out by female suicide bombers near a market in Kano in northern Nigeria.

- On Wednesday, police in the northern city of Kano arrested a 13-year-old wearing an explosives-packed vest after she and a male accomplice walked into a clinic seeking medical treatment.

### *Domestic News*

- **17 December 2014** – Nigeria’s opposition party has elected Yemi Osibajo, a Christian pastor and ex-Lagos state justice commissioner, as it’s vice presidential nominee for the 14 February 2015 presidential election.
- **16 December 2014** – President Goodluck Jonathan warned Tuesday that Nigeria could be forced to further cut the amount of oil revenue that it uses for government spending if the global crude price continued to fall.
- **11 December 2014** – Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan won party primaries Thursday while the opposition coalition continued voting to choose a challenger for the upcoming presidential elections.
  - Former military leader Muhammadu Buhari is set to contest Nigeria’s presidential election after winning a primary for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party.
- **10 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Nigeria’s main opposition coalition began a convention to select a candidate to take on President Goodluck Jonathan in the February 2015 presidential elections.

### *International Developments*

- **11 December 2014** – France’s defense minister has called on Nigeria and its neighbors to set up a military liaison committee in order to better coordinate their response to the growing regional threat that is posed by Boko Haram.

### **Sierra Leone**

- **17 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Ebola surveillance teams fanned out in the West African country’s capital in search for sick people as the country’s president imposed new restrictions on movement and gatherings in a bid to stop the spread of the deadly disease.
- **15 December 2014** – Sierra Leone is planning a house-to-house search for hidden Ebola cases in the capital city and surrounding areas, as both regions currently account for more than half of the country’s new infections.
- **12 December 2014** – Officials in Sierra Leone have banned any public Christmas celebrations as the caseload of Ebola infections continues to spread at an alarming rate.
- **10 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Sierra Leonean authorities imposed a two-week lockdown on the eastern diamond-mining district of Kono after eight cases of Ebola were confirmed in one day.
- **9 December 2014** – Members of Sierra Leone’s Junior Doctors Association, which forms the bulk of the local doctors who are fighting the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, have gone on a partial strike over the lack of care for local medics who are infected with the deadly disease while working.



# Security Summaries for West African States

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## The Gambia

There is no travel advisory for Gambia, however MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid travel by road from The Gambia to the Casamance, in the southern region of Senegal.

The 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.

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.

## 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 Chieftancy and land disputes, isolated inter-ethnic violence and civil unrest can occur at any time, including in the Northern, Upper East and Volta regions. A dusk to dawn curfew has been put in place on the Hohoe community in the Volta region. This is due to communal clashes over the exhumation of the Chief Imam of Hohoe. If you are

considering travelling to the Northern Region, MS Risk advises you to remain alert to the potential of new outbreaks of flooding which is common in the Upper West, Upper East and Northern Regions during the rainy season, which spans from March to November. We advise that you monitor the local weather reports and expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

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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 43****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 all 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

- **18 December 2014** – On Thursday, a summit security opened Thursday in Mauritania. The meeting, which was attended by five heads of state, was part of the “Nouakchott Process,” named for an initiative launched in Mauritania’s capital in March 2013 in a bid to boost security cooperation amongst eleven participating states. The summit is the first to take place since Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal signed up for the process. Speaking at the summit, Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who also currently chairs the African Union (AU), told leaders from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Senegal, along with other delegates, that there is a shared determination to carry out “a merciless fight against terrorism and organized crime,” stressing that national defence systems need to be better adapted “to the demands of the terrain and the nature of the enemy.” Across the broad Sahel region, the threat ranges from Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, where local officials on Thursday reported that suspected militants kidnapped at least 185 villagers, to militants driven out of Mali’s key northern towns by the French army last year able to continuously carry out attacks in the northern region of the country. President Abdel Aziz told the summit that it “...must define the steps to ensure that AU’s strategy for the Sahel, which has three goals: governance, security and development.”

Experts attending the meeting have indicated that leaders will need to consider measures for setting up patrols by their security forces, adding that such “mixed units would take the shape of groups from 1,000 to 1,500 informed personnel,” including infantry units and special forces. Participants at the summit are expected to discuss developments in northern Mali, Libya and Boko Haram, which has extended its attacks beyond Nigerian soil, notably into neighbouring Cameroon.

- **15 December 2014** – The United Nations special envoy to the Sahel region indicated Monday that talks to resolve a crisis in Libya have stalled, warning that several countries in the region risk being destabilized unless the crisis is resolved quickly. According to Hiroute Gebre Selassie, instability in the Sahel region south of the Sahara desert has worsened due to the fragile state of regional governments coupled with the expansion of Islamist militants. Speaking at an African security forum in Dakar, Selassie stated, “in Libya, the political process is stagnant and the clashes between the different factions continue,” noting “if the crisis in Libya is not resolved quickly, then numerous countries in the region will be destabilized.” Libya currently has two governments that are competing for legitimacy since a group known as the Libya Dawn seized Tripoli in August, effectively forcing the internationally recognized prime minister, Abdullah al-Thinni, to the eastern city of Tobruk. This takeover increased regional and international fears of a possible civil war for control of the country’s vast oil reserves. While a second round of UN-sponsored peace talks was due to open this week, al-Thinni has vowed to retake Tripoli by force. The Libyan prime minister has also warned that different positions of regional players are hindering the efforts of France and its regional counter-insurgency force Barkhane and the UN to start the dialogue. Persistent indications of Islamic State (IS) training camps being set up in Libya are especially worrying, with the prime minister stating “there are groups that have given allegiance to Islamic State and the situation on the ground in Libya paves the way for these groups,” adding the spread of weapons across the Sahel region continues despite the efforts by international forces to hamper international networks. French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian echoed this statement, stating that militants have managed to regroup in southern Libya and equip themselves with weapons.
- **14 December 2014** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian disclosed Sunday that over the past year, French forces have either killed or captured nearly 200 jihadists operating in the Sahel region of West Africa. According to Le Drian, “there have been many operations, nearly 200 terrorists have been neutralized in a year, around 50 since August” when France launched a massive counter-terrorism operation across five nations in the Sahel region. Le Drian added that some important leaders were amongst those killed or captured, mostly in Mali and Niger. The announcement by Le Drian came days after the French army indicated that it had killed Ahmed el Tilemsi, the Malian leader of the al-Murabitoun group, in what has been seen as a massive blow dealt to Islamist fighters operating in the region. In 2013, the French military launched operations in Mali to route out Islamist groups that had seized large areas of northern Mali. In August, the military launched Operation Barkhane as part of a wider counter-terrorism operation that spans across the Sahel region. A total of 3,000 troops are now taking part in the operation across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, with the operation aimed at tracking and combatting Islamist militants. Sources have disclosed that troops taking part in the operation are currently building an advance base close to the Libyan border in the north of Niger. According to Le Drian, the south of Libya has become a hub for jihadists operating in the region, adding “southern Libya has become a place of recovery, a petrol station, a place of rest, re-organization and training for a number of terrorist groups.”
- **9 December 2014** – On Tuesday, the United Nations’ coordinator on Ebola hailed widespread progress in the fight against the deadly disease however he warned that the outbreak was still surging in western Sierra Leone and northern Guinea. Speaking to reporters in Geneva, David Nabarro confirmed “...the outbreak is

still flaming strongly in western Sierra Leone and some parts of the interior of Guinea," adding that more foreign workers and specialists, along with more treatment units and beds, are needed in these areas where the disease continues to spread quickly. The surge in transmission rates in the west of Sierra Leone, including in the capital city Freetown, has been linked to the fact that the community there had not been as quick to adapt to the recommended procedures needed to slow the spread of the virus. Transmission is also high in Port Loko. In Guinea, transmission remains high in the forested interior of the country, known as Guinea Forestiere, where the epidemic began nearly a year ago. According to Mr Nabarro, in the more urban areas, it is more difficult for those infected to isolate themselves. New figures released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday indicated that Sierra Leone now counts 7,798 cases, 1,742 of them fatal, compared with 7,719 cases in Liberia, including 3,177 deaths. In Guinea, 1,4123 people have died out of 2,283 reported cases.

# 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

- **11 December 2014** – Tens of thousands of people marched through the streets of Benin's largest city on Thursday, demanding that the government schedule local elections that have been repeatedly delayed. The march through Cotonou, which is the West African country's commercial capital, was organized by opposition parties who are unhappy that the elections, which were originally scheduled for March 2013, have yet to occur. The elections were initially postponed until December 2013 because of issues with voter registration lists, with the government recently promising to hold them before the end of 2014. The march in Cotonou comes a day after a similar one was held in the capital, Porto-Novo. Political tension over the local elections has been exacerbated by the fact that the opposition also suspects President Boni Yayi of attempting to change the constitution so that he can run for a third term in 2016. The country's constitution currently allows a president to be elected to a maximum of two-terms in office.

# 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

the 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

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Security Forces. This applies to military, police or private security services.

## Domestic News

- **15 December 2014** – On Monday, Burkina Faso's interim government announced that it was suspending the party of ousted president Blaise Compaore. A statement released by Auguste Denise Barry, who heads the equivalent of the interior ministry, indicated “the party named the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) has been suspended for activities incompatible with the law.” The statement does not disclose how long Compaore’s party will be suspended for however Sadou Sidibe, secretary general of the country’s ministry of territorial administration and security, did indicate that the party can file a complaint in court in order to challenge the decision. The CDP was created from thirteen pro-Compaore groups in 1996 and was a pillar of the president’s regime, winning every election. Monday’s decision came just a day before the former ruling party planned a press conference to announce its comeback. On 31 October, Compaore fled Burkina Faso after he was ousted in a revolt that was sparked by his bid to extend his 27-year hold on power. The military seized power shortly afterwards, making Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Zida interim prime minister. Faced with increasing international pressure, the military later agreed to hand over power to an interim government, with Lt Col Zida given the temporary premiership until elections, which are due to be held in November 2015.

## Regional Reporting

- **12 December 2014** – Burkina Faso’s deposed president Blaise Compaore arrived in Ivory Coast on Friday. According to a senior official in the president’s office, Compaore, who sought refuge in the Ivory Coast immediately after fleeing mass protests in Burkina Faso at the end of October, arrived in the capital Yamoussoukro after spending time in Morocco, Gabon and elsewhere, adding that while it remains unclear how long the ex-president planned to remain in the country, “the president has already said that he is free to stay as long as he likes. Its up to him.” Compaore has a close relationship with Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara, and was lodged in a state villa when he first arrived after his fall from power. The Ivorian opposition however has accused him of backing pro-Ouattara forces that fought against and defeated former president Laurent Gbagbo in 2011 after he failed to recognize his defeat to Ouattara in an election. Presidential polls in the Ivory Coast are due to take place next year and Compaore’s continued presence could prove sensitive while the possibility that Burkina Faso may seek Compaore’s extradition to face trial could also create complications. Burkina Faso’s interim Prime Minister Isaac Zida has promised to open enquiries into the suspected involvement of Compaore’s government in several high-profile killings, enquiries that were key demands of protesters who ended his 27 years in power. Compaore took power in a 1987 coup in which then-President Thomas Sankara was killed in unexplained circumstances. Interim officials have indicated that they will exhume a grave believed to contain the remains of Sankara.

## 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

- **16 December 2014** – Guinea’s capital Conakry has followed Sierra Leone’s example of banning public Christmas and New Year celebrations in a bid to curb the spread of the deadly Ebola virus. A statement issued by Conakry governor Soriba Sorel Camara announced that “large-scale gatherings in public places are suspended for the moment, adding “beaches will remain closed” and firecrackers and fireworks will also be banned. The capital city’s governor has appealed to residents to “refrain from anything” that would compromise efforts to contain the spread of Ebola. This means avoiding “all gatherings in markets, bus stations, ferry landing stages, hospitals and the airport. Guinea is one of three West African countries currently at the epicentre of the deadliest Ebola outbreak in history. Last week, officials in Sierra Leone, which overtook Liberia recently as the country with the highest number of Ebola infections, announced a nationwide ban on public Christmas and New Year festivities.

## 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 northwestern regions of the country, specifically those which border the Casamance region of Senegal, including the Sao Domingos/Mpack road.

### On the Ground Reporting

- **12 December 2014** – A medical official in Guinea-Bissau reported Friday that a man, who entered the West African country from Guinea the day after the border was reopened, is now being treated for suspected Ebola. According to the official, the traveller was running a temperature and was placed under surveillance as he attempted to pass through the Fulamori border crossing on Wednesday. Sources have reported that the traveller had taken advantage of the lax security amongst border guards in order to escape observation and boarded a bus headed for the eastern city of Gabu, where he was apprehended. The traveller, along with eight fellow passengers on board the bus, has been quarantined. The government in Guinea-Bissau reopened its 300-kilometre (185 mile) land border with Guinea on Tuesday, after it was closed 12 August due to the Ebola outbreak. In November, a team from the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that Guinea-Bissau had an “inefficient health system, which would not be able to cope with an outbreak of Ebola.” So far the West African country has not reported any cases of Ebola.

### International Developments

- **8 December 2014** – The onetime bodyguard to a former navy chief of Guinea Bissau has been sentenced to five years in a US prison for engaging in a scheme to import hundreds of kilograms of cocaine into the US. Tchamy Yala, an ex-aide to former Rear Admiral Jose Americo bubo Na Tchuto, was sentenced

Monday by US District Judge Richard Berman in New York after pleading guilty to a conspiracy count in April. In 2012, the US Drug Enforcement Administration began an undercover investigation that targeted drug trafficking in West Africa. According to prosecutors, confidential DEA informants, who posed as representatives of Latin American drug traffickers, met with Na Tchuto, Yala and another aide, Papis Dejeme, in order to finalize an agreement to transport cocaine from South America to the United States and Europe through Guinea Bissau. Na Tchuto, along with two aides were arrested on a luxury yacht off the country's coast in April 2013. Guinea-Bissau is viewed by the UN as a major waypoint for Latin American cocaine that is headed for Europe. US and European authorities have long suspected that the West African country's military has been involved in the drug trade.



# 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 northeastern 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

- **15 December 2014** – According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), armed gangs are increasingly becoming out of control in northern Ivory Coast, where residents are being subjected to relentless and sometimes deadly attacks. Officials from the HRW disclosed Monday that they have documented fifteen violent attacks in recent months, in which at least four people were killed and at least twenty-two wounded. Ivorian media have also carried several reports on the violence, which has been blamed on former fighters from Ivory Coast's 2002 – 2011 civil conflict. In a statement released Monday, Corrine Dufka, West Africa director of the US-based rights group, disclosed "people living, working and travelling in northern Ivory Coast are being terrorized by armed men who appear to operate with little fear of being stopped, much less prosecuted." While banditry has long been a problem in the northern region of the West African country, in 2013, residents noted a slight improvement, however the HRW has indicated that this year, the security situation has "dramatically worsened." According to the HRW's report, buses, cars and homes have been targeted in near daily attacks that have been carried out by gunmen armed with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, with many victims indicating that they have "given up reporting attacks because of the lack of response." The report has urged Ivorian authorities to increase security in the region, to disarm former combatants and to prosecute those responsible for the attacks. For a decade, the Ivory Coast was divided between a rebel-held north and a south controlled by forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo. Violence peaked after a disputed presidential election in late 2010, which saw Gbagbo's rival, Alassane Ouattara, elected president. The elections were followed by a four-month standoff between the two, which ended after Ouattara's forces overran the south and detained Gbagbo. While thousands of former rebels have since been integrated into the national army, many are still armed and jobless and pose a significant threat to the country's peace and stability.

## International Developments

- **8 December 2014** – On Thursday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) ordered Charles Ble Goude, a close ally of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo, to stand trial for crimes against humanity linked to the 2010 – 2011 post-election crisis. A statement released by an ICC three-judge bench disclosed "in light of the evidence...the Pre-Trial Chamber concludes that there is sufficient evidence to establish substantial grounds to believe that Charles Ble Goude is individually criminally responsible for crimes against humanity," adding "the Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed four charges of crimes against humanity against Charles Ble Goude and committed him to trial." Goude, 42, faces four counts including murder, rape, persecution and other inhumane acts for his role in a bloody stand-off that followed the presidential elections, which left some 3,000 people dead. The crisis was sparked after long-time Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo refused to concede defeat. Gbagbo himself is set to go on trial before the ICC on similar charges in July 2015. According to prosecutors, as the leader of the "Young Patriots," a group of Gbagbo supporters, Goude "bears responsibility for some of the worst crimes" that were committed during that

period. Prosecutors have further indicated that Goude “commanded men that murdered and raped and burned alive hundreds of people during the post-election violence that ended only after Gbagbo’s arrest following an assault on his fortress-like Abidjan compound by Ouattara’s forces.” During a pre-trial hearing in October, Goude told the judges that he was a believer in non-violence who did “everything to bring Ivorian’s together.” His lawyer, Nick Kaufman, indicated Thursday that Goude was “surprised” by the decision to put him on trial, adding that this decision “confirmed a politically-motivated and selective investigation.” Gbagbo’s supporters have long accused President Ouattara’s government of practicing a “victor’s justice” as many of the former president’s backers have been jailed in the wake of the post-election violence, including Gbagbo’s wife Simone, who remains in prison in the Ivory Coast. On Thursday, the ICC rejected an Ivorian request to have her tried at home, stating that she should be handed over to the ICC to stand on trial in The Hague.

# 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 Sprigs 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

- **13 December 2014** – Liberia has begun treating Ebola patients with serum therapy, which is a treatment made from the blood of recovered survivors. If a person has successfully fought off the infection, it effectively means that their body has learned how to combat the virus and they will have antibodies in their blood which can attack Ebola. Doctors are then able to take a sample of their blood and, by removing the red blood cells but keeping the important antibodies, they can turn it into a serum that can then be used to treat other patients. Doctors are hoping that the experimental treatment could help combat the virus. Ebola patients treated in both the UK and the US have already received this form of treatment. The treatment is currently only available at the ELWA hospital in the capital Monrovia, with doctors their indicating that they will monitor how safe and effective the serum treatment being given is. Scientists are also exploring other Ebola treatments, with the US, UK and Canada testing different kinds of vaccine in controlled clinical trial. The aim is to have 20,000 doses that could be used in West Africa by early 2015.

## Domestic News

- **20 December 2014** – Liberians began voting Saturday in much-delayed elections to fill the seats of the Senate. Balloting began at 7:30 AM and is due to end at 5:00 PM. Former football player George Weah, who played for Chelsea and AC Milan before retiring from the game in 2003, along with the son of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Robert Sirleaf, are amongst the 139 candidates in the running for a seat. The vote for fifteen seats in the upper house of parliament had previously been postponed twice due to the ongoing Ebola epidemic in Liberia. While many opposed the ballots being held at a time when the Ebola outbreak had not been contained, Liberia's Deputy Health Minister Tolbert Nyensuah assured that all voters would be tested and those with high temperatures would be asked to case their ballots in a separate area. Joey Kennedy, a spokesman for the national election commission, had also earlier indicated that all voters would be asked to wash their hands before entering polling stations and to maintain at least a meter's distance from each other. While the capital city's streets were deserted on Saturday, there were long queues outside polling stations. Bars, offices and businesses remained closed. While a total of 1.9 million voters are

registered to vote in the elections, the National Elections Commission indicated Saturday afternoon that turnout had been low. Election results are expected to be announced early next week.

- **13 December 2014** – On Saturday, Liberia’s Supreme Court ruled that Senate elections in the West African country should go ahead, effectively rejecting a petition to suspend the vote until an outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus is brought under control. Last month, the country’s highest court had suspended campaigning for the planned 16 December vote while it considered the petition from a group that included some former government officials and political party representatives. The group had warned that electioneering risked the further spread of the highly infectious viral hemorrhagic fever. The Supreme Court has not confirmed whether the elections will take place 16 December as planned, effectively leaving it to the country’s electoral commission to decide if it would set a new date for the vote. Liberia has been one of the hardest hit nations in the worst outbreak of Ebola on record. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 7 December, the deadly disease has killed some 3,222 of its citizens, however infections in the country have in recent weeks slowed, raising hopes that the outbreak may be nearing an end. **Update (14 December)** – Officials in Liberia have postponed senatorial elections until 20 December as many across the West African country urged officials to call off the vote over fears that it would not be credible. The elections, which were first scheduled in October, were supposed to be held Tuesday and have now been moved back to Saturday. It however remains unclear whether the additional days will be a sufficient delay to address the logistical problems posed by the Ebola outbreak. While health authorities have indicated that the situation in Liberia has somewhat stabilized in recent weeks, fears remain that mass gatherings at polling stations could spark a new surge in Ebola cases.



# Mali

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

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



## Security Summary

### Summary



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 operate 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 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 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 neighborhoods of Bankoni, Taliko, Lafiabougou, Djicoroni Woyowayanko, Lafiabougou Bougouba and Bougoudani were all hit by floods during the rains storms which lasted most of the day. MS Risk advises anyone in the capital city to monitor the local weather reports and to expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

### *Terrorism*

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

Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. There is also a high threat of kidnapping in Mali by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and by the splinter group, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). Although AQIM uses the northern region of Mali as an operating base, it has proven its capability of travelling long distances in order to carry out attacks, some of which have occurred in neighboring countries. As such the kidnap threat cannot be isolated within the northern regional stronghold. In turn, criminal gangs have previously been engaged to carry out kidnappings for terrorist groups in return for financial rewards. Subsequently attacks can take place throughout Mali.

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

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

### *Kidnapping*

In the past, a number of Westerners have been kidnapped by terrorists in Mali and in the Sahel region. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel. Victims have included tourists, NGO workers and diplomats of a variety of nationalities, primarily European. These attacks have on occasion resulted in the murder of the hostages. The recent kidnapping of a French citizen in the western region of the country has come as a shock as the area where he was taken has been perceived as being stable and under governmental control. In the past, kidnap threats have typically emanated from the Azawad region in the north and east part of the county, as such this incident in the west has caused great concern. MS Risk forecasts that there will be an increased and sustained kidnap threat across Mali and in certain border-regions for some time to come. Incidents of kidnap are likely to occur for three primary reasons:

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

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

#### *Local Travel*

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

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

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

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

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

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## On the Ground Reporting

- **19 December 2014** – The chief of the most powerful Tuareg tribe in northern Mali has died, signaling a change of leadership as Tuareg separatists are locked in peace talks with the Malian government. On Thursday, Intallah Ag Attaher, the 87-year-old patriarch who led the Ifoghas tribe for several decades, died in the desert town of Kidal after a long illness. According to on the ground sources, his son, Alghabass ag Intallah is expected to succeed him as tribal leader and the name of the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), which is the name for northern Mali used by separatists. In 2013, Alghabass split from the Tuareg Islamist movement Ansar Dine and called for negotiations to end the ongoing conflict in northern Mali. Ansar Dine was part of a coalition of militant groups that seized control of northern Mali in 2012. Peace talks in neighboring Algeria between separatists groups and the Malian government are due to restart in January after three previous rounds of talks ending in November without any agreements reached.
- **18 December 2014** – The United Nations force in Mali confirmed Thursday that three of its peacekeepers were wounded when a vehicle carrying Chadian troops hit a roadside bomb in the country's northern region. Radhia Achouri, a spokesperson for the peacekeeping force, indicated that the explosion happened early Thursday in Aguel'hoc, which is located near the city of Kidal. According to Achouri, Chadian troops had followed footprints from the bombsite to a house where they located two people armed with heavy weapons. The two have been arrested and will be handed over to Malian authorities within seventy-two hours. The identities of the two suspects are not yet known.
- **16 December 2014** – The World Health Organization (WHO) revealed Tuesday that Mali has released from quarantine the last thirteen people that were being monitored for the deadly Ebola virus, adding that the West African country could be declared free of the virus in January if no further cases are recorded. Mali's last infected patient recovered and was discharged from hospital last week. The remaining individuals who had come into contact with the infected person had finished the mandatory 21-day quarantine on Monday. A spokesman for the WHO, Abdoulaye Cisse, confirmed, "there is no more contact-tracing. No sick person is being treated and there is no suspected case of Ebola. At one point, Mali had been monitoring over 300 contact cases. If no new Ebola infections are recorded, the WHO will declare Mali Ebola-free on 18 January 2015. Mali became the sixth West African country to record a case of Ebola when a two-year-old girl from Guinea died in October. While in November, the country appeared to have prevented a large outbreak; a second wave of infections erupted, prompting officials across the region to fear that the deadly Ebola virus was continuing to spread.
- **12 December 2014** – According to Mali's Health Ministry, the last Ebola patient treated in the West African country has been released from hospital, leaving no known cases of the deadly virus in Mali. A statement released by the ministry disclosed that the last patient was discharged from hospital on Thursday after several Ebola tests came back negative. The deadly Ebola virus had first entered Mali through an infant girl who died of the disease in October after arriving from neighboring Guinea. Later that month, an imam who also arrived from Guinea with the disease, died in Mali. The recent eight recorded cases of Ebola were all linked to the imam. According to officials from the Health Ministry, the country now has no confirmed or suspected cases of Ebola however authorities are still monitoring twenty-six people who had contact with the sick. The government has warned that because people are still being monitored for symptoms, and with the fact that another sick person could cross the border, all Malians must remain vigilant. Mali will officially be declared Ebola-free forty-two days after the last Ebola patient tested negative for the disease.
- **11 December 2014** – On Thursday, the French army disclosed that a high-ranking member of jihadist group al-Murabitoun was killed in an overnight operation carried out by French forces in northern Mali.

According to army spokesman Gilles Jaron, “last night...French forces conducted an operation in the Gao region in coordination with Malian authorities,” adding that Ahmed el Tilemsi, who is the head of the Mali division of al-Murabitoun, was killed in the operation. Earlier this year, Tilemsi was declared a “specially designated global terrorist” by the US State Department, who offered a US \$5 million reward for information leading to his capture. According to a French government sources, Tilemsi “was a very valuable target. We had been tracking him for several days.” Tilemsi has had a long history with jihadist groups that operate in the Sahel region, having been a member of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) before becoming one of the founding members of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), a splinter group with desires of spreading jihad across the region. MUJAO was one of a number of militant groups that occupied northern Mali last year. In August 2013, it merged with a group run by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a notorious Algerian jihadist, to form al-Murabitoun, which loosely translates as “the guardians,” and which claimed to seek revenge on France for its military operations in Mali. Belmokhtar had split from AQIM in 2013 to form his own militant group. He is the mastermind behind a deadly raid against Algeria’s In Amenas gas plant in which thirty-eight hostages were killed during a four-day siege. Sources have disclosed that Tilemsi was one of the masterminds behind the kidnapping of Gilberto Rodrigues Leal, who MUJAO claimed to have killed in April 2013. According to the US State Department, while operating with AQIM, Tilemsi also played a role in the kidnapping of two French nationals in Niamey in January 2011. The hostages were later found dead after a failed rescue attempt by the French military. Tilemsi also took part in the October 2011 kidnapping of three aid workers in Algeria, which left two wounded by gunfire.

- **9 December 2014** - A French hostage, Serge Lazarevic, seized in Mali more than three years ago has been released. On Tuesday, French President Francois Hollande confirmed Mr Lazarevic’s release, stating that he was in “relatively good health” despite the conditions of his captivity. It was unclear where exactly he was freed however the French president did disclose that Mr Lazarevic was en route for the Nigerien capital Niamey. Mr Lazarevic was kidnapped in November 2011 along with fellow Frenchman Philippe Verdon. Militants from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) later killed Mr Verdon in retaliation for France’s intervention in Mali. During his captivity, Mr Lazarevic appeared in several AQIM videos, the last one being released in November, where he appeared alongside a second hostage, Dutchman Sjaak Rijke. Mr Rijke was kidnapped on 24 November 2011 while visiting the city of Timbuktu as a tourist. There has been no additional information on his whereabouts since the video was released last month. While according to the French president there are no more French hostages being held, there are three European hostages that remain captive in the sub-Saharan region. Johan Gustafson, a Swede; Dutchman Sjaak Rijke and a Stephen Malcolm a Briton, who also holds a South African passport, were kidnapped in Timbuktu in northern Mali. All the kidnappings were claimed by AQIM. The whereabouts of these three men remain unknown. **Update (12 December)** – Malian Justice Minister Mohamed Ali Bathily confirmed Friday that four militants belonging to al-Qaeda’s North African branch were handed over in exchange for the release of French hostage Serge Lazarevic. The French government however has so far refused to comment on reports that several al-Qaeda prisoners, including those involved in the kidnapping of Lazarevic, were released in exchange for his freedom, with government spokesman Stephane Le Foll only stating “there were negotiations, diplomatic exchanges and discretion.” A Malian security source disclosed earlier this week that Bamako had freed several AQIM prisoners “on request from Paris.” Earlier this week, reports surfaced that Lazarevic was freed as part of a prisoner swap with at least two jailed militants. A prison official in Bamako revealed over the weekend that two men had been taken from their cells to the airport to be flown to Niger. The men were named as Heiba Ag Acherif and Mohammed Ali Ag Wadossene. Both are said to be members of AQIM and had been jailed for their alleged role in the abduction of Mr



Lazarevic. The negotiations for Lazarevic's release are said to have involved a close associate of Iyad Ag Ghali, the head of the jihadist group Ansar dine, which recently called for combat against France.

## International Developments

- **12 December 2014** – The Malian government confirmed Friday that the European Union (EU) has resumed aid to Mali, which was suspended in June due to suspected irregularities in government spending. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was the first to question the way in which the Malian government had acquired a US \$40 million presidential jet and a US \$200 million state guarantee for a loan that was obtained by a private company, which won a contract to provide supplies for the army. The IMF later halted its support for the West African country while other international donors, including France and the EU, which have pledged around US \$4 billion to back Mali's recovery, also suspended their assistance. Earlier this month however, the IMF indicated that Malian authorities had complied with a requirement to make public the results of audits into the suspected irregularities. In the wake of the IMF resuming aid to Mali, the EU has also resumed its aid, with Malian Finance Minister Bouare Fily Sissoko confirming "...the receipt...of the sum of 62,241,680,110 CFA francs (US \$117 million)." Other donors are expected to follow suit. The IMF predicts that Mali's economy should expand 5.8 percent this year and 5.5 percent in 2015 provided that the Ebola outbreak in the country does not spread further. Mali has recorded a handful of Ebola cases, with the country's health ministry indicating Thursday that its last infected patient has recovered.



# 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 traveling to Mauritania to take particular caution in the region of Inchire (Akjoujt is the capita) as well as in the areas that border Mali and Morocco.

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

# 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.

# 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 northeastern 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



neighboring 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 northeastern 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



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*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

- **20 December 2014** – Soldiers and witnesses reported Saturday that Nigerian troops have repelled a Boko Haram attack near the village where at least 185 people were kidnapped last week. According to sources, roughly 150 militants stormed the town of Bulabulin on Wednesday, however the military had reportedly received advanced warning of the raid. Bulabulin is located in the Damboa local government district of northeastern Borno state and is near the village of Gumsuri, where around 185 people, mostly women and children, were kidnapped last Sunday. While Defense spokesman Chris Olukolade indicated Friday that troops were battling Boko Haram fighters in the area, he was unavailable to give details on clashes in Bulabulin. Two security sources have estimated that a large number of insurgents were killed however the military has not released an official toll.
- **19 December 2014** – A Nigerian court has ruled that prisoners should be able to vote in all national and local elections. The ruling from the Federal High Court in Benin, Edo State comes ahead of the presidential elections, which are due to occur February 2015. On Tuesday, Justice Mohammed Lima stated, “to deny inmates the right to vote is unconstitutional, illegal, irregular, unlawful, null and void and of no effect whatsoever,” adding “being an inmate is not an offence that impedes their registration and voting right under section 24 of the Electoral Act.” The judge has ordered Nigeria's election commission to update its register of voters in order to take into account the prison population. A report released by the Nigerian Prisons Service earlier this year indicated that there were nearly 57,000 prisoners across the country. Almost 70% of these have not been convicted of a crime, with many waiting years for their trials to begin.
- **18 December 2014** – Nigeria's Government on Friday disclosed that it is “outraged and deeply saddened” after militants attacked a remote village in northeastern Nigeria and reportedly kidnapped around 200 people. While no group has claimed responsibility, the attack bore resemblance to past attacks carried out by Boko Haram militants, who abducted more than 200 women in April from a secondary school in Chibok, which is located 24 kilometres (15 miles) from this latest incident. Boko Haram militants have kidnapped at least 185 people, including women and children, from a Nigerian village, with local sources reporting that civilians were forced away on trucks towards Sambisa Forest, which is known to be one of Boko Haram's strongholds. The mass abduction, which was part of an attack that also killed thirty-two people, occurred Sunday in the village of Gumsuri, Borno state. While officials have not confirmed the number of those kidnapped, local sources have reported that the number is likely to increase in the coming days and weeks as many civilians return after having fled the area during the attack. Details of the attack took four days to emerge as the mobile phone network in the region has completely collapsed and many roads are impassable. News emerged Thursday as many of the survivors reached the city of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. Two local officials and a vigilante leader also confirmed the attack, stating that the local government had established the number of those abducted by contacting families. Late on Thursday, government spokesman Mike Omeri released a statement, condemning the “deplorable act,” adding that it was currently “...impossible to verify the number of those missing at this early stage because it is presumed

that many civilians fled during the attack.” Gumsuri is located roughly 70 kilometres (43 miles) south of Maiduguri and is located on the road that leads to Chibok, where Boko Haram kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls. Boko Haram has been increasingly using kidnappings to boost its supply of child fighters, protesters and young women. It is believed that the schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok are now being forced to carry out suicide bombings across northeastern Nigeria. In recent month, a number of deadly attacks have been carried out by young female suicide bombers. The mass abductions in Chibok brought unprecedented attention to Boko Haram’s five-year uprising. Despite President Goodluck Jonathan vowing to end the conflict, the violence has escalated since April and Sunday’s attack in Gumsuri will likely cast further doubt on Nigeria’s ability to contain the crisis.

- **17 December 2014** – On Wednesday, a Nigerian military court sentenced 54 soldiers to death for mutiny after they refused to deploy for an operation against Boko Haram militants in northeastern Nigeria. Prominent human rights lawyer Femi Falana confirmed that the court “...sentenced 54 to death and acquitted five,” following a court martial that began on 15 October and which was conducted behind closed doors. The lawyer indicated that the soldiers were sentenced to death because they “embarrassed Nigeria’s military by demanding weapons to fight Islamic extremists,” adding that he will take all legal measure to prevent authorities from carrying out a “genocidal verdict” of death by firing squad. The men sentenced to death on Wednesday were part of a Special Forces division that was ordered in August to retake three lost towns in Borno state. Military officials have not commented on the verdict. In a similar case in September, twelve soldiers were sentenced to death for mutiny after they fired on their commanding officer in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, where troops are battling Boko Haram. While both of these sentences are subject to approval by top army brass, so far there has been no indication that senior officers oppose the rulings. What is evident is that these rulings will only further reduce the already low morality amongst soldiers within Nigeria’s army. Despite calls by troops and civilians in northeastern Nigeria, all of whom have indicated that Nigerian troops are often outnumbered and don’t have the adequate weaponry to fight Boko Haram, these calls have for the most part been unanswered. Defense officials have maintained that the troops are properly equipped. President Goodluck Jonathan earlier this year sought permission from lawmakers to secure a US \$1 billion foreign loan to upgrade the military, a request that was seen as a tacit acknowledgment from the Nigerian president that the country’s soldiers are being out-matched, however little has been done to improve the situation. In recent months, frontline troops have consistently complained that they lack the weapons and other supplies needed to face Boko Haram militants in insurgent strongholds. The Islamist group, which has been waging a five-year uprising to create a caliphate in northern Nigeria, is known to have tanks, rocket propelled grenade launchers and other heavy weaponry, while on the ground troops have reported lacking ammunition for basic assault rifles. After Boko Haram captured a number of towns in northeastern Nigeria earlier this year, the military vowed to retake all of the lost territory. The 7 Division, which is based in Maiduguri, was tasked with leading the offensive however numerous reports have surfaced that troops are refusing to deploy. Wives of soldiers have also staged numerous protests outside a military base in a bid to stop their husbands from heading to conflict areas without proper equipment. Soldiers have also carried out similar demonstrations, including one group that set up a protest camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri. Boko Haram is currently believed to be in control of more than two-dozen towns and villages across the northeast. While the military has claimed a series of victories in recent weeks, large swathes of territory remain in the militant group’s hands.
- **15 December 2014** – Nigeria’s two main oil workers’ unions have begun an indefinite nationwide strike that threatens to hurt the output of Africa’s largest oil producer. The unions, Nupeng and Pengassan, have indicated that the strike will continue until the government addresses its concerns, which includes the

adoption of the delayed Petroleum Industry Bill, which is aimed at overhauling the sector and maintenance work on oil refineries. While initially the two unions demanded the reinstatement of representatives who had been dismissed by oil companies, their list of complaints has grown and they are now protesting that the Nigerian government has allowed the country's oil refineries to fall into despair and that the poor state of the country's roads is hindering the transport of oil. The two unions are also asking for the price of petrol to be reduced and oil theft to be stopped. While Pengassan chief Babatunde Oke has warned that the strike "...will affect oil production, since all operations are on strike," an oil executive had indicated that the strike is not expected to affect output, as "it would require the co-operation of large numbers of workers at production sites who would be unwilling to go that far." On the ground sources have reported that the nationwide strike has resulted in long queues forming at many petrol stations as Nigerians fear an oil shortage. Many Nigerians typically travel home over the Christmas and New Year holidays, with many now stocking up on fuel in the case of shortages over the next couple of weeks.

- **11 December 2014** – At least thirty-one people were killed in a double bombing in the Nigerian city of Jos on Thursday. The blasts in Jos occurred about 6:00 pm (1700 GMT) and targeted makeshift market near the terminus bus station, which had been set up after a twin car bomb attack in May that killed at least 118 people. The attack occurred as storeowners were closing their shops and Muslims were preparing for evening prayers. According to witnesses, the first blast occurred at an outdoor food stand, called Mr Bigs, while the other blast occurred at the nearby entrance to the Terminus market, which is located in the entre of the city. Mohammed Abdulsala, coordinator for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) confirmed the attack, adding that the area was densely populated at the time of the bombing. Officials have confirmed that they have recovered thirty-one bodies however they have warned that the figures are likely to change in the coming days. Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau later claimed responsibility for the attack. The city, which is the capital of Plateau state, lies in Nigeria's "Middle Belt" region, where the mainly Muslim north meets the mostly Christian south. Boko Haram militants have in the past targeted the city, while the area is a hotbed of ethnic and sectarian tensions, which have frequently ended in deadly violence.
- **10 December 2014** – At least four people have been killed and seven injured in a double attack carried out by female suicide bombers near a market in Kano in northern Nigeria. State police commissioner Adenrele Shinaba reported Wednesday that the attacks had been carried out by "two young girls in hijab (Muslim headscarves)," adding that the girls "...came by the market and asked to be directed to a public convenience. The bombs detonated, killing them and four others." According to police officials, the blast hit a vehicle loading area at the Kantin Kwari textile market with the first bomber blowing herself up near the toilets at about 14:30 local time (13:30 GMT) while the second attack took place shortly afterwards near another toilet block. Kantin Kwari is the largest textile market in Kano, with people often coming from neighboring states and other parts of the country. The market is usually packed with shoppers throughout the day. Boko Haram militants are suspected of being behind the latest attacks. The militant group has been increasingly using female suicide bombers to carry out deadly attacks, with officials fearing that some of the kidnapped girls from Chibok, who were taken by the militants in April, are being forced to carry out deadly suicide missions. Last month, more than 100 people died in a gun and bomb attack during prayers at one of the largest mosques in Kano, with some 2,000 having died in attacks blamed on the militant group so far this year. Boko Haram's tempo of attacks is likely to continue to increase in the coming weeks as the holiday season approaches.
  - On Wednesday, police in the northern city of Kano arrested a 13-year-old wearing an explosives-packed vest after she and a male accomplice walked into a clinic seeking medical treatment. The location of the clinic, which is located some 20 kilometres (12.5 miles) from the scene of a double

suicide attack carried out by two female suicide bombers on a textile market just hours earlier, raised suspicions. According to a security source, a nurse had alerted the police who immediately mobilized and arrested the duo, adding that upon searching her, "...the police discovered explosives hidden under her hijab..." A senior security source has disclosed that the young girl was from the northeastern state of Bauchi and had been part of a "suicide team" that had attacked the busy Kantin Kwari textile bazaar just hours earlier. Four people were killed in that attack and seven others were injured. In recent weeks, Boko haram has increasingly been using women as suicide bombers in attacks that have occurred across the northeastern region of the country. Last month, at least 120 people were killed when two suicide bombers blew themselves up at Kano's central mosque, with gunmen later opening fire on worshippers as they attempted to flee the scene. The use of women, whether voluntarily and ideologically motivated or coerced, is a sign that Boko Haram wants to spread fear and terror outside of its current area of operation. In a similar case in July, a 10-year-old girl was discovered wearing a suicide vest in the northern Katsina state.

## Domestic News

- **17 December 2014** – Nigeria's opposition party has elected Yemi Osibajo, a Christian pastor and ex-Lagos state justice commissioner, as its vice presidential nominee for the 14 February 2015 presidential election. Last week, former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari secured the All Progressives Congress (APC) party's presidential nomination to challenge incumbent Goodluck Jonathan. It is believed that it was necessary for Buhari, a devout Muslim, to nominate a Christian in order to appeal to voters in the south of the religiously divided country. Many see Osibajo as a surprise choice as Buhari could have selected a politician with a much higher public profile, such as a sitting state governor. Governor Rotimi Amaechi, from Rivers State, who is also Jonathan's rival, had been widely mentioned and could have boosted opposition support in the president's home region, the Niger Delta. Presidential elections are due to take place in mid-February.
- **16 December 2014** – President Goodluck Jonathan warned Tuesday that Nigeria could be forced to further cut the amount of oil revenue that it uses for government spending if the global crude price continued to fall. The warning from the president came on the evening of the presentation of the revised 2015 budget that could see politically sensitive spending cuts just weeks before presidential and parliamentary elections are due to take place. Last month, Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala announced a cut in the proposed benchmark rate for next year from US \$78 to \$73 a barrel. Earlier this month, the benchmark was again reduced to US \$65. The government in Abuja sets a so-called benchmark oil price in which revenue from oil exports up to that price go into general government spending while anything above left over goes into an Excess Crude Account (ECA). The near halving of the global crude price over the past six months has led to a squeeze on government finances, which is likely to see cuts made when the Finance Minister presents a revised budget estimate for next year on Wednesday. While the president indicated that he expects not to have to cut the government's benchmark oil price further, as estimates indicate that crude could stabilize at between US \$65 to \$70 a barrel next year, he did warn "there is no iron-clad guarantee where oil prices are concerned due to numerous underlying global, geo-political factors that are outside our control and unpredictable," adding "should prices fall below the range, the country could have to make further adjustments." Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer and depends on crude exports for 70% of government revenue and some 90% of its foreign exchange earnings.

- **11 December 2014** – Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan won party primaries Thursday while the opposition coalition continued voting to choose a challenger for the upcoming presidential elections. President Jonathan was the sole candidate at the governing party primaries, however his election Thursday defied an unwritten party rule that the presidency should rotate between a Christian southerner, like himself, and a northern Muslim. This ongoing issue resulted in dozens of ruling party legislators to defect to the opposition earlier this year, which in turn resulted in Jonathan's party losing its majority in the lower house of Parliament. The 14 February poll is expected to be the most closely contested election since decades of military rule ended in 1999.
  - Former military leader Muhammadu Buhari is set to contest Nigeria's presidential election after winning a primary for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party. Mr Buhari won 3,430 votes while his closest rival, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, one 954 votes out of 8,000. He was up against four other candidates in the vote at the APC's party convention in Lagos. The 71-year-old former general, a Muslim from the northern region of the country, seized power in 1983 but was deposed in a coup less than two years later. This will be the fourth time Mr Buhari contests a presidential election. In the previous election, President Goodluck Jonathan defeated Mr Buhari, with almost 59% of the vote against 32%, a win that sparked widespread unrest in the northern areas that had backed Mr Buhari. More than 500 people were killed and thousands were forced from their homes in the post-election violence. The upcoming presidential elections will likely be a tight race, particularly if the opposition manages to stay united behind one candidate. Whatever the outcome, the next president will need to deal with the growing jihadist insurgency in the northern region of the country, which is threatening not only Nigeria's security, but regional stability, along with an economy that is under strain because of the falling price of oil. President Goodluck Jonathan has faced mounting criticism over the way in which he has handled Boko Haram's insurgency. Supporters of Mr Buhari believe that as a former army general, he is better placed to fight the militants.
- **10 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Nigeria's main opposition coalition began a convention to select a candidate to take on President Goodluck Jonathan in the February 2015 presidential elections. Eight thousand delegates began gathering in Nigeria's national stadium in the commercial capital Lagos in order to vote for their choice. Results are expected to be announced Thursday. Two political heavyweights lead the race for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) ticket: former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari and ex-vice president Atiku Abubakar. Both men are Muslims from the northern region of the country. Three other candidates have put their names forward to run against President Jonathan, a Christian from southern Nigeria who has increasingly come under fire for his handling of the country's economy and the mounting Boko Haram insurgency. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) will hold its primary on Thursday however it will only be a formality as the president has already been approved by the party's board as the sole candidate. The likely contest between an opposition candidate from the largely Muslim north and an incumbent from the mostly Christian south will likely increase the regional and sectarian divide and could result in violence. The president's bid for a second elected term in office has upset many northern elites who argue that he broke an unwritten agreement that power should rotate between the north and south every two terms. The polls, which are due to take place 14 February, will be a test for Africa's largest economy and top oil producer on whether officials have learnt from past mistakes that have often seen elections being marred by fraud and violence.



## International Developments

- **11 December 2014** – France’s defense minister has called on Nigeria and its neighbors to set up a military liaison committee in order to better coordinate their response to the growing regional threat that is posed by Boko Haram. Last May, leaders of all four countries gathered in Paris and agreed to work together more closely. Despite these promises, there appears to have been little tangible coordination between the government in Abuja and neighboring governments. Speaking at an African security forum in the Senegalese capital Dakar, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian stated Monday “there is a serious threat to the integrity of Nigeria and for its neighbors be it Cameroon, Niger or Chad,” adding “for this reason, we’d like to see a military liaison committee set up between the authorities of these four countries to help coordinate their action and their capacity to respond.” Le Drian further noted that while France for now has ruled out direct military involvement, it can play a role in easing tensions and instigating dialogue between its three former colonies and Nigeria, adding that France is ready to provide several officers to help with these efforts. Over the past year, Boko Haram fighters have increased their attacks across much of Nigeria’s northern region, with the militants raiding villages, kidnapping civilians and seizing territory for their declared caliphate. Their operations have also increasingly spilled over Nigeria’s borders into the northern region of Niger and Cameroon. It has also left Chadian officials fearing that the West African country may soon be dragged into the ongoing conflict. In July, the four countries, whose borders meet at Lake Chad, an area that has become a Boko Haram stronghold, pledged to mobilize a joint force of 2,800 soldiers in order to tackle the terrorist group. The forces however have yet to be put in place. Furthermore, while the countries have collaborated on several occasions in the past, observers have strongly criticized a lack of cohesion in the effort to defeat the Islamist insurgents. Some Western officials have also expressed frustration with Nigeria’s lack of progress against Boko Haram, given the urgency of the situation.

# 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 demonstrations 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 void 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

- **17 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Ebola surveillance teams fanned out in the West African country's capital in search for sick people as the country's president imposed new restrictions on movement and gatherings in a bid to stop the spread of the deadly disease. In a national broadcast, President Ernest Bai Koroma launched "Operation Western Area Surge," promising that new treatment beds, labs and ambulances are ready to handle new cases. He also reiterated that Christmas and New Year's celebrations are cancelled and also banned public gatherings during the holidays and movement between districts. Despite Sierra Leonean officials repeatedly quarantining hot spots, and once locking down the entire country in search of sick patients hidden away in homes, infections continue to rise, with transmission of the deadly disease particularly high in the capital Freetown and in the surrounding areas.
- **15 December 2014** – Sierra Leone is planning a house-to-house search for hidden Ebola cases in the capital city and surrounding areas, as both regions currently account for more than half of the country's new infections. In a statement released Tuesday, President Ernest Bai Koroma indicated that officials will begin a house-to-house search Wednesday for sick people in the Western Area, which includes the capital Freetown. The statement however did not specify if people had to remain in their homes and if so, for how long. The government has periodically restricted movements into and out of Ebola hot spots in a bid to slow the spread of the deadly disease. In September, officials locked down the entire country to look for sick people who were hiding in their homes.
- **12 December 2014** – Officials in Sierra Leone have banned any public Christmas celebrations as the caseload of Ebola infections continues to spread at an alarming rate. According to the government's Ebola response unit, soldiers will be deployed across the country throughout the holiday period to ensure that all residents remain indoors. Palo Conteh, head of the department, has not disclosed the exact dates or specified any exceptions however during previous local and nationwide anti-Ebola curfews, people have been allowed out in order to worship and for "essential business." Under the current emergency regulations, bars and nightspots have been shut down while public gatherings have been outlawed however there is currently no general ban on wandering outdoors or working. Sierra Leone, which has now overtaken Liberia to report the most cases of the deadly virus, has in the past three weeks recorded 1,319 new Ebola cases.
- **10 December 2014** – On Wednesday, Sierra Leonean authorities imposed a two-week lockdown on the eastern diamond-mining district of Kono after eight cases of Ebola were confirmed in one day. The lockdown will effectively limit residents' movements until 23 December. Only essential vehicles, including fuel-carrying tankers, military, police, NGO workers and UN-associated vehicles will be allowed through the heavily monitored checkpoints into the district. Private and commercial vehicles and motorcycle taxes will be barred while mining activity has ceased. According to Sierra Leone's health ministry, Tuesday's spate of Ebola reports increased the cumulative total of confirmed cases in the region to 119. Officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centre for Disease Control are assisting Sierra Leone's National Ebola Response Centre in preventing the deadly virus from spreading throughout Kono, which has a population of 350,000. While the rapid reaction has helped contain the virus to about half of the fifteen chiefdoms in Kono, WHO teams that arrived in the area ten days ago were taken aback by the situation.

According to sources, in the space of eleven days, two WHO teams buried 87 victims, including a nurse and an ambulance driver who were enlisted to help dispose of corpses that were piling up in the local hospital.

- **9 December 2014** – Members of Sierra Leone’s Junior Doctors Association, which forms the bulk of the local doctors who are fighting the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, have gone on a partial strike over the lack of care for local medics who are infected with the deadly disease while working. According to Dr Jeredine George, president of the doctors’ association, local doctors are dying at an “alarming rate” adding that staff are now demanding a specialized unit with a dialysis machine if they are not to be evacuated when they are infected. Dr George further disclosed “we have raised so many concerns and we have still not been listened to...we have decided to withhold the majority of our services...until the establishment of this facility.” There are over ninety members of the association, all of whom are now on strike. Discrepancies in treatment between locals and foreign medical staff, who are routinely evacuated to Western hospital when infected with Ebola, has become a particular source of tension. The strike also comes after the tenth doctor died from Ebola last week and is just the latest in a series of strikes that have hampered the country’s fight against Ebola. Nine months into the worst Ebola outbreak on record, the deadly virus continues to spread in Sierra Leone and in parts of neighboring Guinea. The country has now recorded more Ebola cases than any other, with experts stating that more foreign aid workers are needed in order to halt the disease. At least 106 medical personnel have died from Ebola in Sierra Leone and some 250 more have died elsewhere in the region, mainly in Guinea and Liberia, which are the other worst affected countries.



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