



MS | RISK

West Africa Report

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

February 16 – March 1, 2015



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 - Hostile operations support to commercial interests
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Summary

February 16 – March 1, 2015



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Sahel Region

- **21 February 2015** – On Saturday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius began a tour of several West African countries in a bid to show France's support for their battle against Boko Haram.
- **20 February 2015** – On Friday, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it has approved a 15-minute test for Ebola that should provide a fast tool to test for the deadly virus in countries that are currently affected by the disease.

Burkina Faso

- **21 February 2015** – The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS in Burkina Faso could soon face cuts in food assistance due to a funding shortage.

Ghana

- **26 February 2015** – Ghana's President John Mahama has indicated that he expects to announce later on Thursday a positive outcome to months of negotiations that have been taking place between the West African nation's government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a three-year financial assistance package.
- **24 February 2015** – Citing security concerns, Ghana's ruling party has called off Tuesday's planned march in Kumasi, which was aimed at showing support for the government in the face of mounting opposition protests amidst the country's ongoing power crisis.
- **18 February 2015** – Several thousand opposition supporters marched through the capital city on Wednesday, protesting against widespread power shortages, which are seen as harming the country's economy.

Guinea

On the Ground Reporting

- **24 February 2015** – Amidst increasing security concerns over incidents targeting international aid workers in the region, officials from medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) have announced that they are contemplating stopping their work in fighting Ebola in Guinea and pulling out of the country.
- **23 February 2015** – A judicial source has disclosed that a Muslim cleric, who conducted the funeral rites of a suspected Ebola victim, was charged Monday with assaulting an outreach worker who came to question him over the ceremony.

Domestic News

- **23 February 2015** – On Tuesday, Guinea's government replaced the minister charged with organizing this year's presidential election with an army general, with officials stating that the move was necessary in order to strengthen the fight against Ebola.

Guinea-Bissau

- **19 February 2015** – The United Nations Security Council has extended the mandate of a Peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau for another year until 29 February 2016.

Ivory Coast

- **25 February 2015** – According to sources in Abidjan, health experts from Guinea and neighboring Ivory Coast have agreed to carry out periodic cross-border meetings aimed at reinforcing vigilance against the Ebola virus along the border zones.
- **20 February 2015** – The Ivory Coast's ex-first lady, Simone Gbagbo, is due to appear in court on Monday alongside other accused persons.

Liberia

- **26 February 2015** – On Thursday, the United States staged a military ceremony marking the end of its five-month Ebola mission in Liberia.
- **21 February 2015** – Eight health workers at a hospital in Liberia's capital city have been sent home for observation after coming into contact with a patient who later tested positive for Ebola.
- **20 February 2015** – Liberia's president on Friday ordered officials to lift an overnight curfew that has been in place for the past six months and to reopen the country's land border crossings.
 - President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will visit the White House on February 27.

- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, schools in Liberia reopened after being delayed for months by the Ebola outbreak.

Mali

On the Ground Reporting

- **1 March 2015** – Mali signed a preliminary peace agreement on Sunday aimed at ending fighting with northern separatist fighters, however the Tuareg-led rebels have requested additional time for consultations before they sign the agreement.
- **27 February 2015** - Malian officials disclosed Saturday that three of its nationals were killed in a village near the Guinean border after clashes erupted between miners over the discovery of gold.
- **25 February 2015** – The new Tuareg tribal chief in Mali's Kidal region has rejected the struggle for independence or autonomy and instead has issued a plea for unity.
- **20 February 2015** – The Malian government has agreed to a deal with six armed groups to cease hostilities.
- **16 February 2015** – Gunman have killed two Malian soldiers after attacking an army post 460 kilometres (300 miles) from the capital Bamako.
 - The UN representative to Mali has expressed hope for the latest round of peace talks, which began Monday.

Mauritania

- **23 February 2015** – Three jailed Mauritanian anti-slavery activists began a hunger strike Monday to protest their treatment by prison authorities.
- **21 February 2015** – A road accident in western Mauritania has killed fourteen soldiers and injured some twenty more.

Niger

On the Ground Reporting

- **25 February 2015** – Officials from the World Food Programme (WFP) confirmed Wednesday that food aid to thousands of refugees located on the border between Niger and Nigeria has resumed, effectively ending a suspension of deliveries by humanitarian groups over fears of Boko Haram attacks.
 - The Nigerien government has appealed for an extension of the state of emergency that has been in force in the region of Diffa.
 - Canadian Special Forces from Petawawa have been pulled out from a town in Niger that has recently been affected by heavy fighting between government troops and Islamist militants.
- **24 February 2015** – A mine planted by Boko Haram militants killed at least two soldiers on Tuesday in the town of Bosso in Niger's southeastern region of Diffa.
- **21 February 2015** – A Boko Haram attack on a village in the southeastern region of Niger, which was followed by clashes with troops, have killed at least 21 people, with most of the casualties being Boko Haram fighters.
- **19 February 2015** – According to a senior Nigerien military official, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are aiming to pin down Boko Haram within Nigeria's borders ahead of a ground-and-air offensive by a regional task force, which is due to launch at the end of next month.
 - A military source has reported that Boko Haram militants attacked a village in northeastern Niger overnight, killing three people, including the local chief, and wounding three others before being driven out by security forces.
- **18 February 2015** – Niger's army disclosed Wednesday that at least 36 mourners at a funeral ceremony were killed and 27 wounded when an unidentified plane bombarded a village near the Nigerian border.
- **17 February 2015** – Thousands of people marched in the capital city on Tuesday, protesting Boko Haram militants who have launched several deadly raids in the country from their base in neighboring Nigeria.

- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Boko Haram threatened Chad and Niger, warning that its fighters were preparing to carry out suicide bombings in the countries that have deployed troops to help fight the militant group.
 - Police officials disclosed Monday that they have arrested more than 160 people in Diffa region, which was attacked by Boko Haram earlier this month.

Domestic News

- **25 February 2015** – Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou replaced his foreign minister on Wednesday, appointing him instead as minister of state ahead of next year's elections.

Nigeria

Coverage of the Presidential Election ~ 28 March 2015

- **26 February 2015** – On Thursday, Nigerian presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari vowed that if elected in the country's upcoming elections, he will "lead from the front" in the fight against Boko Haram.
- **18 February 2015** – Boko Haram has vowed to make voting in the upcoming presidential elections impossible.
 - On Wednesday, Nigeria's election chief ruled out any further postponement to the upcoming presidential and parliamentary polls.
- **17 February 2015** - On Tuesday, five explosions followed by a burst of gunfire targeted an opposition rally in the town of Okrika, which is located in the southern oil producing Rivers state.
- **16 February 2015** – A massive crowd met opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari as he arrived in the northeastern city of Maiduguri on Monday.

On the Ground Reporting

- **28 February 2015** – A female suicide bomber killed two passers-by and her accomplice on Saturday in northeastern Nigeria.
- **26 February 2015** – The head of the Nigerian army has visited soldiers in the northeastern town of Baga, telling troops that the conflict against Boko Haram will soon end.
 - At least eighteen people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a crowded bus station in northeastern Nigeria on Thursday, while another bomber was shot dead before he could detonate his explosives.
- **24 February 2015** – Two blasts targeting bus stations in northern Nigeria on Tuesday have killed at least twenty seven people as violence continues to rage with less than five weeks until general elections are due to take place.
 - On Tuesday, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said that the military was gaining the upper hand against Boko Haram despite two bombings in the country's northern region that killed at least twenty-seven people.
- **23 February 2015** - Gunmen in central Nigeria have kidnapped an American woman doing missionary work. According to Kogi state police spokesman Sola Collins Adebayo, Phyllis Sortor "was whisked away at around 10:00 am (0900 GMT) Monday" by masked gunmen, with officials indicating that ransom is the suspected motive for the kidnapping.
- **22 February 2015** – On Sunday, a young female suicide bomber blew herself up and five others when the explosive device that was strapped to her body detonated in a market in the northeastern Nigerian city of Potiskum. At least nineteen others were injured in the attack.
 - Nigerian military officials disclosed Sunday that the country offensive against Boko Haram was progressing, and claimed that soldiers have recovered stocks of arms that were abandoned by fighters fleeing the recaptured town of Baga.
 - In an interview published on Sunday, President Goodluck Jonathan admitted that he underestimated Boko Haram while defending the election postponement.

- **21 February 2015** – Nigeria's military has reported that Nigerian troops retook a major border town and killed scores of Boko Haram fighters Saturday.
- **20 February 2015** – At least thirty people have been killed after Boko Haram raided two villages in the northeastern Borno state near the town of Chibok.
 - A group of 158 women and children, who were abducted by Boko Haram militants in northeastern Nigeria in December have been reunited with their families.
- **19 February 2015** - A statement released by the military has indicated that Nigeria's air force on Thursday bombed Boko Haram strongholds in northeastern Borno state, killing "a large number of terrorists."
- **18 February 2015** – On Wednesday, Nigeria's military claimed that more than 300 Boko Haram fighters were killed when troops recaptured the garrison town of Monguno, in the northeastern state of Borno.
 - In a statement that aired on Chadian television, Chad's chief of state disclosed that 117 militants were killed in fierce clashes on Tuesday around the town of Dikwa, which is located about 80 kilometres south of Monguno in Borno state.
- **17 February 2015** – At least fourteen people were killed Tuesday after a suicide bomb attack targeted a checkpoint near the town of Biu in northeastern Nigeria.
 - A suicide bomber blew himself up in Al-Amir restaurant, which is a popular chain in northern Nigeria, in the northeastern town of Potiskum on Tuesday, killing at least two people and wounding thirteen.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Nigerian soldiers claimed to have recaptured two towns from Boko Haram.
 - Boko Haram militants stormed the town of Askira Uba, in Borno state on Monday evening, razing homes and public buildings and forcing hundreds of residents to flee.

Domestic News

- **17 February 2015** – Nigeria's former president Olusegun Obasanjo has quit the ruling party just six weeks before presidential elections are due to take place.

Regional Reporting

- **18 February 2015** – The United States embassy in Cameroon announced Wednesday that the US will help the African country's army secure equipment to fight Boko Haram as Cameroon deepens its commitment to countering the militant group.
- **17 February 2015** – On Tuesday, seven villagers in the far north region of Cameroon were killed after battling Boko Haram militants who stole seventy cows and torched houses in Gaboua.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Chad launched a US-backed counter-terrorism exercise, which involves 1,300 soldiers from 28 African and Western countries.

Senegal

- **18 February 2015** – According to the lawyer of Karim Wade, the son of a former president, a Senegalese special prosecutor is seeking a seven-year prison sentence for Wade on charges of illicit enrichment.

Sierra Leone

- **28 February 2015** – The vice president of Sierra Leone has placed himself under quarantine after one of his bodyguards died of Ebola.
- **25 February 2015** – Sierra Leonean officials indicated Wednesday that the West African country has experienced an increase in Ebola infections, which has been blamed on unsafe burials that are threatening to undermine the recovery from the deadly epidemic.
- **23 February 2015** – More than twenty children have been quarantined at a British-run orphanage in Sierra Leone after one of its staff members was diagnosed with Ebola.

- **18 February 2015** – On Wednesday, Sierra Leonean officials launched a two-week door-to-door search for Ebola patients, a move that is part of new sweeping efforts aimed at stemming the spread of the deadly virus in the West African country.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Sierra Leone's government promised to carry out an investigation into Ebola spending after an internal audit found that nearly one-third of the money that the government had received to fight the deadly disease was spent without saving the necessary receipts and invoices in order to justify the spending.

Togo

On the Ground Reporting

- **18 February 2015** – Schools were temporarily closed in Togo on Tuesday after students launched a protest over repeated strikes by teachers.

Domestic News

- **24 February 2015** – Togo's government announced Tuesday that the country's presidential elections will be held on April 15.

Security Summaries for West African States

Sahel Region – Page 11

Benin

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.

Burkina Faso – Page 13

The Gambia

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

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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

- **21 February 2015** – On Saturday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius began a tour of several West African countries in a bid to show France's support for their battle against Boko Haram. On his first stop in Chad, Fabius met with the country's President Idriss Deby Itno, who has deployed Chadian forces to Cameroon and earlier this month also deployed Chad's army directly into Nigeria for the first time in order to fight the Islamist insurgents. Speaking shortly after the meeting with the president, Fabius stated, "Chad has done the most to assure stability in a region that unfortunately is unstable," adding that Boko Haram poses "an extremely heavy economic risk for Chad." Due to Chad being a landlocked nation, Fabius disclosed that it is very important that the vital route between N'Djamena and the Cameroonian port of Douala, which has come under attack by the militants, remain open. While the French minister did state that France supports the ongoing military operations in the region, he did note that the Western European nation did not envision any direct intervention in its former colonies, stating that France can only provide tactical support and "coordination among the countries" as well as intelligence information. Fabius' official trip to the region, which will also include stops in Cameroon and Niger, is also aimed at raising international funds in order to battle Boko Haram's spreading insurgency.
- **20 February 2015** – On Friday, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it has approved a 15-minute test for Ebola that should provide a fast tool to test for the deadly virus in countries that are

currently affected by the disease. According to WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic, while the test is slightly less accurate than a standard lab assessment, it does not require electricity or highly trained personnel to use it. Speaking to reporters, Mr Jasarevic stated “yesterday WHO assessed and listed (the) first antigen rapid test kit as being eligible for procurement to Ebola affected countries.” He has described the test as “a breakthrough” because it takes so little time, noting however “where possible, obviously results from the antigen rapid test should be confirmed by testing by blood sample using normal PCR tests,” referring to a DNA analysis that is used in order to detect the disease. The test, which is manufactured by the US firm Corgenix, “can correctly identify 92 percent of Ebola infected patients” and entails putting a drop of blood on a paper strip, which then shows positive or negative. The WHO’s approval of this test effectively means that it meets benchmarks for quality, safety and performance. While the WHO spokesman did not provide details as to where and when the test will be introduced, he did indicate that it would likely be brought by a UN agency.

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.

On the Ground Sources

- **21 February 2015** – The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS in Burkina Faso could soon face cuts in food assistance due to a funding shortage. According to local WFP representative Jean-Charles Dei, the shortage threatens more than 12,000 patients and other people affected by HIV/AIDS, all of which are beneficiaries of a programme that distributes 117 tons of food assistance on a monthly basis to vulnerable HIV/AIDS-affected groups, including corn, beans, cooking oil and corn soya blend. So far this year, the programme has only received 27% of the funding it needs, effectively allowing it to provide aid for 3,000 people. The projected cost of the programme for 2015 has been set at US \$1.8 million. Mr Dei disclosed that he is “...very sad because the international community is not reacting... The situation is more than worrying because people living with HIV and who are on antiretroviral drugs need nutritional balance to survive.” Mamadou Sawadogo, head of the National Network of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS, has disclosed that patients receiving antiretroviral drugs could give up the treatment in response to the cuts in aid as side effects could become too much for those patients who are not receiving enough food. According to estimates compiled by the United Nations, there are 110,000 people living with HIV in Burkina Faso.

Ghana

No Travel Restrictions

Security Summary



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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **26 February 2015** – Ghana's President John Mahama has indicated that he expects to announce later on Thursday a positive outcome to months of negotiations that have been taking place between the West African nation's government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a three-year financial assistance package. Speaking during his annual state of the nation speech to parliament on Thursday, President Mahama stated, "as I address you this morning, negotiations are being concluded with an IMF mission team here in Accra and later this afternoon I expect an announcement of a positive outcome of these discussion." If signed, the agreement could help restore investor faith in Ghana, which rattled some investors after the country reported a budget deficit of nearly 12 percent in 2013. A source close to the talks disclosed Wednesday that an agreement has been reached for a three-year deal worth around US \$1 billion (645 million pounds) that is aimed at restoring fiscal stability. Since 2013, Ghana's GDP growth has slowed sharply to a projection of 3.9 percent for 2015 after years at which it stood at around 8 percent. **Update (27**

February) – IMF staff have reached an agreement with the government of Ghana for a roughly US \$940 million loan aimed at helping the country to stabilize itself after three years of declining economic growth and increasing debt. The extended credit facility is expected to go before the IMF board for final approval in April.

- **24 February 2015** – Citing security concerns, Ghana's ruling party has called off Tuesday's planned march in Kumasi, which was aimed at showing support for the government in the face of mounting opposition protests amidst the country's ongoing power crisis. Officials from the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) have claimed that the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which is Ghana's largest opposition party, had been planning to disrupt the march in Kumasi, which is the second largest city in the West African nation. According to Raymond Tandoh, the NDC's regional secretary in Ashanti, "they have decided that they will organize some groups to throw stones. That will infuriate us and make us give a negative response, so we want to avoid these things," adding that officials had "...decided to postpone the march and organize ourselves very well." The rally was meant to counter a massive opposition protest in the capital Accra last week against an ongoing power crisis. The march has been rescheduled for the first week of March. The opposition leader, meanwhile, has indicated that the opposition demonstration will be held on Wednesday as scheduled.
- **18 February 2015** – Several thousand opposition supporters marched through the capital city on Wednesday, protesting against widespread power shortages, which are seen as harming the country's economy. The New Patriotic Party (NPP), which organized the rally, claims that President John Dramani Mahama's failure to increase electricity output has in effect crippled business. Speaking to reporters, Isaac Osei, an NPP member of parliament who joined the rally, stated, "we have a serious problem in this country.... Our people have come out fully to show this government that it is time for them to fix the problem." He further indicated that the rally was not just a partisan demonstration, noting that both business owners and laborers were participating in a bid to show the damage that power cuts have had on Ghana's economy. Experts have stated that power supply has been affected by underperforming dams, with output partly affected by lower than normal rainfall last year. The NPP has also criticized the president and his National Democratic Congress (NDC) party for its wider failure to stabilize the economy, which has been affected by a weakening currency, coupled with high deficits and worsening debt. Ghana is currently in talks with the International Monetary Fund for an aid package, with negotiations set to wrap up in April.

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, Macenta 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

- **24 February 2015** – Amidst increasing security concerns over incidents targeting international aid workers in the region, officials from medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) have announced that they are contemplating stopping their work in fighting Ebola in Guinea and pulling out of the country. MSF, which began working on battling the deadly disease in the West African nation in March 2014, has been the target of a spate of violent attacks that have targeted its healthcare facilities and workers. Such attacks are because many locals continue to believe that Ebola workers are helping to spread the epidemic further. According to MSF's head of mission in Guinea, Claudia Evers, the organization is now on high alert, noting, "we've had incidents since the beginning of Ebola, but these were more or less sporadic, and we could control them, and identify the different people in the communities who were behind the incidents," adding "we have not seen these kinds of incidents, and the strength of these incidents, before." She further disclosed that "these incidents are getting more violent, and today we don't know whether to continue or not," adding, "once the situation becomes too tough, we'll have to take a decision." In one attack, youths targeted a local MSF site, throwing stones at the building and destroying plastic shelters. According to Ms Evers, "unfortunately we had four staff on the site. They had to hide in the building but managed to flee the site. Even then, the youths continued to demolish the building and they burnt out car." In a separate attack, large groups armed with rocks stoned Ms Evers' white SUV, which was marked with the MSF logo, as her team was passing through a village in the Faranah region while on its way to Kissidougou. During that incident, all the windows of the car were smashed. Guinea's Red Cross has also reported similar incidents and has continuously shared reports of increasing repeated attacks on its staff and volunteers. MSF is currently working on an agreement with the Guinean government and the international community to work on a solution.
- **23 February 2015** – A judicial source has disclosed that a Muslim cleric, who conducted the funeral rites of a suspected Ebola victim, was charged Monday with assaulting an outreach worker who came to question him over the ceremony. El-Hadj Mohamed Soumah's trial is due to begin on Tuesday. His arrest on 9 February resulted in demonstrations in the capital city Conakry, which left around a dozen people wounded. Demonstrators put up barricades, burned tires and overturned rubbish bins before using sticks and stones to attack officers who responded with tear gas and baton charges. A policeman at the scene indicated that officers had wanted simply to question the imam on the cause of death and the conditions at the burial, adding "it is especially important to know that he didn't have Ebola to ensure the safety of this family and neighbors, including potential contacts." According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burial rites involving contact with bodies are amongst the main factors in the spread of Ebola. **Update (25 February)** – A court in Guinea has acquitted a Muslim cleric of assaulting Ebola outreach workers. Speaking shortly after the ruling, which was reached Tuesday, El-Hadj Mohamed Soumah's lawyer, Me Fode Camara, confirmed "my client was acquitted, plain and simple. I am satisfied because justice has been done," adding "it is especially important to know that he didn't have Ebola to ensure the safety of his family and neighbors, including potential contacts."

Domestic News

- **23 February 2015** – On Tuesday, Guinea’s government replaced the minister charged with organizing this year’s presidential election with an army general, with officials stating that the move was necessary in order to strengthen the fight against Ebola. A statement read on state-owned television named General Bourema Conde as minister of territorial administration. General Conde is considered to be amongst President Alpha Conde’s closest allies within the country’s army. More than fourteen months after the first Ebola case was reported in the West African nation’s forest region, the government continues to face pockets of often violent resistance to the campaign against the epidemic, which has undermined its plans in rebuilding the health sector and the economy. In a statement released Wednesday, government spokesman Damantang Albert Camara indicated “our objective is two-fold: to strengthen the mobilization of local authorities and to increase awareness of local communities (of Ebola).” General Bourema Conde effectively replaces Alassane Conde, a civilian who had held the position since President Conde named his first government following his election in late 2010. Alassane Conde will continue to serve as a government minister with an advisory role to the president. None of the three men are related.

Guinea-Bissau

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary

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

Although the security situation is currently calm, the current political situation remains uncertain throughout the country and the possibility of civil or military unrest in Guinea-Bissau remains high. While political tensions in Guinea-Bissau remain calm, this could change at any moment. All travellers to the country are advised to monitor the political situation and remain vigilant at all times. MS Risk advises against all travel to the northwestern regions of the country, specifically those which border the Casamance region of Senegal, including the Sao Domingos/Mpack road.

On the Ground Reporting

- **19 February 2015** – The United Nations Security Council has extended the mandate of a Peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau for another year until 29 February 2016. In a resolution that was adopted by the Council, it reaffirmed “its full commitment to the consolidation of peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau,” and decided to renew the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). The Peacebuilding office will focus on supporting an inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation, providing advice and support to national authorities as well as supporting the country’s government in coordination of international assistance. The 15-member UN Council also called upon Guinea-Bissau’s authorities and all stakeholders “to work together to consolidate progress and eradicate the root cause of instability,” reiterating its demand to the security and defense services “to submit themselves fully to civilian control.” It also called upon authorities in the West African country to strengthen legislations and mechanism in fighting transnational organized crime, particularly drug trafficking and money laundering. The current UNIOGBIS mandate, which was established in 2010 to replace the previous Peacebuilding support office, was due to expire at the end of this month.

Ivory Coast

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



Security Summary

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

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

On the Ground Reporting

- **25 February 2015** – According to sources in Abidjan, health experts from Guinea and neighboring Ivory Coast have agreed to carry out periodic cross-border meetings aimed at reinforcing vigilance against the Ebola virus along the border zones. The Ivory Coast's health officials have indicated that the proximity of Guinea's affected regions to the Ivory Coast's borders justifies the need for periodic meetings in order to come up with effective preventative measures. According to Antoine Kouadio, the Kabadougou regional health director, "Lola region in Guinea where the virus is widespread shares a border with Cote d'Ivoire's regions of Tonkpi, Bafing and Kabadougou." The regional health director also highlighted the challenges arising from the porousness of the border and the absence of transport means in some zones. Tonkpi

regional health director Seydou Doumbia has indicated that the isolation centers had been set up in each health district within his zone however he has appealed for the establishment of a treatment center. On a number of occasions, West African officials and experts have called for elaboration of a regional plan to fight against the deadly Ebola virus. During a recent meeting in Conakry, the regional director for the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr Luis Sambo, called for reinforcement of cross-border and community actions in order to ensure the entire-sub-region is free from the disease.

- **20 February 2015** – The Ivory Coast’s ex-first lady, Simone Gbagbo, is due to appear in court on Monday alongside other accused persons. Ms Gbagbo was arrested with her husband, former president Laurent Gbagbo, in 2011. She is facing charges of threatening state security. She appeared in court for the first time in December last year. Eight pro-Gbagbo confidants are also accused of being involved in the 2010-2011 post election violence. While the International Criminal Court (ICC) had initially issued an arrest warrant against her for crimes against humanity that were committed during the post-election violence, and requested that the Ivory Coast transfer her to The Hague, the West African nation turned down the request, insisting that the country is able to prosecute her case. For almost a month, a succession of politicians, journalists and other Gbagbo supports have been questioned before the court, including a former prime minister and seven other ex-ministers, however no witnesses have been called to challenge the testimony. **Update (23 February)** – On Monday, the Ivory Coast’s former first lady Simone Gbagbo questioned the charges against her as she appeared in court. Speaking to the court, Ms Gbagbo stated “I don’t know exactly what the concrete actions are that I am being accused of,” insisting that her husband, Laurent Gbagbo, was the legitimate winner of the 2010 presidential elections, which sparked five months of violence that claimed some 3,000 lives. Ahead of her appearance in court on Monday, police separated supporters and opponents of the Gbagbo’s as scuffles broke out outside the courtroom.

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, including the overnight curfew, has been lifted. In late February 2015, the Liberian government announced the reopening of the country's main borders with Sierra Leone and Guinea.

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

- **26 February 2015** – On Thursday, the United States staged a military ceremony marking the end of its five-month Ebola mission in Liberia. A force, which at one point reached 2,800 troops has been gradually scaled back since the epidemic began to recede, with Pentagon officials recently announcing that “nearly all” troops will be gone by the end of April. According to mission commander Major General Gary Volesky, “the importance of the progress we see today means more than just the reduction in the number of new or suspected cases of Ebola....This progress is also about Liberians being able to get back to a normal way of life.” The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) “cased its colors,” which is the ceremonial folding and stowing of the flag, in the capital of Monrovia, effectively marking the end of the “Joint Forces Command United Assistance” mission. Pentagon officials have indicated that around 100 troops will remain in the region in order to strengthen “disease preparedness and surveillance capacity” of local governments. The US troops, in which a vast majority of them were stationed in Liberia, constructed Ebola treatment units, trained 1,500 health workers, provided logistical support for aid agencies and set up labs to test blood samples. While US troops stationed in Senegal and Liberia had no contact with patients, the Pentagon has placed all military personnel returning from duty in West Africa in quarantine as a precaution. Officials have indicated that so far, the deadly virus has not been detected in any US soldier that worked in the affected region.
- **21 February 2015** – Eight health workers at a hospital in Liberia’s capital city have been sent home for observation after coming into contact with a patient who later tested positive for Ebola. According to Liberia’s assistant health minister, Tolbert Nyenswah, the incident occurred at the S.D. Cooper Hospital in Monrovia’s Sinkor neighborhood. The patient, a woman, was transferred to the hospital from a smaller hospital, and staff began treating her before an Ebola test was conducted. Nyenswah has indicated that the health workers have been placed under observation for 21 days and will not be coming into work during this period. There are now eight patients who have tested positive for Ebola in Liberia, with seven of those in Monrovia and another in the town of Kakata, which is located 35 miles (56 kilometres) northeast of the capital city.

- **20 February 2015** – Liberia’s president on Friday ordered officials to lift an overnight curfew that has been in place for the past six months and to reopen the country’s land border crossings. A statement released by the presidency indicated that the president made her decision pertaining to the curfew and the borders “on the advice of the National Security Council of Liberia.” The new orders from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, which will take effect this Sunday, offer another sign that normal life is resuming in the West African country. The statement also indicated that “the country’s main borders” be opened, this includes the borders with Sierra Leone and Guinea however it remains unclear if the border with the Ivory Coast would be reopened. The Ivory Coast closed its borders with Liberia back in August. While Liberia was once the worst affected country in the current Ebola outbreak, recording more than 9,000 confirmed, suspected and probable cases and 3,900 deaths, latest figures released by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that the country has only reported two new cases of the deadly virus in the past week. The curfew was imposed in August 2014, at the height of the epidemic. While it originally lasted from 9 PM to 6AM, officials later pushed the start time back to midnight.
 - President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will visit the White House on February 27. The White House announced Friday that the Liberian president will meet with US President Barack Obama at the White House, where they will discuss the Ebola response and economic recovery. A statement released by President Obama’s office indicated “President Sirleaf’s visit comes at a time of critical cooperation between the United States and Liberia.”
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, schools in Liberia reopened after being delayed for months by the Ebola outbreak. A UNICEF spokeswoman disclosed Monday “here in Monrovia, children were coming back to school today. We went to one school this morning and saw how the school has implemented the protocols... The youth were washing their hands before entering the school premises and their temperature was checked. The teachers were also talking to the students about how to stay safe, and Ebola preventative measures.” UNICEF has been at the forefront of introducing safety measures aimed at combatting the spread of the deadly disease. Teachers have been trained to implement and monitor the safety measures, while soap and other hygiene materials have been distributed and mass mobilization campaigns on Ebola prevention have been conducted nationwide.

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 operate 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 with the previous advice which has been given. MS RISK currently advises against all travel to Mali.

Local Travel

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

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

MS RISK Guidance to Organizations in Mali:

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

- Thinning out non-essential staff and dependents
- Restricting expat and local national internal travel
- Seeking advice from the security forces
- Ensuring journey management systems are in place and working
- 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

- **1 March 2015** – Mali signed a preliminary peace agreement on Sunday aimed at ending fighting with northern separatist fighters, however the Tuareg-led rebels have requested additional time for consultations before they sign the agreement. An international mediation team confirmed that the peace agreement has been signed, stating, “this accord is not intended to immediately resolve all the problems of a deep, multifaceted, cyclical crisis. It is nevertheless a decisive step towards peace and reconciliation.” The United Nations-brokered agreement aims to end decades of uprisings and instability in northern Mali. Tuareg and Arab rebel groups were at the signing ceremony, which took place in Algiers, and have indicated that they will continue with the peace dialogue. Tuareg rebels had earlier indicated that the agreement, which is due to be formally signed in Mali later this month, did not fully address their political demands for the region they call Azawad.
- **27 February 2015** - Malian officials disclosed Saturday that three of its nationals were killed in a village near the Guinean border after clashes erupted between miners over the discovery of gold. According to a statement released by the Malian government, Guinean miners armed with guns and knives killed them in the village of Sanafara, which is located 100 kilometres (62 miles) west of the capital city, Bamako. The statement disclosed, “the provisional death toll is three and several Malians injured.” Government officials in Guinea have not commented on the incident.
- **25 February 2015** – The new Tuareg tribal chief in Mali’s Kidal region has rejected the struggle for independence or autonomy and instead has issued a plea for unity. His stance however will likely not be accepted by Tuareg rebels who are demanding a separate homeland in the vast region of northern Mali they call “Azawad.” Mohamed Ag Intalla, who succeeded his father in December as the “Amenokal” – or highest Tuareg leader – of the northeastern Ifoghas mountains, stated Wednesday that “Kidal is Malian. I’m against the independence and even autonomy of Kidal.” In his first public statement since being appointed tribal chief, Ag Intalla indicated, “we must make peace. We must talk among Malians to find out how we will all benefit from development. We need to involve the people.... There will be a mission within the Kidal region, and the same mission in the Gao region to sensitize civil society, to advocate peace.” Sources have reported that Ag Intalla is planning to tour northern Mali with other leaders in a bid to “advocate peace.”
- **20 February 2015** – The Malian government has agreed to a deal with six armed groups to cease hostilities. The agreement is part of UN-sponsored peace talks that have been aimed at ending the crisis in the country’s northern region. According to sources, the two sides have agreed to “observe an immediate cessation of all forms of violence, and to refrain from any provocative acts or comments.” The government and the armed groups have also committed themselves to “pursue negotiations in good faith and in a constructive spirit...to tackle the causes of lasting tensions.” The agreement also provides for “the continuation of the implementation of confidence-building measures, including the release of detainees.” The deal was signed on Thursday, during the fifth round of talks, which began Monday in Algiers, in the presence of Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra, along with Mongi Hamdi, the head of the 9,300-strong UN peace mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The agreement to end hostilities was the last chance to save the Algiers talks, which over the past few months have been overshadowed by intense fighting that has erupted in northern Mali. The agreement also came after the United Nations Security Council threatened Arab and Tuareg rebels and pro-government militias with sanctions.

- **16 February 2015** – Gunman have killed two Malian soldiers after attacking an army post 460 kilometres (300 miles) from the capital Bamako. Army spokesman Colonel Souleymane Maiga disclosed Monday that gunmen attacked an army base in the Mopti region at 6:15 AM on Saturday. After clashes erupted with the troops, “the attackers...fled leaving five bodies behind while carrying others. The army suffered two dead and three wounded.” In a separate incident on Sunday, four United Nations peacekeepers were wounded in an explosion that occurred in the restive desert northeast over the weekend. Radhia Achouri, a spokeswoman for the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, indicated Monday that at least four peacekeepers were wounded in the blast, which occurred near the town of Tabankort, which is located some 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) northeast of Bamako. It remains unclear who was responsible for the two incidents. Local troops and UN peacekeepers have been trying to impose order two years after French forces gained control of the area from separatists rebels and militants linked to al-Qaeda.
 - The UN representative to Mali has expressed hope for the latest round of peace talks, which began Monday. Speaking Monday, Mongi Hamdi, the head of the UN mission in Mali, stated “this meeting represents an historic chance for a lasting peace in Mali,” adding “the international community and the parties involved are pushing for the immediate end to hostilities to create positive conditions for the talks.” The talks, which were first launched in Algiers in September, are between Mali’s government, separatist rebel groups based in the north and government-allied militias. They come as fighting has occurred again between the rival groups, with clashes sometimes involving UN peacekeepers. Hamdi has noted that the recent fighting is a “serious worry” for all parties involved in the talks. Meanwhile in Algiers, Mali’s Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop saluted the start of talks over a draft accord between the government and separatists. The Minister did admit that while “this document is not perfect, it is a solid base today and it is the surest base to reach an accord.” Over the past several months, UN peacekeepers in Mali have been attempting to stabilize the situation in the north, however they have on a number of occasions been targeted by extremists and separatists. About two dozen peacekeepers have been killed, making the mission in Mali the UN’s deadliest. Separatists accuse peacekeepers of siding with government forces, which has resulted in demonstrations against the UN forces in northern Mali.

Mauritania

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

Summary

Due to the current Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia 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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **23 February 2015** – Three jailed Mauritanian anti-slavery activists began a hunger strike Monday to protest their treatment by prison authorities. Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, the runner-up in the 2014 presidential elections, is currently serving a two-year prison sentence in the central Aleg prison, along with aide Bilal Ramdane and Djiby Sow, a civil and cultural rights campaigner. Ould Abeid's Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) has objected to the way that the trio have been treated in prison. In a statement released Monday, the campaign group denounced the "abuse against them since their arrival at the Aleg and the squalid conditions... which are not in accordance with their status as senior human rights activists." The IRA has promised, "to initiate and organize a series of demonstrations and intensify the peaceful activities of the anti-slavery struggle" in solidarity with the hunger strikers. On January 15, a court in Mauritania sentenced the men to two years in prison for "belonging to an illegal organization, leading an unauthorized rally, and violence against the police." Seven others on trial for joining anti-slavery protests in November were released. Officials at Amnesty International have indicated that the activists were arrested while trying to educate people about land rights in the West African country. Mauritanian authorities however had accused the IRA of spreading "racist propaganda." Police have closed down the IRA's headquarters in the capital Nouakchott.
- **21 February 2015** – A road accident in western Mauritania has killed fourteen soldiers and injured some twenty more. According to a statement carried by Mauritania's state news agency, AMI, the accident occurred near the town of Atar of Friday when the truck carrying the soldiers was travelling and "turned over in a dangerous passage." The statement further indicated that the army had airlifted the injured to a nearby military hospital.

Niger

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

On 6 February 2015, Nigerien and Chadian military forces were attacked by Boko Haram militants in the towns of Bosso and Diffa, which are located along the border with Nigeria. On 8 February 2015, there was an explosion in the town of Diffa, which resulted in several deaths and injuries. The Nigerien government has declared a 15-day state of emergency in the region of Diffa, beginning at midnight on Tuesday 10 February. On 26 February, the government extended the state of emergency however officials have not stated how long the measure will be in place. The curfew will force residents to stay indoors between 20:00 and 06:00 local time (19:00 and 05:00 GMT). Officials have banned the use of motorcycles, which is a common mode of transport, in order to prevent infiltration by Boko Haram militants.

Niger’s ruling coalition has called for a national day of protest against Boko Haram. The protest is set to take place on 17 February. MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to take the necessary precautions and to avoid the demonstrations, and large gatherings as they may turn violent with little notice.

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.

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

- **25 February 2015** – Officials from the World Food Programme (WFP) confirmed Wednesday that food aid to thousands of refugees located on the border between Niger and Nigeria has resumed, effectively ending a suspension of deliveries by humanitarian groups over fears of Boko Haram attacks. WFP officials have disclosed that some 3,000 people are expected to receive food aid from WFP on Wednesday, following the suspension of humanitarian work earlier this month in several areas along the border between the two countries. WFP official Adel Sarkozi has indicated “in the camps, there is a lack of access to basic services, a lack of food and clean water.... We are very concerned about the status of the newly arrived women and children.” Prior to the latest influx of refugees, Niger was already facing a hunger crisis. According to a November assessment, Niger had an acute malnutrition rate of 23.5 percent of its 17 million population, which is above the emergency threshold of 15 percent. The WFP is now aiming to provide food aid to 37,000 newly displaced people in Niger by the end of February. In Cameroon, Chad and Niger, countries that have been impacted by the ongoing violence in neighboring Nigeria, the WFP plans to provide food aid to about 240,000 people this year.
 - The Nigerien government has appealed for an extension of the state of emergency that has been in force in the region of Diffa. On 11 February, officials declared a 15-day state of emergency on the region in the wake of attacks that were carried out by Boko Haram. The measure is due to end on Wednesday however the government in Niamey has indicated that an extension of the emergency rule is necessary in order to enable Nigerien troops and security forces to restore calm and peace in the town. Niger's National Assembly is due to hold an extraordinary session on Thursday in order to decide on the government's request for an extension of the state of emergency. **Update (26 February)** – The government has extended the state of emergency however officials have not stated how long the measure will be in place.
 - Canadian Special Forces from Petawawa have been pulled out from a town in Niger that has recently been affected by heavy fighting between government troops and Islamist militants. While the Canadian troops were not involved in any of the combat fighting that occurred in the town of Diffa, which is located near the border with Nigeria, they were training with Nigerien soldiers on the outskirts of the town, which has been attacked by Boko Haram militants a number of times earlier this month. On 11 February, Niger declared a 15-day state of emergency in the region and in the wake of this

move, Canadian Special Forces officers have decided to pull out the small number of training troops. Military sources have disclosed that while the soldiers from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) had authorization to defend themselves they did not have approval from the government to take part in the ongoing fighting. Furthermore, it became increasingly difficult to carry out training as the security situation continued to deteriorate. Training is due to continue in other parts of the region. The CSOR members are in Niger to take part in the annual US-organized training exercise, known as Flintlock. The Canadian Special Forces from Petawawa have been teamed with soldiers from Niger in this year's exercise, which is due to run until 9 March.

- **24 February 2015** – A mine planted by Boko Haram militants killed at least two soldiers on Tuesday in the town of Bosso in Niger's southeastern region of Diffa. This is the first time that Nigerien officials have accused the militant group of planting a mine in recent fighting that has occurred in Diffa. A statement released by the defense ministry disclosed, "at around 0930 (0830 GMT), a patrol of the defense and security forces rolled over a mine planted by Boko Haram in the town of Bosso. The toll is two soldiers killed and four others wounded."
- **21 February 2015** – A Boko Haram attack on a village in the southeastern region of Niger, which was followed by clashes with troops, have killed at least 21 people, with most of the casualties being Boko Haram fighters. A Nigerien military report release Saturday disclosed "seven Niger soldiers were killed and two others wounded in a Boko Haram attack on a village near Lake Chad on Friday night," adding that "Boko Haram lost 14 members." Security sources have reported that the fighting took place in Karouga, which is located near the border that divides Chad, Niger and Nigeria. According to the source, Boko Haram fighters later attempted to enter Chadian territory by crossing Lake Chad however Chadian aircraft intervened and destroyed their five boats.
- **19 February 2015** – According to a senior Nigerien military official, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are aiming to pin down Boko Haram within Nigeria's borders ahead of a ground-and-air offensive by a regional task force, which is due to launch at the end of next month. Military chiefs are due to meet in the Chadian capital N'Djamena next week in order to finalize the strategy for the 8,700-strong task force of troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. According to Colonel Mahamane Laminou Sani, director of documentation and military intelligence of Niger's armed forces, "all we are doing right now is stopping Boko Haram from entering Niger: if they attack our positions we push them back a certain distance and Nigeria pushed from the other side to contain the situation," adding "there are initiatives by our countries to make sure Boko Haram doesn't get out of control, but we have a deadline of end-March to put the joint force into practice." The force's first commander will be a Nigerian and the position will rotate amongst the members. Sources have reported that while the force was due to already have been launched, its implementation has been delayed over tensions between Cameroon and Nigeria pertaining to the right to pursue the militants across the border into each other's territories. Niger and Chad already have agreements in place, which cover this issue not only with each other but also with Nigeria. Nigeria and Cameroon are now under increasing pressure to iron out their differences.
 - A military source has reported that Boko Haram militants attacked a village in northeastern Niger overnight, killing three people, including the local chief, and wounding three others before being driven out by security forces. The raid occurred in the village of Tourba Guida, which is located in Niger's Diffa region, which has recently been targeted by the militant group.
- **18 February 2015** – Niger's army disclosed Wednesday that at least 36 mourners at a funeral ceremony were killed and 27 wounded when an unidentified plane bombarded a village near the Nigerian border. A Niger army report has indicated that the plane's "origins remained undetermined." According to a

humanitarian source, “the victims were residents attending a mourning ceremony for a prefecture official,” adding that the attack occurred near the mosque in Abadam. Despite reports that Nigeria was involved in the strike, a spokesman for Nigeria’s air force, Air Commodore Dele Alonge, has denied all responsibility, stating, “its not to my knowledge and there has not been any report from our people of such an incident.” Nigerien officials have announced that they will conduct an investigation into the strike. Three days of mourning have also been announced. The strike, which occurred Tuesday, came as Niger takes part in a regional offensive against Nigeria-based Boko Haram.

- **17 February 2015** – Thousands of people marched in the capital city on Tuesday, protesting Boko Haram militants who have launched several deadly raids in the country from their base in neighboring Nigeria. Prime Minister Brigi Rafini led the demonstrations, which were monitored by a heavy police presence, with snipers posted on rooftops along the protest route, including the parliament building. Speaking to reporters, the prime minister stated that Boko Haram fighters have “nothing Islamic, nothing Muslim about them,” adding that Muslims in Niger who were previously “troubled, waiting to see, are now free to say no to Boko Haram.” While the militant group has waged an insurgency in northeastern Nigeria since 2009, with the conflict claiming some 13,000 lives. In recent months, Boko Haram has extended its field of operations by carrying out deadly attacks in neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Boko Haram threatened Chad and Niger, warning that its fighters were preparing to carry out suicide bombings in the countries that have deployed troops to help fight the militant group. In a translation published Monday, Boko Haram sharply criticized Niger for joining the joint offensive and said that the West African country was being dragged into a “swamp of darkness,” adding “if you insist on continuing the aggression and the coalition with the government of Chad, then we give you glad tidings that the land of Niger is easier than the land of Nigeria and moving the war to the depth of your cities will be the first reaction toward any aggression that occurs after this statement.” Over the past ten days, Boko Haram fighters have repeatedly attacked the town of Diffa, near the border with Nigeria, however they have not attacked the capital city, Niamey. A multinational force to fight Boko Haram is expected to be formally launched in the coming weeks. Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger have already pledged to help Nigeria, with Burundi and the Central African Republic agreeing Monday to contribute troops to fight the militant group.
 - Police officials disclosed Monday that they have arrested more than 160 people in Diffa region, which was attacked by Boko Haram earlier this month. National police spokesman Adily Toro has stated that those arrested are suspected of having links to Boko Haram, adding that police officials “...would like to warmly thank the residents of the Diffa region whose assistance has allowed us to arrest more than 160 suspects.” The suspects, who will be questioned by anti-terror officers, face charges of terrorism and conspiracy in connection with a terrorist group. Boko Haram first attacked Niger on 6 February, just three days before parliament authorized the army to enter Nigeria and to take part in a multinational force aimed at combatting the militant group. Some 3,000 troops have been deployed to the frontier with Nigeria to protect the towns from raids. Monday’s wave of arrests comes just a day after a local governor confirmed that several dozen suspects were arrested at checkpoints on access roads into Zinder, which is Niger’s second largest city, located 400 kilometres (250 miles) west of Diffa.

Domestic News

- **25 February 2015** – Niger’s President Mahamadou Issoufou replaced his foreign minister on Wednesday, appointing him instead as minister of state ahead of next year’s elections. According to a government statement, Mohamed Bazoum, who is a close ally of the president and a leading figure in his ruling PNDS party, will be replaced by Aichatou Kane Boulama, who was formerly the prime minister’s chief of staff. A source close to the government has disclosed, “Bazoum has not been cast aside. His new portfolio will be less demanding so he can devote more time to party affairs ahead of the election next year.” President Issoufou’s prospects for re-election next year will likely depend on his government’s response to a number of cross-border attacks that were carried out by Boko Haram militants in the southern region of Diffa earlier this month.

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.

Nigerian authorities have announced that the Presidential and national Assembly elections, previously scheduled for 14 February 2015, as well as the Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections, previously scheduled for 28 February, will take place on 28 March 2015 and 11 April 2015 respectively.

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 ~ 28 March 2015

- **26 February 2015** – On Thursday, Nigerian presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari vowed that if elected in the country's upcoming elections, he will "lead from the front" in the fight against Boko Haram. The former military ruler, who has rejected descriptions of him as a "dictator" also argued against further delays to the presidential elections, stating that free, fair and peaceful polls will boost democracy across the African continent. During a speech at the Chatham House international affairs institute in London, Buhari asserted that Nigeria has been failed by a consistent lack of leadership from the current president in the insurgency. He stated "our soldiers have neither received the necessary support nor the required incentive to tackle this problem. Let me assure you that if I'm elected president I vow to change that," adding "we will give them adequate modern arms and ammunition, we will improve intelligence gathering...we will be tough on terrorists and tough on its root causes...in the affected areas." Buhari pledged that "no inch of Nigerian territory will ever be in the hands of the enemy," promising to return the West African nation to its former role as a stabilizing force in West Africa. The 72-year-old from the All Progressives Congress (APC) opposition party is seen as a major threat to President Goodluck Jonathan's bid to win next months' elections, with some predicting that the president's ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) could lose power for the first time since the country returned to civilian rule in 1999.
- **18 February 2015** – Boko Haram has vowed to make voting in the upcoming presidential elections impossible. In a new video posted online late Tuesday, the militant group's leader, Abubakar Shekau indicated that his fighters would disrupt polling, stating "this election will not be held even if we are dead. Even if we are alive, Allah will never allow you to do it." In the video, Shekau also claimed responsibility for a large-scale attack that targeted the northeastern city of Gombe last Saturday, where Boko Haram militants

dropped leaflets warning people not to vote. The latest threats come as the head of Nigeria's electoral body faced senators in parliament in order to explain his decision to delay the election by six weeks. Attahiru Jega, president of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has been criticized for agreeing to the postponement on security grounds. While national security advisor Sambo Dasuki had recommended pushing back the date of the election, in order to allow troops in a regional offensive against Boko Haram more time to secure and stabilize the northeast, stating that the deployment would leave soldiers unable to provide security on election day, Dasuki's six-week deadline to push back the militants has been seen as unrealistic, even if it does allow the INEC more time in order to distribute ID cards to the 68.8 million registered voters.

- On Wednesday, Nigeria's election chief ruled out any further postponement to the upcoming presidential and parliamentary polls. Speaking to the Senate, electoral commission chairman Attahiru Jega stated that any additional delay to the vote, which was postponed by six weeks over security concerns related to Boko Haram's ongoing insurgency in the northeast, would be "unconstitutional." Speaking in the upper chamber of parliament, Jega, who heads the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was adamant that there would be no further change to the timetable, stating, "I don't see how anyone can contemplate any extension beyond these six weeks because there is no constitutional grounds on which you can do that." On 7 February, Jega announced the postponement of the vote after being told that soldiers would not be available to provide security on election day. The decision however has been criticized as many view the delay to stabilize the northeast as unrealistic. Jega's remarks come as Boko Haram vowed to impede the ballot.
- **17 February 2015** - On Tuesday, five explosions followed by a burst of gunfire targeted an opposition rally in the town of Okrika, which is located in the southern oil producing Rivers state. The town is home to Patience Jonathan, the wife of President Goodluck Jonathan. According to eyewitnesses and local officials, Tuesday's attack targeted the rally of main opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), governorship aspirant Dakuku Peterside, which was held at a school in Okrika, a small port town located south of Port Harcourt. The incident occurred as members of the APC were reportedly waiting for their leaders to arrive at the venue. Several people were wounded in the attack, which forced people to flee the rally amidst fears that further explosions would occur. According to officials, APC party Governor Rotimi Amaechi was not present at the rally. While it was not immediately clear who was responsible for the incident, Governor Amaechi has blamed the attack on the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), stating, "it is intimidation. They don't want people to come out and vote because they'll know they'll lose." The PDP spokesman for Rivers state, Emmanuel Okah, has stated that the incident was a clash between rival "cultists" – Nigerian university gangs that combine occult rituals with criminal activities. In the lead up to the presidential elections, which are now set to take place on 28 March, Rivers state has been targeted by several bomb blasts. However none of them have been fatal. On Monday, the Nigerian Human Rights Commission disclosed that at least 58 people have been killed in pre-election violence across Nigeria. The elections have been postponed from 14 February to 28 March over security concerns in the northeastern region of the country, where Nigerian troops, along with regional forces, are battling Boko Haram militants. **Update (18 February)** – Gunfire at an opposition rally in River state killed one police officer and injured four others, while a reporter covering the event was stabbed. According to Dakuku Peterside, a candidate for governor for the All Progressives Congress (APC) party who had planned to address the rally, "five police officers were shot. One of them is dead and four are lying in critical condition..."
- **16 February 2015** – A massive crowd met opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari as he arrived in the northeastern city of Maiduguri on Monday. Defying security fears in the city, which has been repeatedly

attacked by the militant group, people flooded the streets surrounding the airport in the Borno state capital ahead of Buhari's arrival. Nigeria's main opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) party candidate Buhari, who is a former military ruler, has pledged to reverse the perceived failures of President Goodluck Jonathan in tackling the militant's insurgency. Speaking to a crowd shortly after visiting the area's top Islamic cleric, the Shehau of Borno, Buhari stated, "if we get the people's mandate... Nigerians will begin to see a government that really care(s)," adding "it is not going to be easy, tackling the insurgency, but we are determined to face it squarely." Buhari's drive from the airport to Shehau's palace, which normally takes ten minutes, lasted more than two hours as people crowded the streets. After meeting the Shehau, Buhari attempted to move to the nearby Ramat square in order to address a campaign rally however his movements were again slowed by supporters. According to locals, the trip, which normally takes five minutes, took more than an hour. The president, who visited Maiduguri last month, has come under intense criticism in the region over his failure to deal with Boko Haram's insurgency. While Buhari has not spoken about a detailed plan to end the uprising, he has repeatedly promised to get troops proper equipment to fight the increasingly well-armed extremist movement.

On the Ground Reporting

Boko Haram Offensive

- **28 February 2015** – A female suicide bomber killed two passers-by and her accomplice on Saturday in northeastern Nigeria. According to on the ground sources, the incident occurred shortly before the female attacker and her accomplice had attempted to board a bus but were stopped by the driver. A security source has disclosed "the suicide mission took place at around 1130 am when two women wearing hijabs tried to board a commercial vehicle but the wary driver resisted," adding "one of the women was wearing the bomb around her waist and it exploded after the bus departed, killing the other woman and two other people." Witnesses have reported that the two women had tried to board the bus in the village of Ngamdu, which is located 90 kilometres (55 miles) from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, and 40 kilometres from Damaturu, the capital of neighboring Yobe state. Over the past week, almost 90 people have been killed in explosions that have been blamed on Boko Haram. All of the attacks occurred at crowded bus stations in the northern and central regions of the country.
- **26 February 2015** – The head of the Nigerian army has visited soldiers in the northeastern town of Baga, telling troops that the conflict against Boko Haram will soon end. According to a correspondent who accompanied Lieutenant General Kenneth Minimah, the head of the Nigerian army flew by helicopter to the fishing hub and spent about thirty minutes on the ground. Speaking to troops during the brief visit, Minimah stated, "the war is almost ended. We will liberate Dikwa, Bama, Gwoza, Marte and other places in a few days' time." He further indicated that the six-week deadline was "achievable," noting that "we are still within the timeframe. Minmah also indicated that residents displaced from Baga should be able to return to vote in the upcoming elections. Boko Haram fighters gained control of the town on 3 January, however the military indicated Saturday that the remote town in the far north region of Borno state was retaken after two days of fighting which resulted in the killing of "a large number of terrorists. Over the past several days, defense chiefs have published dozens of photograph purporting to show vehicles, arms and ammunition used by the militants that were destroyed in the fighting.
 - At least eighteen people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a crowded bus station in northeastern Nigeria on Thursday, while another bomber was shot dead before he could detonate

his explosives. According to Babagana Kyari, a civilian vigilante, “at least 18 people, including three women, died... and several others were injured.” Thursday’s attack occurred after the two men arrived at the Tashar Gandu motor park, which is located on the edge of a town in Borno state. According to eyewitnesses, one of the men detonated his explosives amongst passengers and vendors. On the ground sources have reported that the two men involved in the latest attack pretended to be traders who were leaving Biu after business at the main market, which takes place every Thursday and Sunday. According to one source, “the two men came as if they were travellers and one of them detonated his explosives in the midst of travelers and petty traders...but the second man was shot and killed by soldiers before he could pull the trigger.” Soldiers and local vigilantes later cordoned off the scene while they waited for the arrival of a police bomb squad to defuse the unexploded explosives on the second attacker. While no group has claimed responsibility for this latest attack, Boko Haram has in the past carried out similar attacks, and militants have previously targeted the town of Biu. On 18 February 36 people were killed when assailants in a motorized rickshaw detonated explosives at Yarmakumi village near Biu.

- **24 February 2015** – Two blasts targeting bus stations in northern Nigeria on Tuesday have killed at least twenty seven people as violence continues to rage with less than five weeks until general elections are due to take place. The first bombing, which killed 17 people, targeted a bus station located on the outskirts of Potiskum, in northeastern Yobe state. It occurred shortly after a man placed a bag in the hold of the bus before trying to board. According to a driver’s union official at the bus station, “the bus had just loaded with passengers on its way to Kano when a huge explosion happened inside the bus at exactly 11:40 AM (1040 GMT).” The drivers’ union official disclosed that it was not immediately clear whether the man was a suicide bomber or whether the explosives were hidden inside the bag in the hold. Roughly four hours later, at about 3:40 PM, two men blew themselves up after getting off a bus at a busy terminal in Kano. Ten people were killed in that attack. Kano state police spokesman Musa Magaji Majia described the attack as “suicide explosions” that were carried out by two men who arrived on a bus from Wudil, which is 40 kilometres (25 miles) away. Boko Haram has increasingly used young girls and women as suicide bombs, which have targeted “soft targets” such as bus stations and markets across northeastern Nigeria. Tuesday’s bombings have underlined the severe security challenges that continue to confront Nigeria in the run-up to the elections. **Update (26 February)** – A union official indicated Thursday that Tuesday’s twin bomb attacks at a bus station in Kano city have killed 34 people. According to Ahmed Saleh, of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), who is based at the targeted Kano Line station, “the victims included 21 passengers in a bus that was about to leave for its destination, three of our members and 10 petty traders.” He further indicated that workers compiled the new toll after counting the charred remains of victims following Tuesday’s attack. Kano police spokesman Musa Magaji Majia however has indicated that the force’s official toll remains at ten. Boko Haram has not claimed responsibility for the attacks.
 - On Tuesday, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said that the military was gaining the upper hand against Boko Haram despite two bombings in the country’s northern region that killed at least twenty-seven people. A statement released by his office indicated, “the President assures all Nigerians, and the people of the northeastern states in particular, that the days of mourning victims of incessant terrorist attacks in the country will soon be over as the tide has now definitively turned against Boko Haram.” The president’s statement came just hours after two separate bombings at bus stations in Kano and in Potiskum. President Jonathan, who has been severely criticized for his inability to end the six-year insurgency, described the attacks as the “callous bombing of soft targets.” Nigeria has delayed presidential elections, initially due to be held on 14 February, by six weeks in a bid to give the

military additional time to secure and stabilize the northern region of the country. The decision by the country's electoral commission has been seen as a way for the president to revive his campaign. While many have stated that the six-week deadline is unrealistic, the president has maintained that the military "supported with new platforms, equipment and logistics," would be successful "in the shortest possible time."

- **23 February 2015** - Gunmen in central Nigeria have kidnapped an American woman doing missionary work. According to Kogi state police spokesman Sola Collins Adebayo, Phyllis Sortor "was whisked away at around 10:00 am (0900 GMT) Monday" by masked gunmen, with officials indicating that ransom is the suspected motive for the kidnapping. According to the police spokesman, the attack took place in the village of Emiworo, where the missionary from the Free Methodist Church ran a community organization within the premises of a school that was linked to her church. Mr Adebayo has indicated that the kidnappers were "unknown gunmen...(who) came into the school premises shooting sporadically to scare away people before taking (the hostage) away into the bush.... We are hopeful of finding her. Our suspicion is that she was picked up for ransom." Officials have indicated that there has been no indication that Boko Haram may be linked to Monday's kidnapping. A statement released by the Free Methodist Church confirmed that Ms Sortor was kidnapped, with Bishop David Kendall stating "the US Embassy has been notified, and the State Department and the FBI are working with local authorities to find and rescue her," adding "we are calling on the US church to join together in prayer for Phyllis' safety and speedy release." Foreign nationals have often been kidnapped in Nigeria by local gangs who typically release hostages once a ransom payment has been made. Such kidnappings are particularly common in the southern region of the country, especially in the oil-producing Niger Delta, where expatriates working with large oil companies have been frequently targeted. A number of foreigners have also been kidnapped in the northern region of the country, however those kidnappings have been attributed to either Boko Haram or the linked Islamist group Ansaru. Such kidnappings are different to those that occur in the south as they are not necessarily motivated by a desire for ransom. In some cases, foreigners kidnapped by Islamist groups operating in northern Nigeria have been killed while in captivity. **Update (25 February)** – Armed men who abducted an American missionary earlier this week are demanding a ransom of nearly US \$300,000. According to Kogi State Police Commissioner Adeyemi Ogunjemilusi the kidnappers are demanding a ransom of 60 million naira (US \$300,000). Speaking to reporters, Ogunjemilusi stated "the general concept here is that Americans have money. So they thought that by kidnapping her, they can get money... We don't think it's a good idea for the family to negotiate with the abductors on the ransom because we are sure we will find her." Police are currently working with security forces to ensure Ms Sortor's return is secured. On Wednesday, Ogunjemilusi, along with senior police officers, including the head of the investigation unit and an officer from the counter-terrorism unit, visited the site of the abduction. Rev. Jacob Ahiaba of the Free Methodist Church told police that Ms Sortor went out on Monday morning to attend a meeting in a bid to acquire more land for a farm project. She returned around 10 AM local time and was abducted shortly after by five armed men.
- **22 February 2015** – On Sunday, a young female suicide bomber blew herself up and five others when the explosive device that was strapped to her body detonated in a market in the northeastern Nigerian city of Potiskum. At least nineteen others were injured in the attack. According to a witnesses, the girl "...refused to be checked at the gate to the market and an argument ensued... She let off the bomb, killing herself and five others, while many were injured." No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, however officials are blaming Boko haram. Witnesses have reported that the girl appeared to be as young as seven-years-old. While Boko Haram fighters appear to be on the run in many parts across northeastern Nigeria, and

regions near its borders, after being subjected to a major offensive, they retain the ability to carry out deadly surprise attacks. Since last year, the use of female suicide bombers, sometimes young girls, has been a common tactic employed by Boko Haram, as have revenge attacks on civilians when the group is under pressure.

- Nigerian military officials disclosed Sunday that the country offensive against Boko Haram was progressing, and claimed that soldiers have recovered stocks of arms that were abandoned by fighters fleeing the recaptured town of Baga. In a statement, military spokesman Major General Chris Olukodate stated, “the cordon and search as well as patrol of the localities continue while the offensive on terrorists is progressing in other areas of the theater of the counter terrorist campaign.” The statement further indicated that troops currently engaged in cordon and search operations in Baga have continued to discover various types of arms and provenance that were left behind by fleeing insurgents in houses and surrounding areas adding that many abandoned or destroyed motorcycles were also found. The town, which is a fishing hub located on the shore of Lake Chad in the far north region of Borno state, was retaken on Saturday. Officials have reported that a soldier was stabbed and another was shot during a close quarter battle, which erupted as troops caught up with the fleeing militants.
- In an interview published on Sunday, President Goodluck Jonathan admitted that he underestimated Boko Haram while defending the election postponement. In an interview with influential newspaper ThisDay, President Jonathan stated, “probably at the beginning, we, and I mean myself and the team, we underrated the capacity of Boko Haram.” He further indicated that the Nigerian military has recently acquired more arms and ammunition to combat the militants, and has vowed that their suppression and the capture of the group’s leader were near, stating, “God willing, we will catch (Abubakar) Shekau before the elections.” When asked why he felt that six more weeks would make a difference to Boko Haram’s six-year insurgency, the president indicated that the military could make reasonable progress during this period, however he noted that while “we are not saying we must finish Boko Haram to conduct elections...we should get to a point where they will not cause havoc if they make an attempt....My belief is that by 28th of next month, when the elections will be conducted, Boko Haram may not even be in a position to attack any town, God willing.”
- **21 February 2015** – Nigeria’s military has reported that Nigerian troops retook a major border town and killed scores of Boko Haram fighters Saturday. According to Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Chris Olukolade, troops seized control of the town of Baga, which is located on Lake Chad near the border with Cameroon, after a fighter jet bombed the area and soldiers advanced on the town, which was captured by the militant group a month ago in what is feared to be the worst massacre in Boko Haram’s six-year insurgency. Olukolade disclosed “many of the terrorists died while an unknown but substantial number of them fled with various degrees of injury,” adding that many of the insurgents drowned while trying to escape as soldiers stormed into Baga early on Friday. There has been no independent confirmation of the claim, as thousands of Baga residents had fled the town after Boko Haram attacked it on 3 January. Much of the town, along with twelve surrounding settlements, were burnt to the ground. The capture of Baga, along with a military base used by a multi-national force in nearby Doron Boaga, was seen as a strategic victory for the group as it gave Boko Harm control of Borno’s entire border area. The capture of Baga raised fears that Boko Haram would carry out attacks in neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, and that it may push further south, towards the state capital, Maiduguri.
- **20 February 2015** – At least thirty people have been killed after Boko Haram raided two villages in the northeastern Borno state near the town of Chibok. According to Pgog Bitrus, head of the Chibok Elders

Forum, the militants attacked the villages of Thlaimakalama and Gatamarwa around noon (1100 GMT) on Thursday, adding, “from information coming in from residents of the two villages at least 30 people were killed in the attacks.” The insurgents were passing through the two neighboring villages as they were fleeing the nearby town of Askira Uba, which they attacked Monday evening. Residents have reported that the militants torched homes and that both have been “... completely destroyed.”

- A group of 158 women and children, who were abducted by Boko Haram militants in northeastern Nigeria in December have been reunited with their families. The circumstances of the group’s release are unclear, with some reports suggesting that the insurgents released the group voluntarily and took them to the outskirts of Damaturu. The group was kidnapped during a raid on Katarko village in Yobe state and spent about a month in captivity. According to Musa Ida Jidawa, the secretary of Yobe’s State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), of the 158 people, 62 were married women and the rest were children. The husbands of 16 of the women had been killed by Boko Haram during the December attack. One of the abductees told reporters in Damaturu that the women were treated humanely by the militants and that the insurgents did not rape or abuse the women during their captivity. Last year, Boko Haram militants ignited worldwide outrage when they kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls from a boarding school in Chibok, in neighboring Borno state. Despite military assistance from countries including China, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, the girls have yet to be rescued.
- **19 February 2015** - A statement released by the military has indicated that Nigeria’s air force on Thursday bombed Boko Haram strongholds in northeastern Borno state, killing “a large number of terrorists.” Sources have disclosed that amongst the town targeted by the military operation was Gwoza, where Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau first proclaimed a caliphate inside Nigeria in August, as well as the Sambisa Forest area, where the rebels have had camps for years. In the statement, defense spokesman Chris Olukolade disclosed “the air strikes which today targeted... Sambisa forests and parts of Gwoza have been highly successful,” adding “the death of a large number of terrorists has been recorded.” Nigerian military claims of successes against the militant group have in the past not been consistent with witness accounts, and it has not yet been possible to independently verify the details of the latest military operation. The Sambisa Forest is believed to be the area where more than 200 schoolgirls, who were kidnapped by Boko Haram militants in April, were taken before being divided into groups and moved. The militant group took control of Gwoza in July and tried to encourage people to stay and live under its so-called caliphate. The current population of the town remains unknown and it is not clear if any civilians were killed in the air force bombing.
- **18 February 2015** – On Wednesday, Nigeria’s military claimed that more than 300 Boko Haram fighters were killed when troops recaptured the garrison town of Monguno, in the northeastern state of Borno. In a statement, defense spokesman Chris Olukolade indicated, “over 300 terrorists were killed while a few were also captured.” Two Nigerian soldiers were killed and 10 were injured. Olukolade claimed that the “massive” casualties came after a two-day operation to liberate Monguno and ten other communities. The operation also resulted in the destruction of a cache of equipment, arms and ammunition, including five different types of armored fighting vehicles, an anti-aircraft gun, some 50 cases of shells and eight different types of machine guns. According to the spokesman, five rocket-propelled grenades, 49 boxes containing ammunition as well as 300 motorcycles were also destroyed, adding, “the cordon and search operation is continuing along with aggressive patrols by troops who are now dominating the cleared communities... The various phases of the highly coordinated air and land operation is also ongoing in the designated theaters being handled by contingents involved in the renewed counter-terrorism campaign in and outside Nigeria.”

There was no independent verification of the claims, which follow similar claims about Boko Haram casualties by Cameroon, Chad and Niger, who are involved in the regional fight against the militants.

- In a statement that aired on Chadian television, Chad's chief of state disclosed that 117 militants were killed in fierce clashes on Tuesday around the town of Dikwa, which is located about 80 kilometres south of Monguno in Borno state. According to General Brahim Seid Mahamat, two Chadian soldiers were killed and nine were injured in Tuesday's fighting, adding that "four vehicles packed with explosives" had been destroyed. The presence of Chadian forces in the town of Dikwa, which is located well inside Nigerian territory, likely indicates their readiness to push further into the rebel-controlled areas in a bid to assist Nigeria's military.
- **17 February 2015** – At least fourteen people were killed Tuesday after a suicide bomb attack targeted a checkpoint near the town of Biu in northeastern Nigeria. According to vigilante Gana Sheriff, the attack occurred at about 1:00 pm (1200 GMT) in the village of Yamarkumi, which is located four kilometres (2.5 miles) from Biu in Borno state. The source disclosed that the incident "...was a suicide attack by three men in a motorized tricycle. They killed 11 people, including Civilian JTF (joint task force) and child vendors at the checkpoint." He further indicated, "it was later that we realized the attackers came in two rickshaws. The one ahead had three people inside who opened fire and detonated three explosives," adding "the second rickshaw immediately turned after the explosions but was pursued into the bush by soldiers and local hunters." The attack comes just five days after at least seven people were killed when a female suicide bomber blew herself up at a crowded market in Biu, which is the largest town in the southern region of Borno state. Although Boko Haram militants have made several attempts to seize the town, which is located 180 kilometres (111 miles) from the state capital Maiduguri, they have been pushed back by troops and local vigilantes. Last month, troops, aided by vigilantes, repelled an attempted attack, which resulted in the deaths of 40 Boko Haram fighters. **Update (18 February)** – Tuesday's suicide attack killed 36 people and injured 20. According to a source, "most of the victims were child vendors and beggars that usually crowd the checkpoint to sell wares and beg for alms."
 - A suicide bomber blew himself up in Al-Amir restaurant, which is a popular chain in northern Nigeria, in the northeastern town of Potiskum on Tuesday, killing at least two people and wounding thirteen. The town has frequently been attacked by Boko Haram.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Nigerian soldiers claimed to have recaptured two towns from Boko Haram. In a statement released on Monday, Nigerian army officials indicated that troops, backed by air strikes, recaptured the northeastern town of Monguno, which is located on the shores of Lake Chad. The statement further indicated that the insurgents suffered casualties and that the military operation had disrupted an attempt to re-supply fighters in the town of Baga with food and weapons. Boko Haram captured Monguno in an offensive on 25 January and took control of a military base and a cache of weapons after they overpowered troops stationed at the base. Losing control of Monguno was seen as a major blow to the Nigerian military due to its proximity to Borno's state capital, Maiduguri. Fears that Boko Haram would use the town as a launching pad for an attack on the state capital were confirmed on 1 February when the militants stormed the city before being repelled by troops. While the Nigerian military's claims of success have often been inconsistent with eyewitness accounts, if confirmed the recapture of Monguno would add to a growing list of army victories that have been achieved this month. The statement also indicated that the army seized the nearby town of Marte. According to defense spokesman Major-General Chris Olukolade, "the air and land operation is continuing with aggressive advance towards other designated communities and locations meant to be cleared in the ongoing offensive against the terrorists."

- Boko Haram militants stormed the town of Askira Uba, in Borno state on Monday evening, razing homes and public buildings and forcing hundreds of residents to flee. Askira Uba is located 25 kilometres (16 miles) south of Chibok, where Boko Haram militants kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls last April. The militants gained control of Chibok in September however troops, backed by local vigilantes, reclaimed it days later. Since then, a large contingent of soldiers has been based in Chibok, however residents claimed Monday that soldiers “refused to deploy” to Askira Uba.

Domestic Reporting

- **17 February 2015** – Nigeria’s former president Olusegun Obasanjo has quit the ruling party just six weeks before presidential elections are due to take place. On Monday, just two days after he claimed that Jonathan was seeking to stay in power “by hook or by crook,” Obasanjo publicly ripped up his membership card of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). While Obasanjo’s support for Jonathan was seen as a key element in his win in the 2011 elections, relations between the two men have since disintegrated and have further been impacted by comments made in recent weeks where he stated that Jonathan’s main opponent in the 28 March elections, Muhammadu Buhari, would likely fare better in tackling Boko Haram’s insurgency and corruption. The former president however has not formally endorsed the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate. Due to Obasanjo’s high profile and influential status within Nigerian politics, confirmation of his departure from the PDP dominated Nigerian media on Tuesday. While PDP spokesman Olis Metuah has stated that the party is undeterred by the loss of support, the country’s military has described Obasanjo’s conduct as an “embarrassment” and “unbecoming” of a former general. The 77-year-old former army general led a military government in the 1970’s and served two terms as civilian president after the country returned to democratic rule in 1999.

Regional Reporting

- **18 February 2015** – The United States embassy in Cameroon announced Wednesday that the US will help the African country’s army secure equipment to fight Boko Haram as Cameroon deepens its commitment to countering the militant group. In a notice published Wednesday, US ambassador to Cameroon Michael Stephen Hoza stated “my government is working on a logistic pipeline of material that will enhance Cameroon’s ability to defend itself from Boko Haram.” While the ambassador did not elaborate on what would be provided, he did note that the US would only provide “equipment necessary to defend the country.” Earlier this week, the commander of US Special Forces operations in Africa pledged to help African nations involved in fighting the militant group. Major General James Linder stated that the United States would provide technology allowing African partners to communicate between cellphones, radios and computes.
- **17 February 2015** – On Tuesday, seven villagers in the far north region of Cameroon were killed after battling Boko Haram militants who stole seventy cows and torched houses in Gaboua. On the ground sources have reported that nine militants were killed after clashes erupted between them and locals, who were armed with clubs, machetes and bows and arrows.
- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Chad launched a US-backed counter-terrorism exercise, which involves 1,300 soldiers from 28 African and Western countries. In a speech to mark the launch of the exercises, Chadian Brigadier General Zakaria Ngonbongue stated, “this exercise to a large extent can be considered a warm-up to enable our special forces to learn techniques in the fight against terrorism.” According to the

US military, more than 250 US troops are taking part in the three-week training drill, where they will help to improve intelligence-sharing, patrols, desert survival techniques, airborne operations and marksmanship. Other nations taking part in Flintlock include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia. The annual exercises were launched in 2005 aimed at improving cross-border cooperation in Africa's Sahel belt, a region that has been targeted by al-Qaeda-linked and home-grown Islamists along with separatist insurgents and criminal trafficking gangs.

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

- **18 February 2015** – According to the lawyer of Karim Wade, the son of a former president, a Senegalese special prosecutor is seeking a seven-year prison sentence for Wade on charges of illicit enrichment. In his closing remarks late Tuesday, prosecutor Cheikh Tidiane Mara indicated that he is seeking a 250 CFA billion-franc fine and the confiscation of Wade's assets. According to Wade's lawyer, Amadou Sall, "the prosecutor is equally asking that Karim is denied his political and civil rights and that is their real goal." Defense lawyers, who have frequently boycotted proceedings, are due to make a concluding address. The court will then deliberate before passing a final judgment. During the presidency of his father, Abdoulaye Wade, Karim headed a number of ministries and is seen by many as a future leader. Karim Wade denies any wrongdoing and his arrest has caused divisions across the country. Large crowds have gathered outside the courtroom on a number of occasions since the trial began seven months ago, prompting police to fire teargas in order to disperse the crowds.



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

- **28 February 2015** – The vice president of Sierra Leone has placed himself under quarantine after one of his bodyguards died of Ebola. Samuel Sam-Sumana has confirmed that he will stay out of contact with others for 21-days as a precaution. He indicated Saturday that he had chosen to be quarantined to “lead by example” after the death of his bodyguard, John Koroma, last week, adding that he is feeling “very well” and showing now signs of the illness. His staff members have also been placed under observation. Mr Sam-Sumana is Sierra Leone’s first senior government official to place himself under a voluntary quarantine.
- **25 February 2015** – Sierra Leonean officials indicated Wednesday that the West African country has experienced an increase in Ebola infections, which has been blamed on unsafe burials that are threatening to undermine the recovery from the deadly epidemic. Speaking to reporters in the capital city Freetown, Palo Conteh, head of the government’s National Ebola Response Centre, indicated that the daily count of infections had risen to a peak of 16 so far this week. In the previous week, the daily tally had dropped to as low as two, with Conteh noting, “these numbers are rising because people continue to flout the law with impunity.” Sierra Leone, which has registered some 3,400 deaths in the nine months since the outbreak spread from neighboring Guinea, had seen a steady decline in new cases over recent months however officials have recently warned that the trend was being threatened by people ignoring a ban on traditional funeral rites, which is seen as a key factor in the spread of the deadly disease. Preventing unsafe burials has been a top priority in the response to the epidemic however according to the latest statistics released by the World Health Organization (WHO), Sierra Leone reported 45 in the week leading up to 15 February. Conteh has indicated that funeral homes have reopened illegally across the country, accepting medical certificates as proof that the deceased were Ebola-free. Sierra Leone is currently half-way through a two-week door-to-door operation in the hard-hit Port Loko district, which is located east of Freetown, to find out if families are harboring Ebola patients or concealing bodies. Conteh has indicated that so far, outreach teams operating in the region have not uncovered any new cases.
- **23 February 2015** – More than twenty children have been quarantined at a British-run orphanage in Sierra Leone after one of its staff members was diagnosed with Ebola. A statement released by the orphanage, and dated Sunday, indicated that Sierra Leonean employee Augustin Baker had collapsed during a meeting last week at the St George Foundation orphanage, which is located on the outskirts of the capital Freetown. According to the statement, “Augustin transferred to Kerry Town Ebola treatment center and Ebola is confirmed. Four staff (were) exposed while assisting Augustin to hospital,” adding that Baker, who is being treated at a British run and funded clinic, was “as well as can be expected at this stage.” The orphanage has since placed itself under voluntary quarantine, with ten staff members and 25 children confined to the center for 21 days. Officials at the organization, which has been in Sierra Leone for eleven years, have indicated that the orphanage has helped 175 Ebola orphans since the outbreak began in the West African country in May 2014.
- **18 February 2015** – On Wednesday, Sierra Leonean officials launched a two-week door-to-door search for Ebola patients, a move that is part of new sweeping efforts aimed at stemming the spread of the deadly virus in the West African country. On the ground sources have reported that healthcare workers fanned out across remote areas of Port Loko district, which is located east of the capital city Freetown, after a recent increase in cases in the region, which have been attributed to unsafe burials and patients being hidden from the authorities. According to Morlai Dumbuya, a coordinator of the operation, “teams of health workers backed by security personnel are trekking into outlying areas and knocking on doors of houses...to check whether people are telling us the truth about not hiding sick people,” adding “so far we have not met any

resistance and people are co-operating.” This latest operation follows a larger exercise that was carried out in December. Dubbed the “Western Area Surge,” hundreds of volunteers visited houses over a period of 15 days across Sierra Leone in a bid to find sick patients. Wednesday’s operation also comes a week after the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the number of new cases in Sierra Leone increased for the second week running. According to Dumbuya, the increase in cases was due to “a series of secret burials and hiding of sick people in homes.”

- **16 February 2015** – On Monday, Sierra Leone’s government promised to carry out an investigation into Ebola spending after an internal audit found that nearly one-third of the money that the government had received to fight the deadly disease was spent without saving the necessary receipts and invoices in order to justify the spending. In a statement released by the government on Monday, officials pledged to carry out a full investigation, stating that the matter would also be debated in parliament. The audit first emerged in parliament last week, and detailed how some US \$5.75 millions in funds, a third of the total US \$19.32 million under review, either had insufficient or no documentation. The report, which was compiled by Sierra Leone’s Auditor General, covered the months of May through October 2014 and looked at donations received directly by the government to fight Ebola. The report stated “it is clear from our audit conducted that there continue to be lapses in the financial management system in Sierra Leone and these have ultimately resulted in the loss of funds and a reduction in the quality of service delivery in the health sector.”

Togo

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary

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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **18 February 2015** – Schools were temporarily closed in Togo on Tuesday after students launched a protest over repeated strikes by teachers. Students flooded the streets of the capital city Lome, calling for the resumption of classes and urging the authorities to meet the demands of educators. According to a statement released by the government, the decision to impose the temporary shut down of schools was done because the demonstrators were “capable of endangering the security and lives of pupils, their teachers and the population.” The statement further indicated that, with the exception of universities, the closure affects all schools in both the private and state sectors “until further notice.” Recently services within the education and health sectors have been affected by walkouts by labor unions, which are demanding a salary raise for about 50,000 public sector workers. The central labor movement has called for a new 72-hour strike, which is due to begin on Wednesday. Togo’s government has indicated that it remains determined to “continue talks with labor unions, with a view to bringing appropriate solutions to the situation to bring about a happy academic year,” however union officials have stated that the lock-down of schools was premature.

Domestic News

- **24 February 2015** – Togo’s government announced Tuesday that the country’s presidential elections will be held on April 15. A statement released by the Council of Ministers, which sits in Pya, located 440 kilometres (275 miles) north of the capital, Lome, indicated, “the electorate is called for the presidential election on April 15, 2015.” The announcement was made on the eve of a ruling party conference where incumbent Faure Gnassingbe is expected to be selected as candidate. President Gnassingbe, who has been in power for the last 10 years, is expected to be chosen to run for a third term in of office when his

ruling Union for the Republic (UNIR) party meets on Wednesday. Some 700 delegates are expected to attend the convention, where Gnassingbe is expected to be widely considered amongst party supporters as the sole choice. In November and December last year, opposition supporters took to the street with civil society groups demanding changes. While in recent months, Togo's main opposition parties attempted to introduce a bill in parliament, aimed at limiting the number of five-year terms that a president can serve to two, the reform was blocked as Gnassingbe's party has a parliamentary majority. In total, seven opposition politicians have announced their candidacy, including Kofi Yamgane, a former minister under French president Francois Mitternad, and businessman Albert Olympio, whose great-uncle Sylvanus Olympio was Togo's first president until he was assassinated in 1963. **Update (25 February)** – Togo's ruling party on Wednesday announced that President Faure Gnassingbe will stand for re-elections, as was widely expected, in the upcoming elections in April. First vice president of the Union for the Republic (UNIR), Georges Aidam, confirmed at the party's national gathering that "after a deep analysis of exchanges and debates of today, the national convention has unanimously chosen to pick you, Faure Gnassingbe." Gnassingbe accepted his party's backing to run for a third term in office, stating, "it is out of duty to our country Togo and trust in the ideals that we all share that I have the honor to accept to be invested as the presidential candidate of our UNIR party. I accept this nomination with a deep sense of humility."



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