



MS | RISK

West Africa Report

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

January 19 – February 1, 2015



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Summary

January 19 – February 1, 2015



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Sahel Region

- **31 January 2015** – UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday welcomed an African Union (AU) proposal to set up a regional five-nation force of 7,500 troops to fight Nigeria's Boko Haram militants.
- **30 January 2015** – African leaders meeting in Addis Ababa have chosen the continent's oldest head of state, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, as AU chairman for the coming year.
- **29 January 2015** – On Friday, the African Union (AU) called for a regional five-nation force of 7,5000 troops in order to defeat, what it termed "horrendous" rise of Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamist militants.

Benin

- **22 January 2015** – Lawmakers in Benin have approved a new law for the media.

Burkina Faso

- **23 January 2015** – Burkina Faso's transitional President Michel Kafando announced Thursday that the West African country will hold its presidential and legislative elections, to end the current transition period, on 11 October 2015.

The Gambia

On the Ground Reporting

- **30 January 2015** – Rights campaigners have voiced outrage over unlawful detentions and other abuses as news emerged Friday that a group of senior government officials had been held without charge for more than a week.
- **25 January 2015** – An opposition leader has called for President Yahya Jammeh to release relatives of coup suspects arrested and kept incommunicado since the failed coup attempt nearly four weeks ago.

International Developments

- **31 January 2015** – US prosecutors on Friday charged a third man for conspiring to overthrow the Gambian government late last month.
- **30 January 2015** – A former US army sergeant has pleaded guilty to involvement in a failed coup attempt in The Gambia last December.

Guinea

- **29 January 2015** – A Guinean opposition leader has urged the international community to help monitor presidential elections, which are due to take place in the West African country later this year, voicing concern of possible fraud and violence.
- **23 January 2015** – Police in the capital city Conakry have confirmed that three people were killed after a grenade exploded in a bar packed with soccer fans watching the country's Africa Cup of Nations opener against Ivory Coast.
 - On the ground sources have reported that angry residents are blocking access for health workers to dozens of remote villages across Guinea, in what appears to be a sign that mistrust continues to exist and may threaten President Alpha Conde's aim to eradicate Ebola from the West African country by March.
- **20 January 2015** – Three priests from a Baptist church in Guinea have been beaten up and held hostage after locals mistook them for Ebola awareness campaigners.
 - One person has been killed and three others seriously wounded after someone threw a grenade into a crowd of people watching a televised soccer match.
- **19 January 2015** – Guinean President Alpha Conde announced Monday that his country will send some 500 troops to join a UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.
 - Guinean President Alpha Conde has urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cancel the country's debts in order to help in its recovery, stating "the cancellation must concern bilateral and multilateral debt."

Liberia

- **31 January 2015** – Liberia has delayed planned re-opening of schools, with officials indicating that they are not yet fully prepared to prevent the spread of Ebola.
- **26 January 2015** – Liberia's president on Monday announced the closure of an Ebola treatment facility as the spread of the disease has slowed in the West African country.

- **23 January 2015** – According to a senior health official, Liberia, which was once the epicenter of West Africa's deadly Ebola outbreak, has just five remaining confirmed cases of the deadly disease, highlighting the country's success in halting new infections.

Mali

On the Ground Reporting

- **29 January 2015** – Mali's president has pulled out of attending the African Union (AU) summit in order to visit the restive city of Gao following the deaths of protesters in violent demonstrations against the United Nations.
- **28 January 2015** – Security sources reported Wednesday that an overnight attack in northern Mali by a pro-government armed group has killed a dozen people.
- **27 January 2015** – Government sources have disclosed that three people were killed in northern Mali on Tuesday in a demonstration against the United Nations mission deployed in the West African country.
- **26 January 2015** – One of Mali's most senior military officers has survived an assassination attempt in the capital city Bamako.
- **25 January 2015** – At least two soldiers were killed Sunday and three others wounded in an ambush in Mali's north.
- **23 January 2015** – The separatist Tuareg movement in Mali has broken off cooperation with the UN peacekeeping mission and has threatened to boycott the next round of peace talks after a clash left several of its fighters dead.
- **21 January 2015** – Tuareg separatist protesters in Mali stated Wednesday that they have pushed the UN's mission from an airfield in Kidal, burning generators and tearing down tents.
- **20 January 2015** – According to sources, Dutch United Nations peacekeepers carried out an air strike on Tuareg rebel forces in the northern region of Mali on Tuesday, the first such engagement by Dutch forces serving in the UN mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA.
- **19 January 2015** – The Malian government and the United Nations have declared Mali Ebola-free after the country completed 42-days without any new cases of the deadly virus.

Niger

- **30 January 2015** – A court in Niger has dropped charges against members of the political and social elite accused of trafficking newborn babies.
- **26 January 2015** – Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou announced that his country and neighboring Algeria are set to "pool" their resources in order to tackle the rising threat posed by jihadist groups that operate across the Sahel region.
- **20 January 2015** – A regional summit opened in Niger on Tuesday aimed at stopping Boko Haram as the militant group steps up attacks both in Nigeria and in neighboring countries.
- **19 January 2015** – Police officials revealed Monday that forty-five churches were torched over the weekend in Niger's capital city during deadly protests over the publication of a Prophet Mohammad cartoon by the French satirical weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo.

Nigeria

Coverage of the Presidential Election ~ 14 February 2015

- **30 January 2015** – Nigeria's main opposition party has urged international monitors to press for access after it accused the government of blocking foreign journalists from covering next month's elections.
- **29 January 2015** – Youths angry at President Goodluck Jonathan's failure to fight Islamic extremists threw stones at the president's convoy in the eastern city of Yola on Thursday, breaking windshields and windows on several vehicles.
- **28 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan took his re-election campaign to the Niger Delta on Wednesday, as victory in the key region will help determine the winner of next month's elections.

- **27 January 2015** – The European Union (EU) announced Tuesday that it will deploy ninety observers across the country for the upcoming presidential elections, noting however that observers will not be deployed to the northeastern region of Nigeria.
- **26 January 2015** – Nigeria's opposition urged the government on Monday to respect the electoral calendar, disclosing that delaying next month's elections, over ongoing Boko Haram violence, would effectively mark "a victory" for the insurgents.
- **24 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday held an electoral rally at the epicenter of Boko Haram's insurgency, where he vowed to defeat the militant group.
- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, the head of Nigeria's electoral body maintained that elections, which are set for next month, will still take place despite concerns about whether voter cards will be distributed in time.
- **22 January 2015** – Nigeria's national security adviser disclosed Thursday that next month's presidential and parliamentary elections should be postponed because not all the voter cards have been distributed.

On the Ground Reporting

- **1 February 2015** – Witnesses have reported that Boko Haram militants stormed the city of Maiduguri on Sunday, sparking an hours-long battle with troops for control of the strategically crucial Borno state capital.
 - Witnesses and police officials reported a suicide bomb attack that targeted a political meeting and killed seven people in Potiskum city on Sunday.
- **31 January 2015** – On Saturday, Chadian jets bombed the Nigerian town of Gamboru in a raid that targeted Boko Haram.
- **29 January 2015** – Military officials disclosed Thursday that Nigerian fighter jets have bombed the northeastern town of Malam Fatori, which is controlled by Boko Haram militants.
- **28 January 2015** – Amnesty International officials have claimed that Nigeria's military top brass had been warned of brutal Boko Haram attacks on the northeastern towns of Baga and Monguno however they failed to take action.
 - The United Nations envoy for the Sahel region disclosed Wednesday that Nigeria must accept that it cannot defeat Boko Haram fighters alone and must instead work with regional armies in a new multinational force.
- **27 January 2015** – Dozens of people have been killed and many others forced to flee into the mountains after a renewed series of Boko Haram attacks in northeastern Nigeria.
 - Meanwhile police in the northeastern town of Potiskum have disclosed that they have arrested a bomb-maker linked to several recent Boko Haram suicide attacks.
- **25 January 2015** - Boko Haram militants launched an attack on a key city in northeastern Nigeria on Sunday, just hours ahead of a visit by the United States Secretary of State.
 - US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in the Nigerian financial capital Lagos on Sunday, and headed straight to hold separate meetings with President Jonathan and the main opposition's presidential candidate, former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari.
 - According to a military source, Boko Haram has released nearly 200 hostages, most of them women, who were kidnapped from a village in the northeastern Nigerian state of Yobe.
- **24 January 2015** – Boko Haram fighters killed fifteen villagers Friday near Maiduguri, where President Goodluck Jonathan is due to launch his re-election campaign on Saturday.
- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, Nigeria's top security official ruled out the need for a United Nations or African Union-backed force to fight Boko Haram, stating that the country and its partners could handle the threat.
- **21 January 2015** – A man purporting to be the leader of Boko Haram has claimed in a new video that his fighters carried out the deadly attacks on the Nigerian town of Baga earlier this month.
 - Nigerian officials on Wednesday confirmed that five states have been hit with the H5N1 strain of bird flu, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of poultry but no human cases.
 - A statement released by Cameroon's government on Wednesday indicated that a German national, kidnapped

by Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria's Adamawa State in July 2014, has been released following an operation carried out by Cameroon's military and allies.

- **19 January 2015** – Nigeria announced Monday a cut in petrol prices, a month before the country votes in presidential and parliamentary elections.

International Developments

- **20 January 2015** – On Monday, the United Nations Security Council urged central African countries to step up plans for a multinational force to fight Boko Haram, in its overall response to the threat posed by the militant group.

Senegal

- **26 January 2015** – On Monday, Senegal reopened its land border with Guinea, with officials pointing to the “significant efforts” of its neighbor in fighting an Ebola outbreak that has claimed thousands of lives.
- **24 January 2015** – On Saturday, around 1,500 people, including the prime minister, marched against caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

Sierra Leone

- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, amidst signs that the deadly Ebola epidemic is retreating, Sierra Leone lifted crippling nationwide restrictions on movement, which had been put in place at the height of the Ebola crisis.
- **22 January 2015** – Officials in Sierra Leone announced Thursday that they are ending the “risk allowances” paid to thousands of healthcare workers on the front line of the country's Ebola outbreak.
 - Sierra Leonean officials announced Thursday that schools across the country will reopen in March.

Security Summaries for West African States

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The Gambia

Ghana

An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease has been confirmed in Guinea, Sierra Leone 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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Guinea-Bissau

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.

Ivory Coast

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 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. There is an outbreak of cholera in the Abidjan area. As of December 2014, the epidemic has infected 264 people and resulted in 19 deaths. The most affected areas are: Attecoue, Koumassi, Port Bouet and Yapougon.

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.

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Togo

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

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.

Regional Reporting

- **31 January 2015** – UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday welcomed an African Union (AU) proposal to set up a regional five-nation force of 7,500 troops to fight Nigeria's Boko Haram militants. Speaking to reporters during an AU summit being held in the Ethiopian capital, the Secretary General disclosed "I welcome the decision of the AU and regional countries to establish an MJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force) against Boko Haram," adding "they have committed unspeakable brutality. Those terrorists should be addressed with a regional and international cooperation." Boko Haram's on going insurgency has transformed into a regional crisis, with the four directly affected countries – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria – agreed along with Benin to form a joint task force. The proposed force was backed by the AU's peace and Security Council on Friday, and the pan-African body is now seeking the UN Security Council's approval plus a "trust Fund" to pay for it. Officials at the AU summit have disclosed that military experts will discuss the force at a meeting to be held on February 5 – 7 in Cameroon's capital Yaoundé.
- **30 January 2015** – African leaders meeting in Addis Ababa have chosen the continent's oldest head of state, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, as AU chairman for the coming year. Speaking at the conference, President Mugabe, 90, spoke of the "scourge of terrorism" from Boko Haram and said that there needs to be "lasting solutions" to the issue in Nigeria and Cameroon. In his address, President Mugabe also spoke of the need to take advantage of Africa's mineral wealth and agricultural potential, and guard against

expatriations by foreigners, noting that while African countries wanted relationships with “friends,” “colonialists and imperialists” had no place in the continent. President Mugabe’s election as AU Chair comes in the wake of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warning of the dangers of leaders clinging to power. President Mugabe has led his country since independence in 1980. He is subject to travel bans that have been imposed by the US and the European Union because of political violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe.

- **29 January 2015** – On Friday, the African Union (AU) called for a regional five-nation force of 7,5000 troops in order to defeat, what it termed “horrendous” rise of Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamist militants. The call for collective action came as leaders of the 54-member bloc opened the two-day annual summit in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, where they will address the situation in Nigeria along with a number of other crisis affecting the African continent. In a speech at the opening of the summit, AU commission chair Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma stated “terrorism, in particular the brutality of Boko Haram against our people, are a threat to our collective safety, security and development. This has now spread to the region beyond Nigeria and requires a collective, effective and decisive response.” The AU Peace and Security Council has called for a regional five-nation force composed of 7,500 troops. According to Dlamini-Zuma, the proposed force will have the backing of the AU and will ask for expected UN Security Council approval, plus a “Trust Fund” to pay for it. More than 13,000 people have been killed and more than one million are homeless because of Boko Haram’s insurgency, which began in 2009. UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-moon has told African leaders that Boko Haram is “a clear danger to national, regional and international peace and security.” Also expected to be discussed during the summit are conflicts going on elsewhere, including the civil war in South Sudan and in the Central African Republic, as well as a new offensive that was launched Thursday by the Democratic Republic of Congo against Rwanda Ethnic Hutu rebels in the eastern region of the country. Leaders are due to discuss the economic recovery of those countries affected by the Ebola outbreak and the setting up of a “solidarity fund” and planning a proposed African Centre for Disease Control. African leaders are also set to elect Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe to the bloc’s one-year rotating chair, replacing Mauritania’s President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

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. 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

- **22 January 2015** – Lawmakers in Benin have approved a new law for the media. The new law, which was approved in parliament on Thursday, removes custodial sentences for offences deemed offensive against the head of state, and regulates access to news sources. The new law comes in the wake of recent concerns over the freedom of expression in the West African nation. Franck Kptocheme, president of the Benin media professionals union (UPMP), confirmed the new law, stating, “it’s the crowning achievement of more than 10 years’ battle,” calling the decision “clear-sighted.” In a 2014 Reporters Without Borders index, Benin was ranked 75th out of 180 countries and was ranked 16th amongst African nations. The freedom of information advocacy group highlighted several cases in which journalists have been targeted for doing their job. Last year, the publisher of L’indépendant newspaper was given a three-year suspended prison sentences for allegedly “insulting” President Thomas Boni Yayi. The publication was suspended for six months and one reporter was jailed for two months.

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 and Sierra Leone. While there currently have been no confirmed



cases of the Ebola virus in Burkina Faso, MS Risk advises all travellers to remain cautious, including maintaining strict standards of hygiene. As a precautionary measure, Burkina Faso's environmental ministry has banned all special hunting for bats, which is the main carrier of the deadly virus.

Threats and Concerns

There is a general threat from terrorism throughout the Sahel region. Although there are currently no known Islamist operatives in Burkina Faso, the

country's shared border with Mali may enable such elements to gain access. The regional Islamist elements that could threaten Burkina Faso include: al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar al Dine, Ansar al Sharia and Boko Haram.

Kidnapping Threats

There is a heightened risk that terrorist groups, including AQIM and MUJAO, may cross the northern borders from Mali into Burkina Faso in order to carry out kidnaps. MS Risk therefore advises against all travel to the areas of Burkina Faso north of the town of Boulsa, which is 25 km north of the capital of Ouagadougou. We particularly advise against all travel to the regions that border Mali and Niger. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel region, and a number of these hostages continue to be held. AQIM operates directly or through criminal gangs who carry out kidnappings on their behalf or pass on their kidnap victims in return for payment.

Crime

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

MS RISK Guidance to Organizations in Burkina Faso:

Although the biggest concern at this time remains in the northern areas of the country, specifically along the porous Mali border and at the junction of the Niger border, the attack and kidnapping in Algeria has demonstrated that such attacks can occur at any place and at any time. In addition, the attack on BP in Algeria came just days after Islamists announced that they would retaliate against French interests in the region. Consequently, it is highly likely that more attacks will take place over the coming months.

There is an increased Burkinabe military presence in the north of the country and companies should review their respective security situations and consider the following:

- Location and safety of personnel
- Security controls, communications and contingency plans at static locations
- Work tempo implications
- Journey management systems in place and working
- Liaison with the military - use of military escorts, coordination between multiple assets, confirmation that military escorts are coordinated and competent for the task.
- Reviewing all crisis management contingencies including but not limited to the following:
 - Kidnap (for ransom or ideological purposes)
 - Medical emergency and evacuation cycle for northern area
 - Interdiction of road moves for personnel and any convoys
 - Loss of communications with remote locations - enhanced comms options, access to stores if replenishment is restricted or cut off.
- Media and public affairs contingency

Companies relying on police escorts in the northern region of the country should ensure that travel patterns do not become predictable. Varying routes is difficult due to the limited road networks; therefore, it is even more important to vary the types of vehicles used as well as the times of the journeys and to avoid travel patterns becoming widely known. This is especially critical given the current tensions along the Mali border and the impending ECOWAS operations. All companies linked to the

World Bank/International Finance Cooperation should familiarize themselves with the IFC Voluntary Principles on the Use of Security Forces. This applies to military, police or private security services.

Domestic News

- **23 January 2015** – Burkina Faso's transitional President Michel Kafando announced Thursday that the West African country will hold its presidential and legislative elections, to end the current transition period, on 11 October 2015. The government, political actors and the National Independent Electoral Commission have also agreed to organize municipal elections on 31 January 2016. Authorities have disclosed that the revision of the poll register will begin on 27 February across the country in order to allow all potential voters to register.

The Gambia

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary

There is no travel advisory for Gambia, however MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid travel by road from The Gambia to the Casamance, in the southern region of Senegal. The situation in the capital Banjul has returned to normal following a gun attack on the President's residence and attempted coup on 30 December 2014. The attack was unsuccessful and resulted in the arrest of a number of suspects in The Gambia as well as in the United States. As a result of this failed coup attempt, Gambian authorities have increased security surveillance and there are a number of checkpoints that are currently operating in and around the capital city. MS Risk advises all travellers to the capital city to expect that your vehicle will be searched if you are stopped by security forces.

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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **30 January 2015** – Rights campaigners have voiced outrage over unlawful detentions and other abuses as news emerged Friday that a group of senior government officials had been held without charge for more than a week. Police officials have confirmed that nine fisheries officials, including the department head, have been held in custody since Tuesday last week. They have been accused of irregularities following an audit of the ministry. Assistant superintendent David Kujabie indicated that the arrests were in connection with a report on the ministry's activities over six years from January 2008 however he refused to say whether they had been charged. A government source has disclosed that the officials were arrested on the orders of President Yahya Jammeh for "a wide range of issues including the issuance of fishing licenses to foreign companies and trawlers." The source also indicated that fisheries minister mass Axi Gai had been fired and that work there had ground to a halt since the arrests. Opposition leader Ouasainou Darboe has

denounced the arrests, which saw present and former permanent secretaries and department directors taken into custody, as “unlawful and unconstitutional.”

- **25 January 2015** – An opposition leader has called for President Yahya Jammeh to release relatives of coup suspects arrested and kept incommunicado since the failed coup attempt nearly four weeks ago. On 30 December, the presidential guard put down a bid to seize power, blamed mainly on ex-servicemen from the Gambian and US armed forces, while the president was in Dubai. There has since been a wave of arrests, detentions and harassments across the country, with officials targeting the family members of those suspected of being involved. According to Halifa Sallah, leader of the people’s Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism, “those who are arrested just because they have family ties with the insurgents should be released since no person becomes culpable to a criminal offence just because of family ties,” adding “justice based on blood ties and blood feuds belongs to the Stone Age and is not permissible in republics.” According to officials at Amnesty International, since the beginning of January, Gambian law enforcement agencies, including the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and Presidential guard, have arrested at least thirty people. In a statement released earlier this week, Steve Cockburn, Amnesty’s deputy regional director for West Africa, disclosed “the arrest and prolonged detention of family members of the alleged coup plotters, who have had no opportunity to challenge their detention, violates the basic legal protections provided for by the country’s constitution, as well as regional and international human rights law.” Amongst those detained are the mother of Lieutenant Colonel Lamin Sanneh, the former commander of the Presidential Guard who has been accused of masterminding the attack. According to a relative, “they whisked her away to an unknown location and since then we have not heard from her...We are worried because she is old and has not done anything illegal. Essa Bojang and Fatou Sonko, the parents of alleged co-conspirators Bakary and Dawda Bojang, were arrested on the same day in northern Gambia by NIA officers who said they were taking them to Amdalai, a village located on the border with Senegal. A relative has indicated “we went to Amdalai Police station and the officers there said they have not set eyes on them...We are yet to know the reasons why they are arrested. We do not also know where they are being kept.” Family members of Bai Lowe, a man suspected of having taken part in the coup attempt, were also arrested when NIA officers raided their compound in a village south of Banjul with a list of people to arrest. According to Amnesty officials, the relatives arrested include Lowe’s 13 and 19-year-old sons.

International Developments

- **31 January 2015** – US prosecutors on Friday charged a third man for conspiring to overthrow the Gambian government late last month. Dual US-Gambian citizen Alagie Barrow, 41, has been charged with seeking to overthrow Gambian president Yahya Jammeh on 30 December along with fellow dual national Papa Faal and US resident Cherno Njie, whom they planned to then have serve as interim leader. The three men had traveled to Banjul to take part in the attack on the presidential palace. Officials have indicated that Mr Barrow did not participate in the assault, standing to the side with Mr Njie while waiting for calm to be restored. According to US prosecutors, the plan had been for Mr Barrow to then escort Mr Njie to the presidential palace after the coup. US prosecutors have indicated that from August to October, the men had purchased numerous arms, including M4 semi-automatic rifles, ammunition and equipment, including night-vision goggles and bulletproof vests, and sent them to The Gambia for their coup attempt. Mr Faal indicated that he believed a larger group would travel to The Gambia however ultimately there were only 10 – 12 people that went to carry out the coup, “including some members from the United Kingdom.” They

have been charged with conspiracy to violate the Neutrality Act, which prohibits US citizens or residents from taking up arms or plotting against a nation at peace with America, and conspiracy to possess a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence. The three men were arrested following their return to the United States.

- **30 January 2015** – A former US army sergeant has pleaded guilty to involvement in a failed coup attempt in The Gambia last December. Papa Faal, 46, who has dual American and Gambian nationality, was arrested after he returned to the US. In court in the city of Minneapolis on Thursday, Mr Faal admitted conspiring to carry out a coup and conspiring to export weapons without a license. Mr Faal told the court that “the intent was not to kill anybody” unless they were fired on, adding “we were surprised by the fact that we had more resistance than anticipated.” Mr Faal also stated that one person had given him funds to purchase weapons and he had bought eight semiautomatic rifles in Minnesota, adding that he broke them down into their constituent parts and shipped them to The Gambia by hiding them in barrels. US officials found rifle manuals and receipts at Mr Faal’s home, as well as satellite images of The Gambia in a folder marked “top secret.” Documents submitted to the court indicate that the plotters had originally planned to intercept the convoy of President Yahya Jammeh but had switched their attention to the place when they learned tht he was out of the country. Another man of Gambian origin, Cherno Njie, 57, of Austin, Texas, is accused of leading and bankrolling the coup attempt. Earlier this month, he appeared in court in Baltimore and is being taken to Minneapolis to face charges. He had not yet been asked to plead. Mr Faal is due to be sentenced at a later date.

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.

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

- **29 January 2015** – A Guinean opposition leader has urged the international community to help monitor presidential elections, which are due to take place in the West African country later this year, voicing concern of possible fraud and violence. Former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo has accused the country's president, Alpha Conde, of using the country's ongoing Ebola outbreak as a "pretext" for not setting a date for the presidential election. Diallo, who is the leader of the Union of Democratic Forces in Guinea, has indicated that he will stand again in the upcoming elections, which are due to occur before December, when President Conde's five-year mandate ends. However no date for the presidential polls has been set, with Diallo disclosing that the president has so far been unwilling to hold talks with the opposition in order to lay out an electoral calendar. During a visit to Washington to urge US support for his nation, Diallo stated "there is a huge risk of instability and violence if the elections are not transparent, because the people are not going to accept an electoral masquerade." Diallo is now "...lobbying the international community to become engaged in the elections, because the president has said he does not want any 'foreign interference' as he calls it," pointing out that the President "has already refused international help, he has refused aid from the European Union to finance the election...all that is aimed at one thing – he wants to organize an electoral masquerade to declare himself re-elected." The warning from comes as the International Crisis Group warned last month that "unless the government convenes a serious dialogue with the opposition it risks electoral violence and exacerbating ethnic divisions." It recommended that the President should "embrace the willingness of international partners such as the European Union, African Union and UN to provide...support." When asked about the elections, President Conde, who is Guinea's first democratically elected president, stated last week on the sidelines of economic talks in Davos that he did not want to discuss the elections as he was preoccupied with the fight against Ebola. The Ebola outbreak in Guinea has killed 1,870 people and infected thousands of others, and has impacted the country's already shaky economy.
- **23 January 2015** – Police in the capital city Conakry have confirmed that three people were killed after a grenade exploded in a bar packed with soccer fans watching the country's Africa Cup of Nations opener against Ivory Coast. A spokesman for the police, Mamadou Alpha Barry, confirmed the incident, stating "it was an accidental explosion" and that the man who set off the hand grenade had himself been badly injured.
 - On the ground sources have reported that angry residents are blocking access for health workers to dozens of remote villages across Guinea, in what appears to be a sign that mistrust continues to exist and may threaten President Alpha Conde's aim to eradicate Ebola from the West African country by March. The worst Ebola outbreak on record began in December 2013, deep in the forests of southeastern Guinea, before it spread to neighboring countries. While Guinea, along with Liberia and Sierra Leone, have in recent week recorded a sharp fall in infections, experts have revealed that some people still deny that the deadly disease exists. Officials have indicated that this persistent denial could prove difficult to trace those who had been in contact with the infected and to change traditional behavior such as burial rituals, which involve touching the dead. These steps are seen as critical in defeating the disease. Fode Tass Sylla, spokesman for the national committee for the fight

against Ebola, “we are at a turning point. However, we cannot say that we have completely defeated the disease until we know what is happening inside these reticent villages.” Sylla noted one case in which medical kits sent by the government to schoolchildren were destroyed by villagers in Ourekaba, southern Guinea who believed that the kits had been sent in order to contaminate the children. In a separate incident, a police source disclosed that two security officials, who arrived to investigate reports of a secret Ebola burial, were lynched last week by a crowd in Sinkine, in the Forecariah region, which is located 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the capital city Conakry. While officials have noted that denial of the existence of Ebola has been seen in all three affected countries, with some communities, particularly in Sierra Leone, being reluctant to change their behavior, officials have noted that the problem in Guinea appears to be more acute, with health workers still being denied access to certain regions. Health experts also worry that some of the southern areas of Guinea lie close to the borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone and that imported cases could reverse some of the significant progress achieved in those two countries in recent weeks.

- **20 January 2015** – Three priests from a Baptist church in Guinea have been beaten up and held hostage after locals mistook them for Ebola awareness campaigners. According to on the ground sources, the priests had gone to the village of Kabac in Forecariah intending to spray insecticide on wells and pit latrines when they were attacked by villagers who suspected that they may have been bringing the Ebola virus into the area. Reports have indicated that the priests were badly beaten and that their vehicle was set on fire. The angry villagers later went to the town council building, which they vandalized. The building was set on fire, forcing local officials to flee. While local reports have indicated that one council worker was killed by the crowd, this report has not been independently verified. There was further chaos when police arrested some of the residents and the crowd attempted to prevent the detainees from being taken away. This is the second such attack to take place in Forecariah this month. Earlier, residents attacked and killed two police officers that they had suspected of bringing the Ebola virus to the area.
 - One person has been killed and three others seriously wounded after someone threw a grenade into a crowd of people watching a televised soccer match. The fans were injured as they were watching Guinea’s national team play Ivory Coast at the African Cup of Nations tournament, which is currently being held in Equatorial Guinea. Mamadou Alpha Barry, the national police spokesman, confirmed the violence, stating that it took place around the time Ivory Coast scored an equalizing goal in the game. According to the police spokesman, the person who launched the grenade was also seriously wounded.
- **19 January 2015** – Guinean President Alpha Conde announced Monday that his country will send some 500 troops to join a UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. The President indicated that a “battalion of 450 – 500 men is ready to leave in February” to join the MINUSMA force, stating that “Guinea and Mali are two lungs from one body and anything that concerns Mali concerns Guinea.” The president noted that he was determined to do all he could in order to “help Mali recover the unity and integrity of its territory.” In 2013, a UN peacekeeping force was set up in Mali as a successor to the French-led force that intervened to drive out militants who had seized Mali’s vast northern region. Despite several months of stabilization, the security situation in the West African country has again destabilized, with jihadists carrying out regular attacks targeting soldiers and peacekeepers. On Saturday, a UN peacekeeper was killed when militants attacked a UN camp. The attack came just six weeks after six peacekeepers were injured on 4 January when their car drove over an explosive device. The mission has lost forty-four troops since it was launched in July 2013, resulting in the UN Security Council in October calling for an end to attacks on peacekeepers

and stating that the UN MINUSMA force in the north should be beefed up to its full planned strength of 12,700 troops from its current level of 9,300.

- Guinean President Alpha Conde has urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cancel the country's debts in order to help in its recovery, stating "the cancellation must concern bilateral and multilateral debt." The president further indicated that he hopes the topic will come under further discussion at the next African Union (AU) meeting, which is due to be held in June. Anti-poverty organizations, the United Nations and the United States have all called on the IMF to wipe out some of the debts of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the three West African states that have been the worst affected by the Ebola outbreak. The US, the IMF's largest stakeholder, has asked that the crisis lender wipe out around a fifth of the US \$480 million owed it by the three West African nations. Cancelling the debt of the three nations would free resources to restart their economic activities. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone were already weakened prior to the outbreak as they were just recovering from devastating conflicts.

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

- **31 January 2015** – Liberia has delayed planned re-opening of schools, with officials indicating that they are not yet fully prepared to prevent the spread of Ebola. Schools, which were closed in July, had been due to open on Monday however teaching will now begin on 16 February. On the ground sources have reported that several schools were not prepared to prevent Ebola infection as they lacked chlorinated water for hand-washing and thermometers to check pupils don't have fever.
- **26 January 2015** – Liberia's president on Monday announced the closure of an Ebola treatment facility as the spread of the disease has slowed in the West African country. In a speech before the national parliament, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf stated "Lofa, the epicenter of the virus, has had no new cases for over 70 days," adding "the Ebola Treatment Unit in Foya is closed," and that the country can now "...take pride that 13 of 15...counties have not reported new cases for 21 days." The President however did stress that the outbreak was not yet over, stating "we know we must continue relentlessly on the practices and protocols that have brought us this far. We must make a successful transition from treatment to prevention by building our health system. But from now lets take pride and rejoice in our collective success." Liberia, which was once the worst affected by the Ebola outbreak, hopes to have no new cases by the end of next month. According to the latest figures, the number of registered cases in Liberia is now down to just five, against a peak of more than 300 a week in August and September of last year.
- **23 January 2015** – According to a senior health official, Liberia, which was once the epicenter of West Africa's deadly Ebola outbreak, has just five remaining confirmed cases of the deadly disease, highlighting the country's success in halting new infections. Deputy Health Minister Tolbert Nyenswah, who heads Liberia's Ebola taskforce stated Friday "we have five confirmed Ebola cases in Liberia as of today," adding "it means that we are going down to zero, if everything goes well, if other people don't get sick in other places." According to the Deputy Health Minister, three of the remaining cases are in the capital city Monrovia while the other two are in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties. The worst Ebola outbreak on record has killed more than 8,600 people in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. While last year, Liberia was at the height of the outbreak, as hospitals didn't have enough beds for new patients, forcing them to turn away victims and bodies left in the streets, a massive international response, which included the

deployment of hundreds of US troops to build treatment centers, along with public awareness campaigns, have contributed to a steep decline in infection rates.

Mali

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

Summary

In recent months, northern Mali has seen a spike in terrorist attacks, abductions and clashes amongst armed groups that operate in the region. In the past week, al-Qaeda-linked terrorists killed eight Malian troops in Nampala. In a separate attack, the mayor of Aderanboukane was killed while another attack was carried out on the town of Tinefewa, in the region of Timbuktu. The UN mission in Mali has also reported armed clashes in the towns of Zarho and Bamba, in the Gao region. Further attacks are likely to continue as the Malian government prepares for a new round of talks.



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

On 15 January 2015, the Malian Ministry for Health, in co-operation with the World Health Organization (WHO), declared Mali free from Ebola.

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

On the Ground Reporting

- **29 January 2015** – Mali's president has pulled out of attending the African Union (AU) summit in order to visit the restive city of Gao following the deaths of protesters in violent demonstrations against the United Nations. According to aides, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita had been due to fly on Thursday to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, a day ahead of a meeting of the 54-nation bloc, however he changed his plans following renewed violence in Mali's restive north. In the wake of protests in Gao, the UN has been forced to withdraw a plan to create a "temporary security zone" in the northern town of Tabankort. Three people were killed Tuesday in the second day of demonstrations against the UN. Witnesses described a large crowd of angry youths throwing stones and attempting to storm MINUSMA's headquarters in Gao. Although MINSUMA officials initially denied being behind the deaths, they later indicated that an investigation would be carried out in order to establish its role in the violence.
- **28 January 2015** – Security sources reported Wednesday that an overnight attack in northern Mali by a pro-government armed group has killed a dozen people. According to a military source, "GATIA fighters, accompanied by suicide bombers, attacked a rebel Tuareg and anti-government Arab position in the night from Tuesday to Wednesday near the town of Tabankort. There were a dozen deaths in total," adding "the situation is very volatile, and it is essential to calm the situation." A security source from the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, confirmed the death toll, stating that two fighters blew themselves up while a third was killed before he was able to detonate his explosives. GATIA is the commonly used name for the pro-government Imghad and Allies Tuareg Self-Defense Group. Tabankort is part of a large swathe of desert where the Tuareg separatist movement wants to create its homeland. The town, which is located northwest of the rebel stronghold of Kidal, is controlled by pro-government militias that have clashed over the past month with armed rebels, leading to the deaths of civilians and fighters.
- **27 January 2015** – Government sources have disclosed that three people were killed in northern Mali on Tuesday in a demonstration against the United Nations mission deployed in the West African country. Eyewitnesses have described how violence erupted as a huge crowd of angry youths, gathering for a second day outside the MINUSMA headquarters in the city of Gao, threw stones and attempted to storm the building. An official in the ministry for security and civil protection confirmed the deaths, adding that the situation remained "very tense." According to Arnaud Akodjenou, deputy representative of the MINUSMA force, "our officers were besieged by protesters this morning, but I can tell you that no one from MINUSMA fired on the demonstrators. Absolutely no order was given to use weapons," adding "we are in very close contact with the Malian authorities."
- **26 January 2015** – One of Mali's most senior military officers has survived an assassination attempt in the capital city Bamako. On Monday, General Mohamed Ould Meydou, adviser to the chief of staff of Mali's army, was shot by unknown gunmen however he was only lightly wounded in the incident. According to a source, General Meydou was well enough to leave hospital after receiving treatment on Monday evening. It remains unclear who targeted General Meydou, an ethnic Arab who remained loyal to the Bamako government when Tuareg and Arab rebels took up arms in 2012.
- **25 January 2015** – At least two soldiers were killed Sunday and three others wounded in an ambush in Mali's north. According to Col. Souleymane Maiga, the troops were on their way to the town of Douekire on Sunday to provide security for a weekly market when attackers opened fire. While there was no immediate

claim of responsibility for the attack, which occurred 45 kilometres (30 miles) west of the city of Timbuktu, several armed groups are known to operate in the northern region of the country.

- **23 January 2015** – The separatist Tuareg movement in Mali has broken off cooperation with the UN peacekeeping mission and has threatened to boycott the next round of peace talks after a clash left several of its fighters dead. At a press conference held in Rabat, Morocco, Moussa Ag Attaher stated that the peacekeeping mission was siding with the Malian government and its allied militias after one of the mission's attack helicopters killed seven separatist fighters near the remote desert town of Tabancort on Tuesday. The UN has maintained that their forces came under fire from Attaher's National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad near Tabancort and so they responded. Ag Attaher confirmed that the Tuareg movement has "...decided to end all cooperation with MINUSMA," adding "today it is more urgent than ever to review the rule of the MINUSMA in Mali." He further indicated that his movement would only participate in the next round of peace talks, which are due to take place in Algeria on 8 February, if government troops withdrew from the north. In a statement released Friday, MINUSMA officials called on all parties to exercise restraint and to create a climate of peace and trust in order to ensure the success of the next round of peace talks.
- **21 January 2015** – Tuareg separatist protesters in Mali stated Wednesday that they have pushed the UN's mission from an airfield in Kidal, burning generators and tearing down tents. Tuareg protester Moussa Ag Ali stated that they chased soldiers from the airfield and set fire to at least two generators, adding that the peacekeepers "...fled to their camp." Another protester, Ismail Ah Rhissa, indicated that demonstrators tore down tents that shelter some of the UN mission, adding "the soldiers of MINUSMA fired tear gas and warning shots, but they could not stop us." A deputy spokesman for the UN secretary-general, Farhan Haq, told reporters in New York that "the demonstrations are now ended." He declined to provide any further details. The protests come a day after a Dutch attack helicopter with the UN mission fired upon a car near the town of Gao, killing four rebels on Tuesday. That incident occurred near Tabancort, which is located north of the town of Gao. It is the first time that the UN mission has carried out such attacks.
- **20 January 2015** – According to sources, Dutch United Nations peacekeepers carried out an air strike on Tuareg rebel forces in the northern region of Mali on Tuesday, the first such engagement by Dutch forces serving in the UN mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA. Diplomatic sources have disclosed that the strike was carried out as MNLA separatist rebels advanced on the town of Tabancort, where some rebel militia fighters are based. A contingent of UN peacekeepers are also based in the town, tasked with protecting the local civilians. MNLA spokesman Moussa Ag Acharatoumane confirmed the strike, stating that four rebels were killed and several others injured. The UN mission, which includes 380 troops and four Apache helicopter gunships from the Netherlands, has not commented on the strike. **Update (21 January)** - Authorities in northern Mali confirmed Wednesday that at least four rebels are dead after a Dutch attack helicopter with the UN mission fired upon their car. Officials confirmed that the attack occurred near the town of Tabancort, north of the town of Gao. It is the first time that MINUSMA has carried out such air strikes. In a statement released by the UN mission, officials indicated that its forces had to fire after they came under "direct heavy fire," adding that the action was in line with its mandate to use force to protect civilian, urging the rebels to respect a cease-fire.
- **19 January 2015** – The Malian government and the United Nations have declared Mali Ebola-free after the country completed 42-days without any new cases of the deadly virus. Health Minister Ousmane Kone has confirmed that no new cases had been registered since 6 December when the last Ebola patient tested negative for the deadly disease. In accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, the spread of the Ebola virus could be declared over after 42 days without any new cases being reported.

Mali's Health Minister saluted Malian authorities and the different players in the anti-Ebola fight for "weeks of intense work" that led to the result. He also praised the country's health workers and its partners for their efforts and urged that despite being declared Ebola-free, basic hygiene and protective behavior measures must be kept up. Seven people died of Ebola in Mali, with the first fatality occurring in October last year, when a two-year-old girl travelled from neighboring Guinea to Mali to stay with relatives. Shortly afterwards, a Muslim cleric, also from Guinea, died in the capital city Bamako. He had transmitted the virus, directly or indirectly, to seven other people, five of whom died. The last patient to be treated for Ebola in Mali made a full recovery and was discharged from hospital in early December. In order to be declared Ebola-free, countries must report no new cases for 42 days – or two incubation periods of 21 days – in order to be declared Ebola-free. According to the latest figures released by the WHO, a total of 21,296 people have so far been infected with Ebola since the world's worst-ever outbreak began just over a year ago.

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 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

Violent protests have erupted in the capital city Niamey and in Zinder, Niger's second largest city. The protests, over the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, have resulted in the deaths of at least four civilians. Further protests are likely to occur in the coming days. MS Risk advises all travellers to remain vigilant and to avoid large demonstrations.

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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **30 January 2015** – A court in Niger has dropped charges against members of the political and social elite accused of trafficking newborn babies. On Friday, a criminal court ruled that it did not have the jurisdiction to try the case. In their decision, the judges accepted the defense position that the state needed to first establish the parentage of the allegedly trafficked children in a civil court before criminal charges could be brought. Assistant state prosecutor Samna Chaibou has indicated that his team has appealed against the ruling “so the case will immediately go before the court of appeal.” In June 2014, police arrested twenty people, including the wives of several senior politicians, stating that they wanted to question Hama Amadou, who is seen as being the main challenger to President Mahamadou Issoufou. Protesting his innocence, Amadou later fled the West African country. According to the prosecution, around thirty children were born to women in neighboring Nigeria for the sole purpose of being sold to wealthy couples in Niger. The accused, including Hama’s wife, were charged with “supposition of a child” – the act of falsely claiming parenthood of a child. It remains unclear if an arrest warrant against Hama, which was issued after he fled the country, has been lifted. He was also stripped of his position as parliament speaker.
- **26 January 2015** – Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou announced that his country and neighboring Algeria are set to “pool” their resources in order to tackle the rising threat posed by jihadist groups that operate across the Sahel region. Speaking shortly after holding a meeting with his Algerian counterpart, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President Issoufou stated “we have agreed to mobilize and pool our operational capabilities and intelligence to deal with terrorist threats and criminal organizations,” adding “Algeria and Niger share a 1,000 kilometer (600 mile) border and have large desert areas that need securing.” According to sources, the two leaders discussed the situation in neighboring Libya, which has been rocked by fierce fighting between troops loyal to the internationally recognized government and mainly Islamist militias, as well as the situation in Mali. Niger was one of five Sahel countries to call for international intervention in Libya while Algeria has called for national dialogue and the strengthening of democratic institutions in the North African nation.
- **20 January 2015** – A regional summit opened in Niger on Tuesday aimed at stopping Boko Haram as the militant group steps up attacks both in Nigeria and in neighboring countries. Speaking at the talks in Niamey, Niger’s Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum indicated, “the increase in strength of Boko Haram reflects our slowness and our inability to put up a robust response,” adding “we are watching, as was the case in Mali, the loss of sovereignty in Nigeria over large tracts of its territory and the exporting of the violence to neighboring countries.” Ministers from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Niger and Nigeria attended talks, along with representatives from the European Union, the United States, China and several other countries. Leaders from both Chad and Ghana have called for a unified effort in confronting the Islamist group, whose six-year insurgency has left 13,000 dead and forced 1.5 million from their homes since it began in 2009. Chad on Saturday deployed a convoy of troops and 400 military vehicles into neighboring Cameroon to fight Boko Haram.
- **19 January 2015** – Police officials revealed Monday that forty-five churches were torched over the weekend in Niger’s capital city during deadly protests over the publication of a Prophet Mohammad cartoon by the French satirical weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo. Speaking at a press conference, Adily Toro, a

spokesman for the national police, disclosed that the protests, which left five people dead and 128 people injured in Niamey, also saw a Christian school and orphanage set on fire. He further indicated that “the French flag was burned,” and that 189 people, including two minors, were arrested by police. Demonstrators also pillaged and burned numerous premises, including five hotels and 36 bars. On Sunday some 300 protesters in Niamey defied a ban on further demonstrations, throwing stones at police who tear-gassed them. The governor of the capital, Hamidou Garba, indicated that 90 people were arrested, with local media reporting that those detained included opposition leaders. Similar unrest sparked by the French satirical weekly, which was targeted by terrorists on 7 January, saw five people killed in the southern Nigerien city of Zinder, where 45 were also wounded. Niger has declared three days of mourning.

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 and Liberia. 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.

Presidential and National Assembly elections will be held in Nigeria on 14 February 2015 and Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections will be held on 28 February 2015. MS Risk advises all travellers to Nigeria to take extra care and to remain vigilant during the election period, particularly in areas where there are political or large public gatherings. We advise travelers to be aware that pre-election rallies may be called at short notice and will likely lead to travel disruptions. Restrictions on vehicle movements may be imposed with minimal or no notice, particularly on election days. MS Risk advises all travellers to monitor the local media for details of rallies or travel issues.



Boko Haram's Islamic State

On 3 January, Boko Haram militants stormed the town of Baga, taking control of the northeastern Nigerian town and at least fifteen other villages in the vicinity. While the Nigerian government has indicated that the attack resulted in the deaths of 150 people, Amnesty International has reported that upwards of 2,000 people were likely killed in the attack, in what Amnesty has named to be the worst in the militant group's six-year insurgency. Eyewitness testimonies have also placed the death toll between 2,000 and 3,000. Boko Haram's tempo of attacks has increased in recent weeks and will likely further increase as Nigeria approaches presidential elections, due to take place on 14 February. Boko Haram appears to have encircled Borno state capital Maiduguri. Further out in Borno, Boko Haram is 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

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.

Coverage of the Presidential Elections ~ 14 February 2015

- **30 January 2015** – Nigeria's main opposition party has urged international monitors to press for access after it accused the government of blocking foreign journalists from covering next month's elections. The All Progressives Congress (APC) party has claimed that there has been a "systematic denial of visas" by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. According to APC spokesman Lai Mohammed, "a regime that has nothing to hide or fear will not hesitate to allow international coverage of what is undoubtedly one of the most important elections in the world this year." He further stated "information reaching us indicates that most of the foreign journalists who applied for visas to travel to Nigeria from different parts of the world for the elections have been kept in abeyance under the guise of security clearance," adding "this is totally unacceptable and it is another indication that this administration has a lot of skeletons in its cupboard as far as the forthcoming elections are concerned." The APC has called on local and international election observers to take up this matter with government. The opposition also alleges that the PDP is attempting to "scuttle" the vote with a smear campaign on its candidate, former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari, and through the courts over fears that it will lose. The Nigerian government has not made any comments on the visa issue.
- **29 January 2015** – Youths angry at President Goodluck Jonathan's failure to fight Islamic extremists threw stones at the president's convoy in the eastern city of Yola on Thursday, breaking windshields and windows on several vehicles. In Yola, soldiers guarded billboards and posters of the president, with protesters shouting that the troops should instead be fighting Boko Haram insurgents. Yola, the capital of Adamawa state, is housing tens of thousands of people who have been driven from their homes as a result of Boko Haram's six-year insurgency. The state has also been affected by Boko Haram's violence and was part of

the state of emergency. On the ground sources have reported that police used tear gas in order to disperse the crowds. Similar reports have emerged of the Nigerian leader being met by stone-throwing crowds in Jalingo, the capital of neighboring Taraba state.

- **28 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan took his re-election campaign to the Niger Delta on Wednesday, as victory in the key region will help determine the winner of next month's elections. The president visited Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, which is controlled by the opposition and which is seen as a pivotal battleground in the upcoming elections. Thousands of people arrived at the 40,000-seat stadium where the president is expected to address a rally under tight security. River State was previously run by Jonathan's People Democratic Party (PDP) until the defection of its governor Rotimi Ameachie, who in late 2013 switched to the main opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party. Since then, the state has seen tensions rise, with violence erupting between supporters of the two parties. As a southerner and Christian from neighboring Bayelsa state, the president would normally expect widespread support from Rivers state, however an apparent momentum for the APC on the campaign trail, coupled with analysts predicting that the party could even seize power, has given added importance to controlling the major urban center. Political commentator Chris Ngwodo has indicated that regaining control of Rivers State, which has traditionally been held by the ruling party, is vital for the President and could help determine the outcome of the election, noting "losing Rivers is going to be a very, very significant loss in terms of votes, in terms of sheer numbers...and will add to the APC's national strength...It (the APC) already controls Lagos and Kano. It would be disastrous for the PDP."
- **27 January 2015** – The European Union (EU) announced Tuesday that it will deploy ninety observers across the country for the upcoming presidential elections, noting however that observers will not be deployed to the northeastern region of Nigeria. The head of a EU election monitoring mission, Santiago Fisas, has disclosed that staff deployed to observe polling in Nigeria would not even attempt to travel to the northeast, stating "the present situation (does not) allow us to go to the northeast." Nigerian election officials have already conceded that voting in much of the region will be impossible, as Boko Haram controls large areas of the territory, particularly in its historic stronghold of Borno state.
- **26 January 2015** – Nigeria's opposition urged the government on Monday to respect the electoral calendar, disclosing that delaying next month's elections, over ongoing Boko Haram violence, would effectively mark "a victory" for the insurgents. The opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party has accused the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of secretly backing postponement and of using the militant attacks as justification. A statement released by APC spokesman Lai Mohammed stated, "the truth is that the forthcoming elections terrify the PDP and the Jonathan administration to such an extent that they are looking for ways to postpone or scuttle the polls," adding "any postponement on the basis of the insurgency in the northeast will represent a victory for the terrorist group Boko haram." While the PDP is not in favor of pushing back the 14 February elections, Nigeria's National Security Advisor Sambo Dasuki has stated that election officials needed more time in order to distribute the voter ID cards. The President's position on a potential delay was left unclear in a statement that was released Sunday, just hours after he held a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry. In the statement, the president indicated that the 29 May date for inaugurating the winner of the election was "sacrosanct," however he made no comments over the inviolability of the upcoming election. Kayode Idowu, spokesman for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) indicated Monday that the body remains firmly committed to holding the elections on 14 February. He denied reports that were published Monday in the APC-controlled Nation newspaper that the national security advisor had scheduled a meeting with the election chief in order to push for a delay.
- **24 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday held an electoral rally at the epicenter of Boko

Haram's insurgency, where he vowed to defeat the militant group. The president's visit to Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, came just a day after Boko Haram militants killed fifteen villagers in nearby Kambari. Speaking to supporters at the rally, President Jonathan stated "what I can assure you is that if reelected as president, the problem of insecurity will be addressed," adding "I am deeply disturbed by the number of people who lost their lives due to activities of some irresponsible people." The president further indicated that he had assured local traditional and Islamic leaders of his resolve to end the insurgency. There was a heavy security presence before and during the president's visit, the latest in a series of campaign stops across the country, with hundreds of armed police deployed across the key city. This is President Jonathan's second visit to Maiduguri this month, having briefly visited the city on 15 January. That visit, which was shrouded in secrecy, was his first since March 2013.

- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, the head of Nigeria's electoral body maintained that elections, which are set for next month, will still take place despite concerns about whether voter cards will be distributed in time. While on Thursday, Nigeria's national security adviser, Sambo Dasuki, told a conference in London that the 14 February polls should be delayed in order to ensure that registered voters received their cards, the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Attahiru Jega, has stated that there has been no discussion on postponement. Asked whether the presidential and parliamentary vote will still take place as planned, he told delegates at a meeting in Abuja, "I have said so....I have said everything we are doing, including the challenges of the distribution of Permanent Voter Cards, we believe is something we can address long before February 14," adding "we issued the election timetable for February 14 almost a year ago and we have been very busy working to implement that timetable to the letter." Jega also disclosed Friday that more than 50 million of the 68 million voter cards have been made available and that 4.1 million were received on Thursday, adding "that gives us the confidence that before the end of January, all the remaining cards will be available and made available for people to collect." Apart from the issue of getting out voter cards on time, security concerns have also clouded the run-up to the elections, with hundreds of thousands of people forced out of their home by Boko Haram violence, the main opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party have maintained that the overall result could be called into question of the displaced are prevented from voting. The northeastern region of the country is an APC stronghold.
- **22 January 2015** – Nigeria's national security adviser disclosed Thursday that next month's presidential and parliamentary elections should be postponed because not all the voter cards have been distributed. Sambo Dasuki's suggestion comes just three weeks ahead of the polling date. Speaking at a question and answer session at a conference at the Chatham House international affairs think-tank in London, Mr Dasuki stated, "we said (to the Independent National Electoral Commission), look, there is a problem...We still have about 30 million...(voter) cards to distribute," adding "look at the possibility of shifting this thing and doing it when everybody has a card because it doesn't cost you anything, its still within the law and it is safer for all of us....So that is what we are encouraging. The (INEC) keep assuring us that everybody will have his card but I doubt it." A spokesman for the INEC, Kayode Idowu, has indicated that the agency has not received word of any postponement, stating "...As we speak, there is no basis for something like that, because in terms of preparation we are on course....The commission is preparing and PVC (permanent voter cards) are being collected. Those that are remaining, we are sure they will be available for people to collect before the end of the month." Voting for a new president and parliament has been set for 14 February, with gubernatorial and state assembly elections set to take place two weeks later. The run-up to the elections however has already been clouded by security fears with large areas of the country's northeastern region in control of Boko Haram militants. The INEC has been scrambling to find a solution in order to allow hundreds of thousands of displaced people to vote in the affected area, which is an

opposition stronghold. Latest figures released by the INEC indicate that 68.8 million people have registered to vote so far, out of the country 170 million population. Nigeria's main opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party has voiced concern that if voters in the region controlled by Boko Haram are unable to vote, then the validity of the overall result of the election will be in doubt. The APC party however is not in favor of postponing the elections. In a statement, party officials indicated that Mr Dasuki's statement "has exposed the hitherto clandestine plot by the Jonathan administration to push for the postponement of the polls, using all sorts of cheap tricks." The statement further disclosed that any postponement could trigger a constitutional crisis and is "capable of undermining the nation's democracy," adding that the international community should now get a commitment from President Jonathan that the elections will take place and that he will respect the results. Last week, the United States urged Nigeria to go ahead with the elections, despite a recent upsurge in Boko Haram-linked violence. Election monitors from the European Union (EU) have already arrived in Nigeria and the political campaigns of all the parties and the fourteen presidential candidates are in full swing.

On the Ground Reporting

- **1 February 2015** – Witnesses have reported that Boko Haram militants stormed the city of Maiduguri on Sunday, sparking an hours-long battle with troops for control of the strategically crucial Borno state capital. According to residents, the militants began their assault at roughly 3:00 am (0200 GMT) and that fierce fighting was ongoing at the southern edge of the city between the insurgents and troops who are backed by local vigilantes. Boko Haram's last attempt to take over Maiduguri just seven days ago was repelled by the military. It is believed that the insurgents will likely launch another attempt on Maiduguri before the country's presidential elections, which are due to take place on 14 February.
 - Witnesses and police officials reported a suicide bomb attack that targeted a political meeting and killed seven people in Potiskum city on Sunday. At least seven people were injured in the attack. On the ground sources have reported that the bomber emerged from a bus that had pulled up in front of the home of Sabo Garbu, who is running for a seat in the lower house on the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ticket. Garbu was holding a campaign meeting ahead of the 14 February elections in his home at the time of the attack, however none of the participants were injured. It remains unclear why insurgents want to target Garbu and it remains possible that Sunday's attack was carried out by another group with a separate political motive.
- **31 January 2015** – On Saturday, Chadian jets bombed the Nigerian town of Gamboru in a raid that targeted Boko Haram. According to security sources, an initial raid was carried out around midday by two fighter jets on the town in Nigeria's far northeast along the border with Cameroon. It was followed by further bombings of areas around the town. According to a Cameroonian security source, the raids were aimed at "allowing Chadian soldiers to enter Gamboru." Details on damage or casualties were not immediately clear. Boko Haram militants overran the town several months ago as part of its campaign to seize territory in the region and to create an Islamic state.
- **29 January 2015** – Military officials disclosed Thursday that Nigerian fighter jets have bombed the northeastern town of Malam Fatori, which is controlled by Boko Haram militants. Witnesses and media reports have indicated that troops and air force planes from neighboring Chad were involved in the operation, which occurred on Nigerian soil, however officials in Abuja have neither confirmed nor denied these claims. Defense spokesman Chris Olukolade did disclose "Malam Fatori is within the area of operation covered by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of which Chad has always been a part,"

adding “the Nigerian air force has also been conducting (an) air mission there for two days now....It is all part of the ongoing efforts against terrorism.” Residents in the town of Bosso, which lies next to Malam Fatori however across the border in Niger, reported that the bombardment began early on Wednesday and lasted for several hours. According to one Bosso resident, “at around 8:00 am (0700 GMT) we started seeing three military jets encircling Malam Fatori and soon after (they) began dropping bombs.” There was no initial word on casualties or whether Boko Haram fighters had fled the area as reaching locals inside Malam Fatori is difficult due to the collapse of the mobile phone network on the Nigerian side of the border. The authorities in N’Djamena have also not commented on their alleged involvement in the operation however if an aerial bombardment inside Nigeria by the Chadian air force is confirmed, this would mark a major development in bilateral security cooperation. While it remains unclear whether Chadian troops have begun to operate in Nigeria, security sources have indicated that soldiers from Chad had arrived in neighboring Cameroon ahead of an expected campaign against the militant group. According to a Cameroonian security source, “the first Chadian soldiers were deployed yesterday (Wednesday) in Fotokol,” which is located just 500 meters (0.3 Miles) from the Nigerian town of Gamboru, which is also currently controlled by Boko Haram. A senior Cameroonian official has indicated that the deployment was part of “preliminary action” for the Chadian army to take on Boko Haram alongside troops from Yaoundé.

- **28 January 2015** – Amnesty International officials have claimed that Nigeria’s military top brass had been warned of brutal Boko Haram attacks on the northeastern towns of Baga and Monguno however they failed to take action. The 3 January attack on Baga is feared to have killed hundreds while the takeover of Monguno last weekend has been seen as a major setback for the security forces. Amnesty officials have now indicated that they have received information from senior military officers and other sources indicating that defense officials were told about Boko Haram’s plans to attack both towns but did not act on requests to deploy reinforcements. According to Amnesty’s Africa director Netsanet Belay, “it is clear from this evidence that Nigeria’s military leadership woefully and repeatedly failed in their duty to protect civilians of Baga and Monguno despite repeated warnings about an impending threat posed by Boko Haram.” In regards to the attack on Baga, Amnesty officials indicated that troops in the town had reported a build-up of insurgent fighters in the area before the attack, adding that according to military and local sources, the militants had warned civilians about an impending attack, which caused several hundred residents to flee. A Monguno resident was quoted as saying that residents were also warned about a looming Boko Haram offensive and that this information was passed on to the military however no action was taken. While Defense spokesman Chris Olukolade has not commented on these allegations, the military has repeatedly described Amnesty as an unreliable organization with a political agenda after the organization made similar accusations in the past. Amnesty made similar accusations pertaining to the 14 April attack in Chibok, which saw Boko Haram kidnap more than 200 schoolgirls.
 - The United Nations envoy for the Sahel region disclosed Wednesday that Nigeria must accept that it cannot defeat Boko Haram fighters alone and must instead work with regional armies in a new multinational force. The statement comes in the wake of Nigerian security officials ruling out earlier this month the need for a United Nations or African Union-backed force to fight Boko Haram, stating that the country and its partners could handle the threat. Speaking in the Ethiopian capital, where the African Union (AU) is preparing for leaders of the 54-member bloc to meet for a summit on Friday, Hiroute Guebre Sellassie stated “Nigeria cannot handle the problem alone, Boko Haram is not only confined to Nigeria....We see a flood of refugees to Niger, Cameroon and even Chad.” She added that “the Sahel region is increasingly affected,” and warned of a possible training camp in northern Mali. Despite having the largest army in West Africa, the Nigerian military has come under criticism

both at home and abroad for failing to stop the advance of Boko Haram. The AU is expected on Friday to discuss a proposed regional force of some 3,000 troops that would include soldiers from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

- **27 January 2015** – Dozens of people have been killed and many others forced to flee into the mountains after a renewed series of Boko Haram attacks in northeastern Nigeria. According to a lawmaker and relief agency official, the attacks targeted the Michika area in northeastern Adamawa state, with sources reporting that bodies littered the streets in several villages. Adamu Kamale, who represents the Michika district in the Adamawa state government, disclosed that over the past two weeks, Boko Haram gunmen have been going “door-to-door, killing people, including the old.” It remains unclear what sparked the latest atrocities. Mohammed Kanar, northeast coordinator for the National Emergency Management Agency, confirmed the raids in Michika.
 - Meanwhile police in the northeastern town of Potiskum have disclosed that they have arrested a bomb-maker linked to several recent Boko Haram suicide attacks. Police officials have disclosed that an explosives manufacturer, who was identified only as Ba’na and who is in his mid-thirties, was picked up after three weeks of surveillance in Potiskum, the commercial capital of Yobe state. According to a senior police officer, nine alleged accomplices were also arrested. The area has recently been hit by a wave of bombings, including a suicide attack on a secondary school on 10 November, which resulted in the deaths of 58 people. On 18 January, at least four people were killed in an attack on a bus station, while the previous week two women wearing suicide vests killed six people at a market and two died in a car bombing outside a police station.
- **25 January 2015** - Boko Haram militants launched an attack on a key city in northeastern Nigeria on Sunday, just hours ahead of a visit by the United States Secretary of State. A curfew, which was imposed in the northeastern city of Maiduguri over the weekend “to enable security personnel to carry out their operations,” was lifted Monday as the state governor urged residents to stay and fight. Borno state’s capital was on lock-down since Sunday morning, when Boko Haram militants launched dawn raids on two neighboring towns that were later repelled by the Nigerian military. Nigerian Army spokesman Colonel Sani Usman confirmed, “the curfew imposed on Maiduguri has been lifted as from 6:00 am (0500 GMT). People can go about their legitimate business.” On Sunday, Nigeria’s military fought Boko Haram militants near the restive northeastern city of Maiduguri as US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived to discuss fears about election-related violence. Militants launched a raid at dawn, attacking the village of Jintilo, which is located on the outskirts of the Borno State capital. The attack prompted Nigerian soldiers to respond with heavy weaponry and airstrikes as Maiduguri was placed on lock-down. At the same time, militants attacked the town of Monguno, located about 65 kilometres (40 miles) from the fishing town of Baga. Boko Haram overran the town and captured a military barracks; a significant gain for them as according to a source, the fall of Monguno not only removes the last military base to Maiduguri, but “...also gives Boko Haram a free run into the key city.” The attack on Monguno and Jintilo was also likely driven by a need for food, fuel, medicine and other essentials and has allowed the militant group to restock their weaponry ahead of a possible regional counter-insurgency operation. It is believed that the militants may launch a fresh strike on Maiduguri from Monguno, which is located about 125 kilometres (80 miles) north of the state capital. The military high command in Abuja reported Monday that “scores” of Boko Haram fighters had been killed. While in recent months, fears have been growing about a large-scale attack on Maiduguri, as the militant group has captured swathes of territory in Borno state, the renewed violence has further underscored the extent of the difficulties facing the African nation as it attempts to put a solution in place that will enable hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the on going violence to vote in next month’s presidential

elections. The attacks also came a day after President Goodluck Jonathan visited Maiduguri, where he again vowed to end the militant group's six-year insurgency. Amnesty International reported late Sunday that civilians in the city and in the surrounding areas are now "at grave risk," calling for their "immediate protection." Many civilians caught in Sunday's violence are people who had previously been displaced to Monguno and Maiduguri after Boko Haram militants stormed Baga on 3 January.

- US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in the Nigerian financial capital Lagos on Sunday, and headed straight to hold separate meetings with President Jonathan and the main opposition's presidential candidate, former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari. He is expected to address poll-related violence, which has marred past elections in Nigeria, as fears increase that violence could erupt again, given the closely fought race. During Nigeria's last presidential elections in 2011, some 1,000 people died during protests held in central Nigeria. While both President Jonathan and Buhari recently signed a non-violence agreement, this has not stopped the sporadic outbreaks of violence that have erupted between supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). Despite the on going insurgency in the northeastern region of the country, the US has pressed for the elections to go ahead, with Washington expecting free, fair and peaceful elections. One US official has stated, "this election in Nigeria is being watched by the entire continent and in fact by the entire world." Kerry's visit to Nigeria, the first by a US secretary of state since Hillary Clinton in 2012, was announced on Friday during a speech in which Kerry warned of the dangers posed by Islamist extremists worldwide. Kerry recently described the attack on Baga as a "crime against humanity" while the US has warned of the threat to Nigeria's sovereignty posed by the militants. According to a senior official, Kerry will raise the issue of the insurgency with both of the candidates, adding "we have been working very, very closely with the government of Nigeria to address Boko Haram, and I can say very clearly that no country has done as much as we have to support Nigeria's efforts....And we would hope that both candidates will be able to address the insecurity and address Nigeria's response to Boko Haram." US involvement in Nigeria has been filled with criticisms particularly with the Nigerian government's slow response to the mass abduction of 276 girls from the town of Chibok in April 2014. While US drones were deployed to the area, and the Pentagon dispatching intelligence and surveillance specialist, the whereabouts of 219 teenagers remain unknown. Furthermore, both countries have accused one another of a lack of attempting to end the insurgency. Assistant Secretary of State Linda Thomas-Greenfield has accused Nigeria's military of being in denial of the threat posed by Boko Haram, which over the past six months has captured dozens of towns and cities in the northeastern region of Nigeria. Abuja recently ended a US training programme for soldiers fighting the militant group. Meanwhile Nigeria's ambassador to Washington has accused the US of failing to provide the weaponry necessary to end the rebellion. Furthermore, despite massive defence spending, which accounts for some 20 percent of the federal budget last year, Nigerian troops have on several occasions reported lacking the right weapons and equipment to tackle the militants.
- According to a military source, Boko Haram has released nearly 200 hostages, most of them women, who were kidnapped from a village in the northeastern Nigerian state of Yobe. Sources have reported that a total of 192 people were released Friday from two Islamist enclaves, where they had been kept since a 6 January raid on Katarko, which is located 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the state capital Damaturu. Goni Mari, a Katarko community leader, confirmed the release, stating "they brought them in two batches in four trucks and dropped them in Girbuwa village, eight kilometres from Damaturu, from there we conveyed them to the city and they were taken into government custody." The raid on Katarko involved dozens of Boko Haram gunmen who stormed the village, killing twenty-five men and

burning homes and businesses before kidnapping a total of 218 women and children. Sources reported at the time that the attack was apparently in retaliation over a raid by local hunters and vigilantes in nearby Buni Yadi, where several Boko Haram militants were killed and scores more arrested. The attack and mass kidnapping received minimal publicity as Boko Haram raids have become a near daily occurrence in the restive northeast. Boko Haram is still holding twenty-six young boys, with officials indicating that the hostages were released because they refused to fight alongside the militants, who called them “infidels.” A local politician has disclosed that the hostages were held in the town of Buni Yadi and in Ajigin village, which they seized months ago.

- **24 January 2015** – Boko Haram fighters killed fifteen villagers Friday near Maiduguri, where President Goodluck Jonathan is due to launch his re-election campaign on Saturday. According to security sources, “the terrorists attacked Kambari village, which is less than five kilometres to Maiduguri, around 5:00 am. They killed 15 people and set the entire hamlet ablaze,” adding “after fruitless efforts to enter Maiduguri through Konduga without success, the terrorists took a different route and attacked Kambari.”
- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, Nigeria’s top security official ruled out the need for a United Nations or African Union-backed force to fight Boko Haram, stating that the country and its partners could handle the threat. Due to fears about the group’s threat to regional stability, possible “enhanced international support” against the militant group is due to be discussed on the sidelines of an AU summit later this month however national security adviser Sambo Dasuki, a former army colonel, has disclosed that wider assistance would not be necessary, stating “I think as it is we are in good shape to address the issue with those partners, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.” Representatives from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria met Tuesday in order to discuss details of a new regional force aimed at countering the rising threat from the Islamist militants. An existing force, composed of troops from Chad, Niger and Nigeria, appears to have collapsed in disarray even before the 3 January attack on its headquarters near the northeastern town of Baga. Officials have confirmed that troops from Chad and Niger were not present at the headquarters at the time of the attack, which saw Baga razed and hundreds of civilians, if not more, killed in what is believed to be the insurgents’ worst atrocity during its six-year insurgency. Tuesday’s meeting agreed to transfer the headquarters of the new force from Nigeria to the Chadian capital, N’Djamena.
- **21 January 2015** – A man purporting to be the leader of Boko Haram has claimed in a new video that his fighters carried out the deadly attacks on the Nigerian town of Baga earlier this month. The man, believed to be Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau, stated that people were killed “as our Lord instructed.” In the 35-minute video, he stated, “we killed the people of Baga,” and threatened more raids while taunting nearby countries’ leaders. He also issued a challenge to Nigerian and regional forces to attack his group. The video also displayed an array of weapons believed to have been taken from a military base in neighboring Doron Baga. While the new video has not been verified, sources have indicated that it is in typical Boko Haram style, with the militant group’s leader wearing combat fatigues and surrounded by masked fighters. The attack on Baga has been described as one of the worst attacks in the militant group’s six-year insurgency, with some reports suggesting that as many of 2,000 people died in the raid. The Nigerian government however has disputed these figures, stating that the death tolls stands at 150. Satellite images released by Amnesty International show widespread destruction in Baga and Doron Baga, with some 3,700 buildings damaged or destroyed. Amnesty cited witnesses reporting that the militants had killed indiscriminately, and has described the damage as “catastrophic.”
 - Nigerian officials on Wednesday confirmed that five states have been hit with the H5N1 strain of bird flu, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of poultry but no human cases. According to Agriculture Minister Akinwumi Adesina, the first cases were confirmed on a commercial farm in the

northern city of Kano and at a live bird market in Lagos state on 8 January. Speaking to reporters in Abuja, the minister disclosed, “while we quickly confirmed that the cases were due to H5, we could not at the time determine the biotype. We have now confirmed that the cases were due to the H5N1 virus,” adding “we are taking all measures necessary to ensure that public safety is protected and that the poultry industry is not significantly affected by the spread of the bird flu.” The five states affected by the bird flu are Lagos and Ogun in the southwest, Delta and Rivers in the south and Kano in the north. Fifteen commercial farms and nine live bird markets were affected, with the Agricultural Minister stating “as of today January 21, 2015, a total of 139,505 birds have been associated with bird flu exposures, with 22,173 (15 percent) mortality recorded.” Kano has been the worst affected, with 103,445 birds reported as exposed to infection. Of those, nearly 16,000 had died. The Minister has assured that there was “no cause for alarm” and “we are not in a state of any epidemic, adding that the risk to humans is small. The H5N1 strain of the bird flu virus has killed more than 400 people worldwide since it first appeared in 2003, with most of the deaths occurring in southeast Asia.

Update (29 January) – Nigerian officials confirmed Thursday that the H5N1 strain of bird flu has now spread to eleven states within a week, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of poultry however no human cases have been confirmed. Agriculture Minister Akinwum Adesina told an emergency meeting on the outbreak that “as of yesterday (Wednesday) a total of 11 states have reported positive cases.” Cases have been recorded in Kano, Plateau, Gombe and Jigawa in the north; to the southwest, in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo; in the south, Rivers, Delta and Edo are affected and Imo in the southeast has also been affected. According to the Agriculture Minister, as of Wednesday, 232,385 birds were exposed to the virus and 51,444 had died – up from nearly 140,000 exposures and just over 22,000 deaths on 21 January. Kano, Nigeria’s largest state in the north, has been the worst hit by the outbreak, with 136,905 infected birds and 17,987 deaths. Lagos has 38,845 cases and 4,732 deaths. The minister disclosed “we are not in a state of epidemic, we are closely monitoring the situation and taking aggressive containment measures,” adding “there is no cause for alarm but we must now move with greater speed and decisiveness.”

- A statement released by Cameroon’s government on Wednesday indicated that a German national, kidnapped by Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria’s Adamawa State in July 2014, has been released following an operation carried out by Cameroon’s military and allies. A statement released late in the day by Germany’s Foreign Ministry also confirmed the release of its national. According to the statement from Cameroon’s presidency, “a special operation of the Cameroon armed forces and security services of friendly countries led this night to the release of Nitsch Eberhard Robert, German citizen, abducted in July 2014 in Nigeria by Boko Haram.” The German national is now in Cameroon’s capital. Officials have not provided specific details of how the man was released, nor have they provided any details of his condition, beyond stating that he was healthy enough to be transported.
- **19 January 2015** – Nigeria announced Monday a cut in petrol prices, a month before the country votes in presidential and parliamentary elections. During an evening conference, Oil Minister Diezani Alison-Madueke confirmed that the price of a liter of petrol would drop from 97 naira to 87 naira (47 US cents) at midnight on Sunday, stating that the measure was taken with the approval and directive of President Goodluck Jonathan and that the recent volatility in the oil market had been taken into account. Nigeria depends on crude exports for 70 percent of government revenue and some 90 percent of its foreign exchange earnings. With the historic fall in oil prices, President Jonathan’s administration has had to introduce austerity measures and devalue the naira currency, both moves that have directly affected the

standard living for Nigerians. Nigeria extracts around two million barrels of crude a day however it imports most of its fuel, as it does not have refining capacity. Subsidies are used in order to keep prices low at the pumps. In late 2011, president Jonathan tried to remove the subsidies, which caused a general strike and mass protests. The subsidies were reintroduced however to a lesser degree.

International Developments

- **20 January 2015** – On Monday, the United Nations Security Council urged central African countries to step up plans for a multinational force to fight Boko Haram, in its overall response to the threat posed by the militant group. The Council has issued a 13-point statement, which strongly condemns attacks by Boko Haram, in particular those that involve children being used as suicide bombers, and which demands an end to the violence. In the statement, which was presented by Nigeria, the Council expressed “deep concern that the activities of Boko Haram are undermining the peace and stability of the west and central African region.” The Council also demanded that Boko Haram “immediately and unequivocally cease all hostilities and all abuses of human rights and violations.” The UN has accused Boko Haram of carrying out kidnappings, killings, hostage-taking, pillaging, rape, sexual slavery and recruitment of child soldiers since it launched its insurgency in 2009. The statement is the first adopted by the Council on the threat posed by Boko Haram, which is on the UN terrorist list. Previous statements had only focused on condemning specific attacks. On the eve of a key meeting of regional leaders in Niger, the 15-member council urged Nigeria’s neighbors to advance planning for the deployment of a multinational task force aimed at driving out Boko Haram. While the multinational force has been under discussion since last year, divisions over the scale and scope of its operations have slowed down the deployment. Chad is set to contribute a sizeable contingent to the force, along with Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. Several diplomats have noted that the statement points to a shift from Nigeria, which has in the past shied away from discussing Boko Haram even though it is one of the 10 non-permanent members of the council. The Council statement also urged regional leaders to “undertake further planning toward the sustainable, viable and effective operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force,” and urged African countries to “identify the means and modalities of the envisaged deployment, especially in the areas of intelligence sharing and joint operations.”

Senegal

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary

On 17 October 2014, the World Health Organization declared Senegal Ebola-free. An Ebola outbreak has been confirmed in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. 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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **26 January 2015** – On Monday, Senegal reopened its land border with Guinea, with officials pointing to the “significant efforts” of its neighbor in fighting an Ebola outbreak that has claimed thousands of lives. In a statement released by the interior ministry, people and goods can now “move freely by land between the two countries.” The statement further indicated that Senegal would put in place measures at its land crossings in order to ensure people entering from Guinea were Ebola-free. The country initially closed its land border with Guinea in March last year as the number of infections were escalating at an alarming rate. That order affected crossings in the south of Senegal, which were heavily used by traders, particularly during a weekly market attended by thousands from neighboring countries. While the border was reopened in May, it was closed again in August after an infected student crossed over from Guinea. Senegal was

declared Ebola-free on 17 October after the student recovered without spreading the virus. Air and sea crossings from the three other nations have been permitted since November however officials have continued to enforce measures to avoid any propagation of the disease. While Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have been devastated by the outbreak, which began in December 2013, all countries have recently seen signs that the deadly virus is retreating as the number of new cases has dropped week by week.

- **24 January 2015** – On Saturday, around 1,500 people, including the prime minister, marched against caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. Premier Mohammed Dionne was joined at the demonstration, held in Dakar, by cabinet colleagues, civil society activists, lawmakers, religious leaders and hundreds of members of the public. The event, during which a French flag was burned, used the slogan “I am Nigerian, I am African” to denounce the silence of African leaders and the world over massacres that have occurred on the continent, in contrast with the emphatic response to the Paris attacks. While Nigeria’s volatile northeastern region has repeatedly come under attack by Boko Haram militants, the attacks have not garnered much public attention. The protests were also called in response to a cartoon published by Charlie Hebdo a week after the 7 January attack by Islamist gunmen on its headquarters in Paris, in which 12 people were killed. The march came a day after hundreds of people gathered in front of Dakar’s Grand Mosque after Friday prayers to denounce caricatures of the prophet. Many in Senegal have criticized President Macky Sall for attending a march against terrorism held in Paris on 12 January. The president however has indicated that he would never countenance the practices of “a newspaper that is attacking our Islamic values,” stating that his presence in Paris was due to his “desire to present condolences on the killing of innocent people while reaffirming my commitment in the fight against any terrorist acts.”

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.



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

- **23 January 2015** – On Friday, amidst signs that the deadly Ebola epidemic is retreating, Sierra Leone lifted crippling nationwide restrictions on movement, which had been put in place at the height of the Ebola crisis. In an address to the nation late Thursday, President Ernest Bai Koroma announced, “restrictions on movement will be eased to support economic activity. As such, there will no longer be any district or chiefdom level restrictions on movement.” The president pointed to a “steady downward trend” in new cases in recent weeks as being the main reason for the lifting of quarantines, however he noted that while “victory is in sight,” he cautioned against complacency. The travel bans are due to be removed Friday and restrictions will be eased on Saturday trading hours in the hard-hit Western Area, which includes the capital city Freetown. Sierra Leone had put in place restricted travel for around half of its six million population, sealing of six of its fourteen districts and numerous tribal chiefdoms since announcing a state of emergency in July 2014 in response to the outbreak, which has killed more than 3,000 Sierra Leoneans.
- **22 January 2015** – Officials in Sierra Leone announced Thursday that they are ending the “risk allowances” paid to thousands of healthcare workers on the front line of the country’s Ebola outbreak. Speaking to reporters, Steven Gaojia, the coordinator of the government’s response to the outbreak, indicated that the payments of up to 500,000 leones (US \$118) a week on top of regular salaries would finish by the end of March. The move comes as Sierra Leone has seen a decrease in new cases across most of its territory. Last week, officials registered 117 new cases, against 184 the week before. According to Gaojia, “we have developed an exit strategy in the fight against Ebola. If there are still cases beyond that, we will re-contract people. Now the hazard payment has become a dependency issue, making too many depend on it.” Sierra Leone estimates that 26,000 healthcare workers, either volunteers or state employees, are involved in fighting the Ebola outbreak. Officials have indicated that 221 health workers have died in Sierra Leone after catching the deadly disease.
 - Sierra Leonean officials announced Thursday that schools across the country will reopen in March. A statement released by President Ernest Bai Koroma’s office quoted him as saying, “a timely reopening” was needed in order to limit the damage caused by the crisis to children’s education. Government spokesman Abdulay Bayratay confirmed the news, disclosing that ministers would “shortly announce a specific date after all modalities have been put in place,” adding “an Ebola task force will be attached to schools to promote best practice for the safety of school children. Teachers will be trained to effectively use thermometers to frequently test,” noting that those “schools that have been used as holding and treatment centers will be washed and chlorinated before they are used.” The decision covers all state and private schools however further education colleges and universities will remain closed. Classrooms have been empty since the government announced a state of emergency in July in response to the outbreak. Neighboring Guinea and Liberia have already reopened their schools following a significant slowdown in new Ebola cases.



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