



**MS | RISK**

## **West Africa Report**

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

**May 11 – 24, 2015**





## About MS Risk

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

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

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

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

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

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## Summary

May 11 - 24, 2015



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### Sahel Region

- **19 May 2015** – According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Guinea and Sierra Leone reported 35 new Ebola cases this week, four times as many as the week before.
  - Ghana's foreign minister has indicated that West African leaders have rejected a proposal to impose a region-wide limit to the number of terms that presidents can serve, after opposition to the idea from Gambia and Togo.
- **14 May 2015** – According to an audio recording broadcast by private Mauritanian agency Al-Akhbar, the jihadist group of Algerian militant Mokhtar Belmokhtar has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group.



## Benin

### *Domestic News*

- **20 May 2015** – On Wednesday, opposition leader Adrien Houngbedji was elected head of the country's national assembly, a move that may possibly threaten the president's hopes of pushing through a controversial amendment to the constitution.
- **19 May 2015** – On Tuesday, the country's Constitutional Court announced that municipal and local elections, initially scheduled for 31 May, will now be held on 28 June.
- **13 May 2015** – Benin's government confirmed Wednesday that the country's minister for energy and water has resigned following allegations by the Netherlands of massive fraud in drinking water projects.

## Burkina Faso

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **18 May 2015**– In an audio message released Monday by Mauritanian media, North African jihadist group al-Murabitoun stated that it is holding a Romanian mineworker who was kidnapped in Burkina Faso last month.
  - On Monday, Marian Sankara, the widow of former Burkina Faso president Thomas Sankara, gave testimony for the first time in an inquiry that is looking into the assassination of her husband more than twenty-seven years ago.

## Ghana

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, police officials disclosed that one person has been arrested after a leading member of the country's largest opposition party was attacked with acid and later died.
- **18 May 2015** – According to authorities, ten Chinese citizens suspected of illegal gold mining are facing firearms charges in court.
- **17 May 2015** – Thousands of Ghanaians marched peacefully through parts of the capital city, protesting the government's failure to solve a three-year long electric power crisis that is affecting local businesses and hindering economic growth.

### *Regional Reporting*

- **11 May 2015** – In a joint statement released in Accra on Tuesday, the presidents of Ghana and Ivory Coast disclosed that they held talks on Monday relating to a maritime dispute that has affected oil projects near their shared border.

## Guinea

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **22 May 2015** – Authorities have reported that relatives of Ebola victims are transporting their bodies on public transportation, seating the corpses upright between other passengers in a bid to avoid health controls while contributing to the spread of the deadly disease in Guinea.
- **20 May 2015** – Due to "a substantial increase" in the weekly total of new Ebola cases in Guinea, the World Health Organization (WHO) has deployed a response team to the border with Guinea-Bissau because the country's proximity to a recent cluster of cases reported in the neighboring Guinean prefecture.

### *Domestic News*

- **20 May 2015** – Guinea's opposition leader disclosed Wednesday that he was "disappointed" by talks he recently held with President Alpha Conde, which are aimed at ending a political deadlock that has resulted in nationwide protests.



- **18 May 2015** – Guinea's opposition leader has pledged to continue the protests unless President Alpha Conde allows prompt local elections to take place.
- **11 May 2015** – On Monday, Guinea's former military leader, Moussa Dadis Camara, announced that he will seek the presidency in October's election as the candidate for a newly created party, the Patriotic Forces for Democracy and Development.

## Ivory Coast

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **16 May 2015** – On Friday, politicians in the Ivory Coast launched an opposition coalition ahead of the upcoming October presidential elections.

## Liberia

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **11 May 2015** - On Monday, thousands of Liberians gathered to celebrate the end of Ebola after the country was declared free of the deadly disease that has killed more than 4,700 people.

### *International Developments*

- **11 May 2015** – The Canadian government announced Monday that it will again issue visas to people from Liberia, now that the West African country has officially been declared Ebola-free.

## Mali

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **22 May 2015** – Up to nine civilians, including an aid worker for a European charity, were killed after rebels withdrew from a village, which they had seized in northern Mali.
- **20 May 2015** – The French defense ministry announced Wednesday that French Special Forces killed two key jihadist leaders, one of who has been linked to the kidnapping and execution of foreigners, in a raid in Mali.
  - According to officials from the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission, an unidentified gunman opened fire on a UN resident in the Malian capital on Wednesday, wounding a civilian guard and damaging several vehicles.
- **18 May 2015** – Despite the partial signing of a peace agreement last week, at least three Malian soldiers were killed Monday in a dawn raid by rebels south of the Timbuktu.
- **15 May 2015** – On Friday, regional heads of state, government officials and armed groups gathered in the Malian capital to attend a largely ceremonial signing of a peace agreement that is expected to go ahead without the main Tuareg-led rebel alliance.
- **13 May 2015** – Algerian mediators revealed Wednesday that Mali's Tuareg-led rebel alliance will initial a peace accord, which was drawn up with the government in a bid to bring stability to the region, within 24 hours.
  - Clashes erupted in northern Mali on Wednesday, leaving at least four people dead just days before fighters are due to a sign a peace agreement with the Malian government.
- **11 May 2015** – Eight Malian soldiers were killed Monday after fighters in the desert region of the country ambushed them.
  - The People's Alliance for Peace and National Unity (ALPPUNA), which is a pressure group of mainly Arabs from the northern part of Mali, announced Monday the creation of a military wing.
  - A Dutch armored vehicle on patrol in Mali hit a roadside bomb on Monday, causing damage to the vehicle. None of the soldiers in the vehicle sustained any injuries.



### *International Developments*

- **15 May 2015** – A court in Paris France has convicted a 60-year-old Frenchman and sentenced him to eight years in prison for belonging to al-Qaeda's North African branch and taking part in armed actions in northern Mali.

## **Niger**

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **20 May 2015** – According to Niger's interior minister, a journalist and rights activist, known for his outspoken criticism of the humanitarian crisis in southeastern Niger, has been arrested for "collaborating" with Boko Haram.
- **18 May 2015** – The French army disclosed Monday that French and Nigerien forces killed three gunmen in a convoy carrying drugs and heavy weapons in Niger, close to the Libyan border.

### *Domestic News*

- **12 May 2015** – Lawmakers in Niger have adopted a law, which calls for prison sentences of up to thirty years for smugglers of illegal immigrants.

### *International Developments*

- **15 May 2015** – The French interior minister announced Friday that in an attempt to dissuade illegal African immigrants from trying to reach Europe, several shelters will open in Niger that will instead offer local alternatives.

## **Nigeria**

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **23 May 2015** – On Saturday, Nigerian military claimed the killing of scores of Boko Haram militants and the rescue of twenty more hostages during an operation in Sambisa forest.
- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, a lawyer indicated that the country's incoming president may commute the death sentence of 66 soldiers who were convicted for refusing to fight Boko Haram.
- **20 May 2015** – According to the Nigerian army, nearly 600 Nigerian officers and troops faced charges before a court-martial on Wednesday.
- **19 May 2015** – A local official reported Tuesday that Boko Haram gunmen have killed three people and abducted seven women in a raid on a northeastern district previously declared safe by the military.
  - At least eight people were killed Tuesday when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a livestock market in northeastern Nigeria, as Boko Haram violence begins to escalate after a period of relative calm.
- **17 May 2015** – The Nigerian military on Sunday claimed that it has overrun ten Boko Haram camps in the militant group's Sambisa forest stronghold.
- **16 May 2015** – According to a regional official, Boko Haram militants have recaptured the strategic town of Marte in the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno, of insurgents tried to attack Giwa Barracks, which is located on the outskirts of Maiduguri.
  - On Saturday, a young suicide bomber blew herself up in Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state, killing at least seven people and wounding 27 others.
- **14 May 2015** – Lead poisoning has killed twenty-eight children in central Niger state.
- **13 May 2015** – Residents and the army have reported that Boko Haram fighters launched an attack on Maiduguri on Wednesday but were repelled by Nigerian troops after intense clashes.

### *Domestic News*

- **19 May 2015** – On Tuesday, the White House announced that Secretary of State John Kerry will lead the US delegation to the inauguration of Nigerian president-elect Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja next week.



## Sierra Leone

### *International Developments*

- **12 May 2015** – Italy's health ministry disclosed Tuesday that a nurse, who came to Italy from Sierra Leone last week, has tested positive for the Ebola virus.

## Togo

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **16 May 2015** – On Saturday, thousands of opposition supporters marched through the Togolese capital, protesting the results of the presidential elections, which effectively extended the Gnassingbe family's nearly five decades in power.

### *Domestic News*

- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, Togo's Prime Minister Kwesi Seleagodji Ahoomey-Zunu and his government resigned, in an expected move after elections last month, which saw President Faure Gnassingbe extend his family's nearly five-decade hold on power.



# Security Summaries for West African States

**Sahel Region** – Page 10

**Benin** – Page 12

**Burkina Faso** – Page 14

**The Gambia**

There is no travel advisory for Gambia, however MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid travel by road from The Gambia to the Casamance, in the southern region of Senegal. The Gambian government has reopened the country's border with those nations currently affected by the Ebola outbreak. Health officials will continue to screen people entering the country from Ebola affected countries. There are currently no confirmed Ebola cases in the Gambia.

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

**Ghana** – Page 17

**Guinea** – Page 19

**Guinea-Bissau**

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

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

**Ivory Coast** – Page 22



**Liberia** – Page 24

**Mali** – Page 26

**Mauritania** – Page 32

**Niger** – Page 34

**Nigeria** – Page 37

**Senegal**

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

MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid all outdoor rallies and demonstrations as they may turn violent. Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Senegal, MS Risk advises avoiding road travel in the Casamance region, to the west of Kolda. The Casamance region of south-western Senegal (between the southern border of Gambia and the northern border of Guinea-Bissau) remains affected by incidents involving armed separatist groups and banditry, particularly in the regions of Bignona and Sindian. There has been an increase in clashes between the Senegalese army and suspected elements of the armed separatist group Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). MS Risk advises against all road travel in the Casamance region to the west of Kolda, other than on the main road from Ziguinchor to Cap Skiring (which is often used by groups of tourists during daylight hours) and on the road north of the Guinea-Bissau/Senegal border, from Sao Domingos to Ziguinchor (N4 bis). If you travel on either of these roads, you should do so only during daylight hours and monitor the local security situation before travelling. Severe water shortages in Dakar have led to a number of demonstrations in the suburbs. Youths have blocked some roads with burning tyres and have clashed with police. MS Risk advises travellers to avoid all demonstrations and to leave any affected areas at the first sign that unrest may develop. There have been a number of deaths and injuries. There is currently an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. With the ongoing French military intervention in Mali, authorities in Senegal have increased security in the capital city as well as along the border with Mali. MS Risk advises that al-Qaeda militants may cross the border into Senegal and they may target Western interests as well as foreigners.

**Sierra Leone** – Page 42

**Togo** – Page 44



## Sahel Region



### Security Summary

The current Ebola outbreak affects, Guinea, 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.

### On the Ground Reporting

- **19 May 2015** – According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Guinea and Sierra Leone reported 35 new Ebola cases this week, four times as many as the week before. Speaking at a briefing attended by health ministers, the WHO's special representative for Ebola, Bruce Aylward, stated, "it will take an extraordinary effort to finish the job... With the start of the rainy season today, the doubling of effort will be that much more difficult, that much more important," referring to increased logistical challenges for health workers. In the week leading up to 17 May, 35 new cases were reported in six districts of Guinea and neighboring Sierra Leone, with most of the new infections occurring in Guinea. In the previous week, there were a total of nine confirmed new cases. Guinea's health minister, Remy Laham, disclosed Tuesday that while authorities are searching out new Ebola cases, he noted that traditional cultural practices, including washing dead bodies, continue to be difficult to overcome. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone's chief medical officer Brima Kargbo stated that there were "signs that our strategy is working" to get to zero cases, including fewer fatalities among people exposed to the virus who are confined to quarantine homes. On Monday, the WHO announced that it is setting up a US \$100 million contingency fund to ensure that it will not be "overwhelmed" by another major crisis as it was with Ebola, which since December 2013 has killed more than 11,000 people.
  - Ghana's foreign minister has indicated that West African leaders have rejected a proposal to impose a region-wide limit to the number of terms that presidents can serve, after opposition to the idea from



Gambia and Togo. According to officials, the proposal was discussed at a regional summit that was held in Accra. Currently, Togo and the Gambia are the only members of West Africa's ECOWAS bloc that do not limit the number of presidential terms to two.

- **14 May 2015** – According to an audio recording broadcast by private Mauritanian agency Al-Akhbar, the jihadist group of Algerian militant Mokhtar Belmokhtar has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group. While Belmokhtar's al-Murabitoun group was linked to al-Qaeda, one of its leading members indicated in the recording that that group has now aligned itself with the IS organization. Speaking in the recording, Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui stated, "the al-Murabitoun movement pledges its allegiance to the caliph of Muslims Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (IS leader), thereby banishing divisions and dissent within the (Muslim community)." The Mauritanian news agency, which regularly publishes statements by jihadists, has indicated that it has identified the voice in the audio recording as that of Sahraoui, who is now the new leader of the group. In the recording, Sahraoui also called on "all jihadist movements to pledge allegiance" to Baghdadi, who is the self-proclaimed caliph of IS, in order to "speak with one voice." Al-Murabitoun's decision to align itself with IS comes just two months after Nigerian-based Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the group. Al-Murabitoun was formed out of a merger between Belmokhtar's "Signatories in Blood" and MUJAO, which is one of the jihadist groups that seized control of northern Mali in early 2012. While al-Murabitoun's leader was Belmokhtar, the Mauritanian news agency has indicated that Sahraoui, who has also spoken for both MUJAO and al-Murabitoun particularly in claiming responsibility for attacks and kidnappings in northern Mali, has now taken over, a move that may signify the group is losing its hold and raises questions about Belmokhtar's position. **Update (15 May)** – Mokhtar Belmokhtar has rejected a pledge of allegiance to the IS group, which was made by a member of his organization and which suggested splits within his operation. In a statement that surfaced on Friday, Belmokhtar stated that the earlier pledge violates the rules and principles of his organization, which remains loyal to al-Qaeda. In the statement, Belmokhtar confirmed his allegiance to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, stating that Sahraoui's pledge "clearly violates the foundational statement that determined the method and behavior of the organization." There is a growing competition between IS and al-Qaeda to gain adherents amongst radical Islamic groups around the world. While several militant groups have recently pledged allegiance to IS, Belmokhtar has long been seen as a loyalist to al-Qaeda.



# Benin

## No Travel Restrictions



## Security Summary

On Tuesday, 5 May, protests erupted in the commercial capital Cotonou after security forces attempted to arrest an opposition lawmaker. Thousands of people took to the streets, burning tires and setting alight a fire-brigade truck. Further protests in the coming days may occur. MS Risk advises all travellers in Cotonou to avoid large gatherings as they may turn violent with minimal notice.

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 and Sierra Leone. While Benin currently has no confirmed cases of the Ebola virus, MS Risk advises all travellers to remain cautious, including maintaining strict standards of hygiene and avoiding eating bush meat. There is a 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.

## Domestic News

- **20 May 2015** – On Wednesday, opposition leader Adrien Houngbedji was elected head of the country's national assembly, a move that may possibly threaten the president's hopes of pushing through a controversial amendment to the constitution. Houngbedji, of the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), won 42 of the 83 votes cast, beating Komi Kotche, who was backed by Benin's President Thomas Boni Yayi and his Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin (FCBE), by just one vote. Benin's president has been campaigning for a constitutional reform bill, which he maintains will help curb corruption but which his opponents say is actually aimed at dissolving presidential term limits, a move that would effectively allow him to stand in next year's elections. The president however has denied that he wants to extend his time in power. The reform bill still needs to be approved by lawmakers, with many now believing that having an opposition leader at the head of parliament could serve as a potential roadblock to the president's desired constitutional amendment.
- **19 May 2015** – On Tuesday, the country's Constitutional Court announced that municipal and local elections, initially scheduled for 31 May, will now be held on 28 June. The delay follows a request from the country's electoral commission as schools used as polling stations will not be available due to end-of-term examinations, which will take place in early June.
- **13 May 2015** – Benin's government confirmed Wednesday that the country's minister for energy and water has resigned following allegations by the Netherlands of massive fraud in drinking water projects.



According to Benin's presidency, an investigation into The Hague's allegations will be launched. Last week, Dutch deputy development minister Liliane Ploumen announced an immediate suspension in "development relations" with the West African nation following an audit into aid spending. The review claims that some four million euros (US \$4.5 million) had disappeared from Benin's coffers. In the wake of this review, bilateral aid has stopped until Benin's government takes steps to tackle the issue. The Netherlands is Benin's largest donor for water development projects, donating an estimated 50 million euros. The European Union has contributed a further 20 million euros to supply clean drinking water.



## Burkina Faso

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

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



### Security Summary

There is currently an Ebola virus outbreak in Guinea 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 Boulssa, 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.



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## On the Ground Reporting

- **18 May 2015**– In an audio message released Monday by Mauritanian media, North African jihadist group al-Murabitoun stated that it is holding a Romanian mineworker who was kidnapped in Burkina Faso last month. The Arabic recording, which is attributed to Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui, who is named as the group's leader, called on "the Romanian government to give serious attention to negotiations for the release of the hostage held by the group." In an apparent reference to Bucharest's unwillingness to engage in negotiations, the recording claims that "the Romanian government bears all responsibility for the fate of the hostage if it is slow to take the opportunity given to free its citizen." The message, which was released by al-Akhbar, a Mauritanian news agency that regularly carries jihadist statements, ended with a reiterated pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). The security officer was kidnapped on 4 April when five armed men attacked a manganese mine in Tambao, which is located 350 kilometres (220 miles) northeast of the capital Ouagadougou. **Update (19 May)** – Romania's Foreign Ministry has indicated that it is checking the authenticity of a recording, which claims that a Romanian security worker was kidnapped by a militant group that has ties to IS. Romanian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bogdan Stanescu disclosed Tuesday that the ministry will verify the authenticity of the tape and will continue to cooperate with its partners. Romania set up a crisis cell in April after the Romanian national was kidnapped.
  - On Monday, Marian Sankara, the widow of former Burkina Faso president Thomas Sankara, gave testimony for the first time in an inquiry that is looking into the assassination of her husband more than twenty-seven years ago. According to officials, Ms Sankara spent nearly eight hours at a military court in the capital city, where she answered questions by a judge tasked with investigating her husband's 1987 murder, which saw his former friend Blaise Compaore take power. In 1997, Ms Sankara filed a complaint against persons unknown for the assassination of her husband, however the investigation was stonewalled by then President Compaore. After his forced resignation in October last year, the new transitional government revived the probe into Thomas Sankara's death. Many Burkinabe, including members of Sankara's family, doubt that the corpse buried in a cemetery in the east of the capital is indeed that of Thomas Sankara. With these lingering doubts, in March, authorities ordered that the corpse be exhumed so that it can be formally identified.



## Ghana

### No Travel Restrictions



### Security Summary

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

- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, police officials disclosed that one person has been arrested after a leading member of the country's largest opposition party was attacked with acid and later died. Police spokesman for the Upper East region, Thomas Agbanyo, indicated that a man was detained on suspicion of carrying out the attack on Adam Mahama. Another suspect remains at large. Mahama, who is no relation to Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama, was a chairman of Ghana's New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the Upper East region. He was attacked on Wednesday night by two men who stopped his car. He died the following morning. Prior to his death, Mahama openly criticized the NPP's national chairman Paul Afoko



and general-secretary Kwabena Agyepong. He alleged that they had organized a meeting in the region without his knowledge.

- **18 May 2015** – According to authorities, ten Chinese citizens suspected of illegal gold mining are facing firearms charges in court. On Monday, Judge Francis Obiri granted the defendants US \$12,000 bail each and adjourned the firearms case until a hearing, which is due to take place later this month in Accra. According to court documents, each of the defendants is accused of illegal firearms possession. They have pleaded not guilty to the charges. Authorities have disclosed that they received reports that the Chinese nationals were illegally mining in the Ashanti region of the country. Police officials have indicated that a search of their premises prompted the seizure of at least nine firearms along with ammunition.
- **11 May 2015** – Thousands of Ghanaians marched peacefully through parts of the capital city, protesting the government's failure to solve a three-year long electric power crisis that is affecting local businesses and hindering economic growth. According to sources, the march, which was organized by Ghanaian celebrities and artists, drew a gathering of academics, civil servants and private business people. It stretched half a kilometer through the streets of Accra's eastern districts. While economic growth in Ghana has been slowed by a fiscal crisis, which forced the government to seek support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and undermined its reputation abroad for financial management, it is the current energy crisis that has crippled businesses and angered ordinary Ghanaians. Currently, the electricity company provides power for 12 hours out of a 36-hour cycle. The government has blamed the problem on unmatched power demand over the years, with officials outlining plans to deploy emergency power barges and build additional plants in order to raise installed capacity by more than 3,000 megawatts to 5,000 by 2017.

## Regional Reporting

- **11 May 2015** – In a joint statement released in Accra on Tuesday, the presidents of Ghana and Ivory Coast disclosed that they held talks on Monday relating to a maritime dispute that has affected oil projects near their shared border. According to the statement, the talks, which were held in Geneva between Ghana's John Mahama and Ivory Coast's Alassane Ouattara, were brokered by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The two presidents have reiterated their commitment to talks that will promote regional integration for the benefit of their respective countries. The talks come after the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) last month gave an interim ruling, which indicated that Ghana could continue developing offshore projects in the disputed area. The ruling however imposed a ban on new drilling.



## 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. Over the past several weeks, there have been a number of violent demonstrations that have occurred in the capital city Conakry and across the country. Violent demonstrations are likely to further take place, particularly in the run up to the Presidential elections, which are due to take place in October. MS Risk advises all travelers to Guinea to maintain extreme vigilance, to monitor the local media and to avoid large gatherings.

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.

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,



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

- **22 May 2015** – Authorities have reported that relatives of Ebola victims are transporting their bodies on public transportation, seating the corpses upright between other passengers in a bid to avoid health controls while contributing to the spread of the deadly disease in Guinea. The latest Ebola figures released by the World Health Organization (WHO) are the highest in Guinea in more than a month, with at least twenty-seven new cases reported in one week. They come as officials were hoping that the outbreak in Guinea was finally coming under control, with neighboring Liberia recently being declared Ebola-free and Sierra Leone registering only eight cases during the same period. While it is against the law to transport bodies of Ebola victims from one community to another, according to Rabiadou Serah, a member of an anti-Ebola committee, relatives who are concealing bodies are managing to get past inspection agents.
- **20 May 2015** – Due to “a substantial increase” in the weekly total of new Ebola cases in Guinea, the World Health Organization (WHO) has deployed a response team to the border with Guinea-Bissau because the country’s proximity to a recent cluster of cases reported in the neighboring Guinean prefecture. In its latest update, the WHO reported that in the week ending on 17 May, 35 new cases were reported in Guinea and Sierra Leone, effectively the highest weekly total of confirmed cases of Ebola in over a month. Guinea reported 27 of those cases, compared with seven that were recorded the week before. A statement released by the WHO disclosed that “this is a substantial increase compared with nine cases reported the previous week.” It further reported, “the geographical area of transmission has also expanded compared with recent weeks, with a total of six districts reporting cases (three in Guinea, three in Sierra Leone) compared with three the previous week (three in Guinea, one in Sierra Leone),” adding, “because of the proximity to Guinea-Bissau of the recent cluster of cases in the Guinean prefecture of Boke, a response team from Guinea-Bissau has been deployed to the border to assess points of entry... An epidemiological investigation team has also mobilized to ensure any contacts who cross the border are traced.” The statement further noted, “the cases in Boke were tightly clustered in the coastal sub-prefecture of Kamsar, and initial investigations suggest they may have originated from a chain of transmission in Conakry.” WHO officials have indicated that while the exact origin of the cluster in Boke remains unknown, an investigation has linked most of the confirmed cases to four probable cases who attended a funeral of another probable case in mid-April, which may have been the source of the outbreak. Guinea-Bissau has not reported any cases of Ebola.

## Domestic News

- **20 May 2015** – Guinea’s opposition leader disclosed Wednesday that he was “disappointed” by talks he recently held with President Alpha Conde, which are aimed at ending a political deadlock that has resulted in nationwide protests. After weeks of clashes between anti-government activists and security forces, Cellou Dalein Diallo was summoned to the presidential place in Conakry in order to discuss the situation.



Speaking to reporters shortly after the meeting, Diallo stated, “I was the only one who did any talking. I was disappointed that we didn’t have a proper exchange. I expected better than this.” In stark contrast, the presidency responded positively to the talks, indicating in a statement that they were “based on the resumption of political dialogue,” adding that the talks had focused on the elections, the fight against religious fundamentalism and the peace process in neighboring Mali. A spokesman of the president indicated that “the president’s role is to listen to each of the parties to find a consensus. These periodic meetings allow the president to maintain contacts with the political class.”

- **18 May 2015** – Guinea’s opposition leader has pledged to continue the protests unless President Alpha Conde allows prompt local elections to take place. According to Cellou Daliel Diallo, the president broke a 2013 UN-brokered deal with the opposition to organize long-overdue municipal polls prior to the presidential election, which is due to take place in October. The opposition has accused President Conde of packing local authorities with his supporters after the five-year mandate of elected officials expired in 2010. Diallo has indicated that those officials are now campaigning on the president’s behalf, effectively making fair elections impossible. Prior to holding talks with Diallo on Wednesday, the president ruled out holding local elections before October, citing a decision by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) that doing so would require postponing the presidential vote.
- **11 May 2015** – On Monday, Guinea’s former military leader, Moussa Dadis Camara, announced that he will seek the presidency in October’s election as the candidate for a newly created party, the Patriotic Forces for Democracy and Development. Camara, who ruled Guinea for almost a year after he seized power in a 2008 coup, stated that President Alpha Conde could not prevent him from returning and contesting the election. While Camara remains popular in his native Forest region, in southeastern Guinea, his reputation in the capital, Conakry, was tarnished by a massacre that was carried out by soldiers during his rule. In September 2009, at least 157 people were killed in the capital. On Friday, some 2,000 women took to the streets of N’Zerekore, which is the largest city of the Forest region, demanding Camara’s return. Observers have noted that Camara’s support in the Forest region could effectively make him an important power-broker in the presidential elections, especially if the polls are to go to a second round as is expected to occur between the president and his main rival, Cellou Dalein Diallo. Since resigning the presidency in late 2009, Camara has lived in exile in Burkina Faso. He returned briefly in 2013 to attend his mother’s funeral in N’Zerekore.



# Ivory Coast

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

## Security Summary

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

- **16 May 2015** – On Friday, politicians in the Ivory Coast launched an opposition coalition ahead of the upcoming October presidential elections. Officials have disclosed that more than 1,000 people, including politicians, attended the launch of the National Coalition for Change at a hotel in Abidjan. The coalition's charter is calling for former president Laurent Gbagbo, who is currently awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC), to be freed along with others it labelled "political prisoners." The coalition also called for the dissolution of the current electoral commission, amidst claims that it is biased in favor of current President Alassane Ouattara, who will be seeking re-election and who currently is the only major candidate in the race. Former prime minister Charles Konan Banny and ex-president of the National Assembly Mamadou Koulibaly were amongst those to attend Friday's launch.



## Liberia

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



### Security Summary

MS Risk no longer advises against all but essential travel to Liberia however we advise all but essential travel to parts of the country, particularly those that are affected by crime. On 9 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Liberia Ebola-free. Officials however continue to caution all those in the country as the outbreak in neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone continues. We advise that travellers to Liberia continue to practice enhanced precautions as there is a possibility that Ebola may be reintroduced into the country.

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

- **11 May 2015** - On Monday, thousands of Liberians gathered to celebrate the end of Ebola after the country was declared free of the deadly disease that has killed more than 4,700 people. Several dignitaries participated in the celebration, including the President of Togo, along with guests from the African Union, Ghana and Nigeria. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf closed the celebrations by recommitting herself to helping the governments and people of neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone to overcome the disease. In a statement released Saturday 9 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that 42 days had passed since the last person confirmed with the virus in Liberia was buried. On Monday, the Liberian government declared a public holiday in order to allow workers and students to take part in a festival in the capital city, Monrovia. The ceremony however began on a somber note, with testimonials



from health workers and other staff in the country's Ebola treatment units (ETU's) as well as survivors and body disposal team members. The WHO has hailed the eradication of the deadly disease in Liberia as an enormous development in the crisis, which has affected the West African region for over a year. However the United Nations agency has warned that because outbreaks are continuing in neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone, the risk remains high that infected people could re-enter the country. More than 4,700 people died during the Ebola crisis in Liberia, which remains the hardest-hit country by the outbreak. Neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone continue to report new cases on a weekly basis. While the number of new cases being reported has significantly declined in recent months, officials in both countries have noted that they have had difficulty in tracing new cases. Latest figures released by the WHO indicate that 26,720 cases have been reported and 11,079 people have died from Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, Sierra Leone and the United States, however officials have warned that the full scale of the Ebola outbreak may have been underreported. The latest outbreak, which was officially confirmed in March 2014, has killed five times more people than all the other known outbreaks combined.

## International Developments

- **11 May 2015** – The Canadian government announced Monday that it will again issue visas to people from Liberia, now that the West African country has officially been declared Ebola-free. However visa restrictions will continue to apply for Guinea and Sierra Leone, as both countries continue to be affected by the outbreak. In late October, the Canadian government made the controversial decision to close borders to people from Ebola-affected countries, stating that it would not process visa applications from residents and nationals of the affected countries. The policy however did not impede the return of Canadian medical personnel or those working for international aid organizations who travelled to the Ebola-affected countries in order to help combat the deadly outbreak. On Saturday, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that Liberia has gone 42 days without an Ebola infection, a milestone that effectively signals that the outbreak in the country is believed to be over.



# Mali

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

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



## Security Summary

### Summary

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

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

MS Risk advises against all travel to Bamako. We also advise against all travel to the rest of Mali, especially to the northern regions of the country. Although Bamako is generally calm, the situation throughout the rest of the country is still volatile.

If you are in Bamako, MS Risk advises you to maintain a high level of vigilance, to keep a low profile and to stay alert to the local political developments. We also advise that you avoid sensitive areas, including military installations and large gatherings of people. Night time checkpoints continue to operate in Bamako, largely controlling access





to military and government facilities. Checkpoints are in place from approximately 9PM until dawn.

During the rainy season, which runs from May until October, torrential rains can cause floods and landslides, and may result in houses collapsing. In late August, there were reports of flash flooding that occurred in Bamako. The neighborhoods of Bankoni, Taliko, Lafiabougou, Djicoroni Woyowayanko, Lafiabougou Bougouba and Bougoudani were all hit by floods during the rains storms which lasted most of the day. MS Risk advises anyone in the capital city to monitor the local weather reports and to expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

### *Terrorism*

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

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

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

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

### *Kidnapping*

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

- For Ransom - insurgents will raise finances for future operations. With the impending ECOWAS operation, this is accelerating as a concern.



- Human Shields - Insurgents will kidnap persons in order to deter/reduce the risk of direct action by governmental forces against them.
- Ideological - Kidnappings will occur for political purposes.

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

#### *Local Travel*

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

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

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

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

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

## **On the Ground Reporting**

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- **22 May 2015** – Up to nine civilians, including an aid worker for a European charity, were killed after rebels withdrew from a village, which they had seized in northern Mali. In a statement released overnight, the main Tuareg-led rebel alliance, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) indicated that “the Malian army conducted the summary and public executions of nine people in the town of Tin Hama,” adding “the nine people were first arrested by the GATIA militia and then handed over to Malian soldiers who then executed them,” referring to the pro-government Imghad and Allies Tuareg Self-Defense Group. A statement released by MINUSMA disclosed that the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali had deployed investigators to look into “disturbing reports of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law” in Tin Hama. While it did not confirm the reports, it did indicate that the executions of civilians “would constitute grave crimes for which the perpetrators must be brought to justice.” The CMA and GATIA both disclosed that the rebels took control of the village on Wednesday before withdrawing. The town of Tin Hama is located near the flashpoint town of Menaka, which was seized from rebels by pro-government fighters on 27 April in an operation that has sparked a number of violations of a ceasefire agreement in the area. The UN peacekeeping mission has expressed “deep concern at the alarming escalation in armed confrontations in several localities of northern Mali and once again condemns the gross and continuing violations of the ceasefire that jeopardise the peace process.”
- **20 May 2015** – The French defense ministry announced Wednesday that French Special Forces killed two key jihadist leaders, one of who has been linked to the kidnapping and execution of foreigners, in a raid in Mali. According to officials, one of those killed is Amada Ag Hama, known as “Abdelkrim the Tuareg,” who claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of two Radio France International journalists Ghislaine Dupont, 57, and Claude Verlon, 55, in Mali in 2013. He was a leader of the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) battalion and a former lieutenant of Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, one of AQIM’s leaders killed fighting the French army in northern Mali in February 2013. Ag Hama was one of four jihadists killed in the raid on Monday night. Another key figure, Ibrahim Ag Inawalen, known as “Bana,” was also killed. A statement released by the French defense ministry disclosed that the men were “two of the main leaders” of AQIM and Ansar Dine, adding that the operation was “a fresh blow to armed terrorist groups in the Sahel” after the French army in December killed Ahmed el Tilemsi, the leader of the al-Murabitoun group in Mali, who the US State Department had declared a “specially designated global terrorist.”
  - According to officials from the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission, an unidentified gunman opened fire on a UN resident in the Malian capital on Wednesday, wounding a civilian guard and damaging several vehicles. A statement released by the peacekeeping force disclosed that the assailant attempted to set fire to one of the force’s vehicles parked in front of the residence that houses troops in the city’s southeastern Faso Kanu neighborhood around 2:30 AM, adding that prior to escaping, he shot and wounded the guard and then opened fire on the building and parked UN-marked cars. The mission has indicated that “MINUSMA condemns in the strongest terms this attack against its staff and property, which constitutes a serious crime under international law,” adding “it calls on the Malian authorities to make every effort to identify those responsible for this act and bring them to justice.” The statement further indicated that members of UNMAS, the mission’s mine-clear service, were deployed to the scene to defuse two unexploded grenades.
- **18 May 2015** – Despite the partial signing of a peace agreement last week, at least three Malian soldiers were killed Monday in a dawn raid by rebels south of the Timbuktu. The violence erupted in Bambara Maounde, which is located 100 km (60 miles) south of Timbuktu, and appears to be another sign that violence is spreading beyond the northern strongholds of the various rebel groups that remain active in northern Mali. A UN military source and Malian army source disclosed that three government soldiers were



killed and one left wounded. Mohamed el Maouloud Ramadane, a senior figure in the MAA faction of CMA claimed the raid on recently deployed soldiers and gendarmes in the area, stating that at least ten security personnel were killed. The CMA Alliance, which is made up of Tuareg and Arab-led rebels who have been fighting in Mali since 2012, have committed to Mali's peace process however last week, they refused to sign a peace agreement with the Malian government and its allied armed groups.

- **15 May 2015** – On Friday, regional heads of state, government officials and armed groups gathered in the Malian capital to attend a largely ceremonial signing of a peace agreement that is expected to go ahead without the main Tuareg-led rebel alliance. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who is the current head of the African Union (AU), arrived on Bamako on Friday morning and is expected to be followed by around twenty heads of government and state from across the region. The ceremony, which comes after months of UN-backed negotiations, is going ahead despite repeated recent violations of a ceasefire dead between the army and various pro-government and rebel militias.
- **13 May 2015** – Algerian mediators revealed Wednesday that Mali's Tuareg-led rebel alliance will initial a peace accord, which was drawn up with the government in a bid to bring stability to the region, within 24 hours. Abdelaziz Benali Cherif, a spokesman for Algeria's foreign ministry, confirmed that the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) will signal its commitment to the document in Algiers on Thursday. The delegations are expected to arrive in Algiers in the evening alongside Mongi Hamdi, the head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. A rebel leader and a security source had disclosed Tuesday that the various armed groups that make up the CMA would meet in Algiers on Wednesday in order to agree "in principle" to the deal, despite a recent upsurge in violence between the two sides. In diplomatic language, "initialing" a deal effectively, means that there is an agreement in principle that there is no need for further discussion on the details. However because it stops short of signing the document, this means that the agreement cannot be implemented. The agreement is due to be officially signed in Bamako on Friday in the presence of around a dozens heads of state and government officials. While the Malian government along with a coalition of armed groups, known as the Platform, had already initialled the peace accord, the CMA had indicated that it will not accept a deal without an amendment recognizing "Azawad" as a "geographic, political and juridical entity." Early on Wednesday, the CMA issued a statement lamenting its failure to secure the amendments it was seeking, however it resolved to initial the document before the opening of "intermediate discussions between initially and signature." **Update (14 May)** – On Thursday, Mali's main Tuareg-led rebel alliance initialed a peace agreement with the government, stating however that changes must be made before they will sign the agreement, which is aimed at ending decades of conflict. Speaking in Algiers, alliance official Bilal Ag Cherif stated, "initialing the document and signing a comprehensive agreement are and will remain legally distinct," adding that the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) alliance will stay away from a signing ceremony, which is to be held by the Malian government in the capital Bamako on Friday.
  - Clashes erupted in northern Mali on Wednesday, leaving at least four people dead just days before fighters are due to a sign a peace agreement with the Malian government. According to spokesmen for both groups, the renewed attacks took place between members of a coalition of separatist rebel fighters and a pro-government militia. According to Mossa Ag Attaher, who is with the rebel coalition, at least four people were killed in the village of Ikadewan, however it was not immediately possible to independently confirm this toll. The area has been a source of tension between the two sides ever since a pro-government militia took over the town of Menaka. On Wednesday, Ag Attaher urged the militia fighters to leave or face further violence, stating, "if the militia does not leave Menaka through



dialogue, we are going to use all means necessary to make them leave because this belongs to us and is recognized by the cease-fire accords and the international community.”

- **11 May 2015** – Eight Malian soldiers were killed Monday after fighters in the desert region of the country ambushed them. According to an official in the area, “during an ambush of the Malian army by the rebel Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) between Timbuktu and Goundam on Monday morning, eight Malian soldiers were killed and several wounded.” The source further disclosed that two Malian vehicles had been set on fire while the rebels lost one of their vehicles. While the Malian army has not officially commented on Monday’s incident, a military source linked to reinforcements sent to the scene confirmed the information. A Timbuktu-based military source from MINUSMA revealed that “this is a carefully prepared ambush” as the rebels had waited in four vehicles for the troops, who were due to take over a patrol. The attack comes as a recent upsurge in violence in northern Mali has prompted United Nations peacekeepers to warn that the violence is threatening a peace accord between the rebels and the government, which is due to be signed on Bamako on Friday.
  - The People’s Alliance for Peace and National Unity (ALPPUNA), which is a pressure group of mainly Arabs from the northern part of Mali, announced Monday the creation of a military wing. In a statement, the group indicated “the ALPPUNA informs the national and international community of its decision to create its own armed wing to ensure the legitimate defense of populations and their property,” adding “this decision is justified by the extreme seriousness of the repeated attacks against peaceful citizens in the Timbuktu region.”
  - A Dutch armored vehicle on patrol in Mali hit a roadside bomb on Monday, causing damage to the vehicle. None of the soldiers in the vehicle sustained any injuries. According to the defense ministry, the incident occurred Monday afternoon during a patrol of the Kidal area. The vehicle has been taken back to the Dutch camp in Gao, where most of the Dutch soldiers are staying. The Netherlands has been taking part in the United Nation’s peacekeeping operation in Mali since April 2014. It has a force of some 450 soldiers and support staff, as well as four Apache and three Chinook helicopters. The Dutch government, which last week indicated that the situation in the northern region of the country had worsened as there were now regular attacks being carried out on UN bases and more jihadists seen around the city of Gao, is due to decide later this year whether or not it will extend the Dutch mission in Mali.

## International Developments

- **15 May 2015** – A court in Paris France has convicted a 60-year-old Frenchman and sentenced him to eight years in prison for belonging to al-Qaeda’s North African branch and taking part in armed actions in northern Mali. According to his lawyer Alexandre Vermynck, Gille Le Guen, a former Breton merchant marine officer, was convicted Friday of criminal association in relations with a terrorist organization. In October 2012, Le Guen appeared in an online video, sitting next to an assault rifle and warning both the French and American presidents against intervention in Mali. Le Guen was accused of taking part in a March 2013 offensive against the city of Diabali. He was arrested in April 2013 by French troops north of Timbuktu.



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

MS Risk advises against all travel to the provinces of Tiris Zemmour, Adrar, Tagant, Hodh el Chargui, Dakhlet-Nouadhibou and Inchiri. We also advise against all travel to the northern and eastern regions of the country, especially the desert areas north of Oualata-Tichit-Ouadane-Zouerat line, as well as the border areas with Algeria, Mali and Morocco. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to the rest of the country, which includes travel along the Nouakchott-Nouadhibou corridor which comprises of the north-south arterial road that runs between these two cities and which passes through Nouamghar. This is due to extremist groups and armed smugglers that are active in these areas, which has resulted in high threats of terrorism as well as a heightened risk of banditry and kidnapping.

### Terrorism





Following the French military intervention in Mali there has been a heightened possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. Attacks could be indiscriminate and by occur in places that are frequented by foreigners. Consequently we advise vigilance.

#### *Kidnapping*

There is a high risk of kidnapping throughout Mauritania and Westerners are the favoured target. In the past, hostages have been held captive for several months before being released. MS Risk advises anyone traveling to Mauritania to take particular caution in the region of Inchire (Akjoujt is the capita) as well as in the areas that border Mali and Morocco.

For companies with employees remaining in Mauritania, MS Risk advises you to arrange a trustworthy escort that is familiar with the country. The use of varied and unpredictable routes and schedules when moving from one location to another is also highly advised. Exercise a high awareness of personal security at all times and monitor the local developments. On 14 May 2013, the Government of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Both Adamawa and Borno border Cameroon's far North, North and Adamaoua provinces. It is possible that military operations there might have an impact across the border in Cameroon.



# Niger

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

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



## Security Summary

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.

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 Tillabéri 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 the Ground Reporting

- **20 May 2015** – According to Niger's interior minister, a journalist and rights activist, known for his outspoken criticism of the humanitarian crisis in southeastern Niger, has been arrested for "collaborating" with Boko Haram. According to Interior Minister Hassoumi Massaoudou, Moussa Tchangari "...has been collaborating with Boko Haram for some time, and he is actively spreading propaganda and false news in liaison with Boko Haram," adding, "all his propaganda aims to show... that Niger's defense and security forces are the criminals... (and) not Boko Haram." According to officials, Tchangari was arrested on Monday and charged with "criminal links to the terrorist group Boko Haram." Amnesty International has condemned his arrest and has called on Nigerien officials to release him. Tchangari's organization, Alternative Espace Citoyen, has been critical of the humanitarian crisis in the southeastern region of the country, where the army is fighting Boko Haram. Earlier this month, his group published a report that criticized Nigerien authorities after the evacuation of some 25,000 Lake Chad residents over fears of new attacks, following a deadly assault that was carried out by the militant group in late April. At the time, Tchangari disclosed that thousands of men, women, children and elderly Lake Chad residents "walked for more than 50 kilometres (30 miles)" until they reached safety, adding, "no preparations were in place to welcome...or support them." In early May, A source at the UN echoed similar concerns, stating that the evacuees were living in "dramatic" conditions, without tents, or shelter. In some cases, many did not have access to drinking water.
- **18 May 2015** – The French army disclosed Monday that French and Nigerien forces killed three gunmen in a convoy carrying drugs and heavy weapons in Niger, close to the Libyan border. In the statement, the army disclosed that on 14 May, two pick-up trucks attempted to force their way through a checkpoint set up by about 200 French and Niger troops, adding "the occupants of the vehicles attempted to drive through and responded to warning shots by violently opening fire... Amid the fighting, three people in the convoy were killed and three others were captured and handed to the Niger army." The statement further disclosed that 1.5 tonnes of drugs and weapons were recovered as well as communications equipment. The announcement by the French army comes at a time when troops are increasing efforts to stop militants from crisscrossing the Sahel-Sahara region. France has set up a base at Madama, which is located in northern Niger, in order to monitor the Salvador Pass trafficking route, which leads from southern Libya to northern Mali.

## Domestic News

- **12 May 2015** – Lawmakers in Niger have adopted a law, which calls for prison sentences of up to thirty years for smugglers of illegal immigrants. The new law aims to stem the flow of migrants across Africa and into Europe. According to Maimouna Goje, head of Niger's national anti-human trafficking agency, the legislation, which was approved by parliament on Monday, allows for the "protection of migrants and the repression of traffickers who put the lives of thousands of Africans in danger." Security sources have disclosed that this new law is needed as Niger did not have an "adequate law," which allowed the country to prosecute and keep in prison the traffickers it arrested and that instead, "many people smugglers have had to be released due to a lack of appropriate legislation." Goje has indicated that the new law sets forth prison sentences ranging from one to thirty years and fines ranging from 4,500 – 45,000 euros (US \$5,000 - \$50,500) against traffickers as well as the confiscation of their vehicles. Regional authorities have reported that the West African nation's northern desert region Agadez is a major transit point for thousands of West



Africans who are trying to reach Algeria and Libya in a bid to get to Europe. According to these officials, some 4,000 illegal West African migrants enter Libya each month via the desert route.

## International Developments

- **15 May 2015** – The French interior minister announced Friday that in an attempt to dissuade illegal African immigrants from trying to reach Europe, several shelters will open in Niger that will instead offer local alternatives. Speaking in Niger's capital Niamey, shortly after meeting with President Mahamadou Issoufou, Bernard Cazeneuve disclosed that the centers, which have been proposed by the European Union (EU) in cooperation with Niger, "should be an opportunity to bring ambitious development policies for migrants and for states." The announcement by the French interior minister comes just days after the European Commission revealed a plan of action for immigration and asylum, specifically the opening of a pilot center in Niger by the end of the year. Officials have indicated that the center should open in the main northern city of Agadez, which is a major transit zone for thousands of West Africans who are trying to reach either Algeria or Libya in an attempt to get to Europe. According to a source in the French minister's entourage, other centres could follow in Arlit in the north and Diffa in the south, adding that while neither the nature of these programmes, nor their size, nor the key issue of funding has been decided, European funds could be mobilized. President Issoufou has welcomed this announcement, stressing however that the need to "attack the problem at its root" and that "the real solution is development. He further stated that "these problems of great migrations are much like those of rural exodus. People are leaving the countryside to the cities driven by poverty, the same way people leave poor countries to go to rich countries, simply because their situation is untenable." The EU is under growing migratory pressures and human trafficking, with EU officials now wanting to convince potential migrants not to attempt the increasingly deadly crossing. According to the latest figures, since the beginning of this year, 1,800 people have died in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean.



# Nigeria

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

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



## Security Summary

### Summary

MS Risk advises against all travel to Adamawa State, Borno State, Yobe State, Gombe State and Bauchi State. This is due to the frequent violent attacks, which have been occurring over the past months. We advise against all but essential travel to Kano state, Kaduna State, Jigwa State, Katsina State, Sokoto State, Zamfara State, Kebbi State, Jos City, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas in Plateau State; Okene Region of Kogi State. These areas have witnessed an increase in

violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to Mubi Town in Adamawa State and the area north of Mubi Town that borders Borno State where there has also been a rise in violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to the non-riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, Abia State, Kaduna City, Zaria City.

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



*Northern Nigeria*



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

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

Companies with workers in northern Nigeria, even in areas which are not subject to specific advice against travel, will require a high level of security. In light of the recent kidnappings of Westerners, employers are advised to review their security arrangements and to ensure that compounds are protected.

#### *Kidnapping*

Although recent incidents of kidnapping have mostly occurred in northern Nigeria, MS Risk advises that such kidnappings can take place anywhere in the country

#### *Threats and Terrorism*

Attacks by Islamist groups in northern Nigeria have become the biggest threat to stability in Africa's top oil producing country. This has been exacerbated by the fact that Western governments are currently concerned that militants may link up with groups elsewhere in the region, including al-Qaeda's North African wing, AQIM. These concerns have been further intensified by the conflict and military intervention in nearby Mali.

## On the Ground Reporting

- **23 May 2015** – On Saturday, Nigerian military claimed the killing of scores of Boko Haram militants and the rescue of twenty more hostages during an operation in Sambisa forest. A statement released by the defense ministry indicated “despite continuous encounter with large number of land mines which still litter the Sambisa forest, troops have forged ahead...as scores of the terrorists died in the assault on their bases on Friday,” adding “a total of 20 women and children were rescued at the end of the Friday operation” in the forest in the country's northeast. The statement also indicated that one soldier died while ten others were wounded in the assault on the rebel bases.
- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, a lawyer indicated that the country's incoming president may commute the death sentence of 66 soldiers who were convicted for refusing to fight Boko Haram. According to Femi Falana, incoming president Muhammadu Buhari has promised to review all operations against the militant group, adding that he remains confident that the soldiers, who at the time of their conviction indicated that they lacked weapons to take on the militants, would not be executed and face justice. Falana, a prominent human rights lawyer, who represented some of the 66 soldiers who were sentenced to death for conspiracy, cowardice and mutiny last year, indicated Friday that the Nigerian government had failed to adequately equip the units fighting the insurgency in the northeast, adding, “they (the soldiers) did not sign to commit suicide but to fight for their fatherland and since the government did not make weapons available, they were unable to fight.” He further disclosed, “the sentences are awaiting confirmation but we are taking steps to ensure that no soldier, no officer in Nigeria is executed on account of the negligence of the Nigerian state in motivating the soldiers to fight and equipping them.” According to the lawyer, outgoing President Goodluck



Jonathan “had refused to assist to the request of the convicted soldiers to review their matter... So happily the incoming government of Gen Muhammadu Buhari has promised to review the entire operation in the northeast region and we are confident that the cases of the officers and the soldiers will be reviewed so that justice will be done to them.”

- **20 May 2015** – According to the Nigerian army, nearly 600 Nigerian officers and troops faced charges before a court-martial on Wednesday. The unprecedented number of soldiers is believed to be on trial for alleged offenses related to the ongoing fight against Boko Haram. Speaking to journalists, army spokesman Col. Sani Usman disclosed that 579 officers and troopers are before two courts-martial taking place in Abuja to ensure a “quick dispensation of justice, discipline and professionalism.” No further details, including when the trials began, have been released. Last year, three courts-martial condemned 66 soldiers to death by firing squad for alleged cowardice, mutiny, aiding the enemy and other charges related to the fight against Boko Haram.
- **19 May 2015** – A local official reported Tuesday that Boko Haram gunmen have killed three people and abducted seven women in a raid on a northeastern district previously declared safe by the military. According to Madagali local government chief Maina Ularamu, “the insurgents attacked the (Sabon Gari Hyembula) village around 10:30 PM (2130 GMT) where they killed three people and kidnapped seven women,” adding that they looted food supplies and left thirteen people injured. Madagali fell under Boko Haram’s control in August, which forced thousands of residents to flee their homes. In March, the defense ministry indicated that the area was cleared of insurgents, resulting in those displaced to begin to return home. The latest violence however has forced civilians to flee the region again. This latest attack has also underscored the persisting threat posed by Boko Haram despite the ongoing military offensive. According to the district chief, militants “have been pushed out of Madagali district but there are still remnants... hiding in nearby mountains and bushes,” adding that the area has seen a string of night-time raids, with militants typically targeting food stores and kidnapping people.
  - At least eight people were killed Tuesday when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a livestock market in northeastern Nigeria, as Boko Haram violence begins to escalate after a period of relative calm. The suicide bombing targeted a livestock market in a village in Adamawa state, where militants shot dead three people and kidnapped seven women at the weekend. According to state assembly lawmaker Jerry Kundusi, the bombing occurred outside a livestock market at about 1:15 PM (1215 GMT) in the village of Garkida, which is located some 165 kilometres (100 miles) north of the state capital, Yola, and near the state border with Borno. Eyewitnesses have reported “it was a lone bomber who blew himself up just outside the livestock market.”
- **17 May 2015** – The Nigerian military on Sunday claimed that it has overrun ten Boko Haram camps in the militant group’s Sambisa forest stronghold. According to Defense spokesman Chris Olukolade, a number of rebels were killed in the offensive, with one soldier killed and two others injured in a landmine explosion. In a statement Olukolade disclosed, “the operation to clear the terrorists in Sambisa and other forests is continuing as troops in all fronts have been alerted to be on the look out for fleeing terrorists,” adding, “the Nigerian Air Force is Maintaining an active air surveillance to track the movement of terrorists for appropriate action as the operation continues.”
- **16 May 2015** – According to a regional official, Boko Haram militants have recaptured the strategic town of Marte in the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno, just weeks after the military indicated that it had contained the militants in a forest stronghold. Since 2013, the town, which is located along a strategic trading route between Nigeria and neighboring Cameroon and Chad, has been exchanged between the jihadists and government troops several times. While a regional military coalition, composed of troops from



Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has claimed a series of major victories against Boko Haram since it launched an offensive in February, recently, the Islamist group has been pushing back, carrying out a deadly assault on villages near Maiduguri, the first assault on the key northern city in three months. Deputy Governor Zannah Umar Mustapha of Borno state has indicated that officials now fear that hundreds of female suicide bombers may have entered Maiduguri, effectively using the panic that ensued Wednesday evening as hundreds of insurgents tried to attack Giwa Barracks, which is located on the outskirts of Maiduguri.

- On Saturday, a young suicide bomber blew herself up in Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state, killing at least seven people and wounding 27 others. According to eyewitnesses, the girl, believed to be aged about 12, detonated the explosives at a busy market near a bus station. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, the attack bears the hallmark of previous Boko Haram suicide bombings. While in recent weeks, a military offensive has recaptured significant amount of territory from the militant group, resulting in the frequency of raids and bomb attacks to significantly decrease, over the past week, several attacks suggest that the militants are returning to guerrilla warfare tactics.
- **14 May 2015** – Lead poisoning has killed twenty-eight children in central Niger state. According to junior health minister Fidelis Nwankwo, “as of 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, 65 cases and 28 deaths had occurred giving a case fatality rate of 43 percent... All the 28 cases were children below the age of five.” Officials have disclosed that the victims of the poisoning, which is suspected to be due to illegal gold mining, were found to have levels of lead in their blood that were 17 – 22 times higher than the minimum international standards. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Fidelis Nwankwo disclosed, “the devastating impact of this outbreak is associated with new mining sites which were found to contain more leaded ores which are often brought home for crushing and processing.” Nwankwo further indicated that animals and livestock were also affected by the outbreak.
- **13 May 2015** – Residents and the army have reported that Boko Haram fighters launched an attack on Maiduguri on Wednesday but were repelled by Nigerian troops after intense clashes. Witnesses reported that dozens of militants armed with heavy guns and rocket-propelled grenades stormed the northern outskirts of the city, near the Giwa military base, shooting and firing explosives indiscriminately. In a statement released late Wednesday, the army disclosed that soldiers had fought off “a band of terrorists” and that two bombs carried by female suicide bombers were detonated ahead of the attack. There was no immediate information released pertaining to any casualties. Wednesday’s assault is the first to occur on Maiduguri in three months, following sweeping offensives on Boko Haram strongholds carried out by a regional coalition of troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. **Update (14 May 2015)** – Sources disclosed Thursday that at least three soldiers, six vigilantes and dozens of Boko Haram insurgents were killed during clashes that erupted in Maiduguri on Wednesday. According to civilian vigilante official Yusuf Sani, “three soldiers were killed during a fight with the terrorists while six of our members were killed by three female suicide bombers.” In the aftermath of the attack, the army imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew, with on the ground sources reporting that streets were deserted and that only soldiers and police were seen patrolling. Schools, markets, and public buildings, including hospitals, were also closed.

## Domestic News

- **19 May 2015** – On Tuesday, the White House announced that Secretary of State John Kerry will lead the US delegation to the inauguration of Nigerian president-elect Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja next week.



White House officials have disclosed that other members of the US delegation will be announced in the coming days. Buhari is due to be sworn in on 29 May. A large number of African and Western leaders are also expected to attend the ceremony. Kerry last visited Nigeria in January, in the run-up to the presidential elections, when he issued a clear warning that the strength of future US cooperation would be tied to the success of the polls.



# Sierra Leone

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



## Security Summary

MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to Sierra Leone. This is due to the current Ebola outbreak in the country. Violent incidents have taken place under cover of crowds in the streets of Freetown. 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.



## International Developments

- **12 May 2015** – Italy's health ministry disclosed Tuesday that a nurse, who came to Italy from Sierra Leone last week, has tested positive for the Ebola virus. According to the ministry, a blood sample was sent from Sardinia to Rome on Tuesday, where the nurse had arrived on 8 May. The nurse, who has not been identified in order to protect his privacy, worked for the non-governmental aid group Emergency in Sierra Leone. Officials at the ministry disclosed that the nurse noticed the first symptoms on Sunday evening and was admitted to the infectious disease ward of Sassari



hospital. He will soon be transferred to Rome's Spallanzani infectious disease hospital, which last year successfully treated an Italian doctor who had contracted the Ebola virus after working in Sierra Leone.



# Togo

## No Travel Restrictions



## Security Summary

There is currently no travel advisory for Togo. Crime is on the rise in the capital city Lomé. 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 Lomé city limits, especially after dark.

## On the Ground Reporting

- **16 May 2015** – On Saturday, thousands of opposition supporters marched through the Togolese capital, protesting the results of the presidential elections, which effectively extended the Gnassingbe family's nearly five decades in power. While international observers have indicated that the 25 April election was free and transparent, with the United Nations approving the conduct of the vote, Togo's opposition has labelled the results fraudulent. President Faure Gnassingbe won a third term in office with 59 percent of the vote, while his closest rival, opposition leader Jean-Pierre Fabre, finished with 35 percent. On Saturday, Fabre, who has declared himself the elected president, told the crowd that "we need people to be aware of the seriousness of the situation and that, together, we are working to stop it." The opposition has indicated that it has decided not to challenge the results of the elections in the country's Constitutional Court as it believes that the court is biased in favor of the president.

## Domestic News

- **22 May 2015** – On Friday, Togo's Prime Minister Kwesi Seleagodji Ahoomey-Zunu and his government resigned, in an expected move after elections last month, which saw President Faure Gnassingbe extend his family's nearly five-decade hold on power. On 4 May, President Gnassingbe was sworn in for his third term in office, after winning nearly 59 percent of the vote. In a statement that was read on national television, the president thanked the prime minister and his government for their service, noting that their resignations at the start of a new term were in line with "republican practice." It was not immediately clear if any of the departing ministers would be offered posts in the president's new administration.





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