



# West Africa Security Report

25 September 2015

Issue No. 2

MS | RISK

11 - 24 Sept  
2015

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Burkina Faso.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Security Update.....	3
Major Incidents.....	4
<b>Ivory Coast.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Security Update.....	11
Major Incidents.....	11
<b>Mali.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Security Update.....	13
Major Incidents.....	13
<b>Niger.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Security Update.....	16
Major Incidents.....	16
<b>About MS Risk.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## Burkina Faso

---



### Security Update

A military coup occurred on 16 September, bringing to power General Gilbert Diendere, an aide to ousted president Blaise Compaore, who was forced from power after a popular uprising in October 2014. In the wake of Compaore's removal, an interim government, led by President Michel Kafando, had been running the country. Presidential and legislative elections were originally scheduled to take place on 11 October, with a possible second round of voting on 15 November. On 17 September 2015, General Diendere took over as head of a new National Democratic Council, just one day after soldiers from Compaore's elite Presidential Security Regiment (RSP) entered a cabinet meeting, taking President Kafando and Prime Minister Isaac Zida into custody. A nationwide curfew from 7 PM to 6 AM local time was put in place and land and air borders were closed. Gen. Diendere accused the interim president and prime minister of violating a post-Compaore transition agreement by barring his supporters from running for election. Over the coming days, violent protests erupted in Ouagadougou and in other towns across the West African country, including in Bobo Dioulasso in the west and Fada-Ngourma in the east. In the capital, street protests were held outside the presidential palace, where the interim leaders were being held. RSP officers opened fire in a bid to disperse demonstrators. On 18 September, the borders were reopened, however tensions remained high. In Ouagadougou, shops remained close. Weekend talks resulted in a proposed plan, which would see Kafando put back in power and elections held by 22 November. On 22 September, one day after Burkina Faso army chiefs urged coup soldiers to lay down their arms, Kafando and Zida are freed. Gen. Diendere announces that he will abide by a deal that was reached with top African mediators. Hospital sources have reported that at least ten people have been killed and 113 left injured in the violence. While on 23 September, President Kafando announced that he was back in power, the situation in Burkina Faso remains fragile, and tensions continue to be high. MS Risk advises all travellers to Burkina Faso to be aware that there could be unannounced demonstrations and that the security situation may deteriorate with little notice. The airport and land borders may be subject to closure at short notice, therefore we advise that travellers monitor local media and check with your airline for further information.

There is an underlying threat from terrorism. Travellers are reminded that attacks could be indiscriminate, and may occur in places that are frequented by foreigners. MS Risk currently advises against all travel to the area north of the town of Boulsa. This is due to the town's proximity to the border with Mali.

### *Threats and Concerns*

There is a general threat from terrorism throughout the Sahel region. While for the most part, Burkina Faso has not been affected by Islamist militancy, the country's shared border with Mali, coupled with the regional threat, 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 Threat*

There is a heightened risk that terrorist groups may cross the northern borders from Mali and Niger into Burkina Faso in order to carry out kidnappings. On 4 April 2015, an armed group kidnapped a Western national in the Tambau Region. His current whereabouts remain unknown. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel region, and a number of these hostages continue to be held.

### *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, particularly 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.

## Major Incidents

### **23 September**

A week after a military takeover, Burkina Faso's interim President Michel Kafando announced on Wednesday that he is back in charge and that civilian rule has been restored. His announcement however came as coup leader General Gilbert Diendere went to welcome a number of African leaders arriving to oversee the transfer of power. Overnight, his presidential guard agreed to a deal with the regular army in a bid to avoid further violence. They also pledged to return to their barracks and the army to withdraw from the capital Ouagadougou. Speaking to reporters at the foreign ministry, Kafando confirmed that he has "...returned to work." However at around the same time, around 5 km (3 miles) away, coup leader General Gilbert Diendere appeared at the airport, where he was backed by a contingent of his presidential guard, to welcome regional leaders arriving to try to negotiate an end to the crisis. Sources have reported that Interim President Michel Kafando and Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida will mark their return to power in an official handover ceremony in Ouagadougou later on Wednesday, adding that until then, Diendere will remain in power. The two leaders were arrested by members of the presidential guard a week ago. In recent days, the country's army deployed troops into the capital in a bid to press Diendere and his soldiers to cede power. The military threatened to disarm them by force if they failed to step down. While troops loyal to the government, who had arrived in the capital from bases across the country, were not visible on the streets of Ouagadougou, presidential guard soldiers maintained their positions at the national television headquarters despite an agreement signed over night between the two sides, under which they were to be confined to barracks in order to avoid clashes.

Overnight, the elite soldiers behind a coup in Burkina Faso and regular troops loyal to the government signed an agreement to avoid an outbreak of violence as mediators were due to arrive in the capital. According to a source, under the terms of the accord, the presidential guard agreed to leave Ouagadougou's streets and return to barracks while loyalists will withdraw 50 km (31 miles) outside of the capital city. The presidential guard, which stormed a cabinet meeting a week ago, detaining the president, prime

minister and other government members, will be confined to Camp Naba Koom II, which is their base in the capital. They must carry out an inventory of their arsenal within 72 hours.

### **22 September**

Burkina Faso's presidency has announced that the presidents of Benin, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo are due to arrive in Burkina Faso's capital on Tuesday evening on a mission to negotiate the peaceful roll-back of a coup by presidential guard soldiers last week. The heads of state are due to travel from an emergency regional summit on the crisis, which is being held in Nigeria. They will arrive in Ouagadougou around 7 PM local time and will be accompanied by the United Nations regional envoy in West Africa.

On Tuesday, the country's army warned the elite troops behind last week's coup that it had "the means to attack" them. In a statement, the army chiefs disclosed that "the national armed forces who arrived yesterday in Ouagadougou could have attacked the Presidential Security Regiment (RSP) from the moment they entered, and they have the capacity and the means to do so." The statement further indicated that the troops had not initially used force when they entered the capital late on Monday because they wanted to "prioritize the security of the population," adding that "the army is at the service of the population and it will remain so." The release of the statement by the army comes as the RSP continues mediated talks with army representatives in Ouagadougou. Both sides have claimed that they want to avoid an armed confrontation.

### **21 September**

On Monday, General Gilbert Diendere, who seized power in a coup last week, apologized to the nation, stating that he would hand over control to a civilian transitional government after the military warned that its forces would converge on the capital and forcibly disarm the soldiers behind the power grab. In a communiqué that was issued to reporters, Diendere stated that his presidential guard unit "confirms our commitment to giving power back to civilian authorities, which was one of the key conditions of a draft agreement that resulted from weekend negotiations with regional mediators. Diendere further noted that the compromises were necessary in order to avoid further bloodshed, adding that the risk of clashes could lead to "chaos, civil war and massive human rights violations." The announcement came just hours after the heads of the National Armed Forces warned earlier on Monday that troops would disarm the presidential guard. In the wake of the announcement, people gathered at sunset, cheering on the highway as they waited for the anticipated entry of the country's regular army, which vowed to disarm the presidential guard, known as the RSP. Tensions however have remained high in the streets of the capital, with many demonstrators stating that they felt that the ECOWAS compromise plan was too lenient on the junta.

The country's interim president Michel Kafando voiced reservations Monday about a regional proposal to end the crisis, which was sparked last week by a military coup. In an interview, Kafando stated that he has "...reservations about this draft agreement," which leaves "deep-rooted problems" without solutions. Kafando further disclosed that he was "still under house arrest" and was "not a part of the negotiations" that were mediated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that came up with the 12-point plan. The deal provides for presidential and parliamentary elections to be

held by 22 November at the latest, and crucially, would allow for pro-Compaore candidates to take part after they complained about being excluded from the planned 11 October polls. The regional body also wants General Diendere's regime "to restore the transitional institutions and president Kafando." ECOWAS mediators have disclosed that a future Burkinabe leader should decide the fate of the RSP, however they proposed an amnesty for those behind the coup.

On Monday, the country's army chiefs ordered coup soldiers to lay down their weapons as troops headed for the capital city from the provinces. An army statement disclosed "all the national armed forces are converging on Ouagadougou with the sole aim of disarming the presidential guard (RSP) without any bloodshed." According to a military source, soldiers were headed for Ouagadougou from the country's second city Bobo Dioulasso in the west and nearby Dedougou, Kaya, and Fada N'Gourma in the east and Ouahigouya in the north.

The speaker for Burkina Faso's transitional parliament has rejected a proposed deal that includes an amnesty for the leaders of last week's coup. Cherif Sy, the speaker of parliament, has already declared that he is the interim head of state until Michel Kafando is reinstated. The deal, which was put forward by regional mediators after weekend talks to end the crisis, includes a 12-point plan that also suggests reversing the ban on members of the previous president's party from standing in the upcoming elections. The proposal suggests that anyone detained since the coup on 17 September is freed and that an amnesty law for all events that occurred following the coup is put in place. It also suggests that transitional President Michel Kafando is reinstated until the election, which the proposal states should be held no later than 22 November. Coup leader General Gilbert Diendere, who wants to remain in power until an election is held, has already rejected that point.

### **20 September**

On Sunday, violence broke out at a central hotel in the capital city where talks were taking place with regional mediators as demonstrators opposed to last week's coup fought with supporters of the military. According to sources, clashes erupted as crowds in front of the hotel awaited news of the talks. Late on Saturday, mediators hinted at a breakthrough in the discussions, stating that they would wait to make an announcement on Sunday.

Late on Sunday, mediators, led by the presidents of Benin and Senegal, announced a plan, which calls for new elections by the end of November. The plan, which was drafted by mediators, is now supposed to go before the West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS in Nigeria on Tuesday.

France has suspended all military, civilian and financial cooperation with Burkina Faso until civilian authority is restored. In a statement, French President Francois Holland announced the suspension, and also threatened sanctions against anyone who opposes democratic elections, adding that he would lobby European partners to do the same.

### **19 September**

While late on Saturday West African mediators hinted at a breakthrough in Burkina Faso's political crisis, at a press conference, Benin President Thomas Boni Yayi did not provide any details on a potential agreement, disclosing

instead that a “good decision” would be announced on Sunday. After two days of emergency talks, Boni Yayi hinted at a return to power late on Saturday. Coup leader General Gilbert Diendere also signalled that a deal had been reached, telling reporters, “I never said I wanted to hold onto power...Its now a question of how to proceed.” Earlier, Senegalese President Macky Sall, who is also the chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), had reported that negotiators were seeking the return of Burkina Faso’s interim President Michel Kafando. This has been confirmed by a foreign diplomatic source in Ouagadougou who disclosed that “what is envisaged – and what will be done – is maintaining Kafando as head of state and for the government to complete the transition,” adding that Diendere should leave.” Earlier in the day, Presidents Sall and Boni Yayi met with Kafando at his home after two hours of talks with opposition leaders and civil society groups. Speaking shortly after the meeting, President Sall disclosed “we held in-depth discussions with President Kafando on the urgent situation and how to put in place a return to normality.”

On Saturday, anti-coup demonstrators burned tires at roadblocks in the capital city, shouting slogans denouncing General Gilbert Diendere, who was named the leader of the country on Thursday after members of the elite Presidential Security Regiment stormed a government meeting and detained the acting president, prime minister and several other officials. Sources reported Saturday that at least ten people have been killed and more than 100 injured in the crackdown on anti-coup demonstrators in recent days. On Saturday, Gen. Pingrenoma Zagre, the army chief, issued a statement condemning all violence against civilians and urging soldiers to act “with professionalism.” He further called on civilians to “trust the armed forces” as they would to resolve the crisis.

The African Union (AU) has suspended Burkina Faso and imposed sanctions on the leaders of its military coup. The 54-member bloc has also imposed a travel ban and assets freeze on the junta’s leaders, with Uganda’s representative denouncing the kidnapping of Burkina’s interim leaders as a “terrorist” act.

### **18 September**

On Friday, the country’s military released the interim president, who was detained during a coup that saw his government dissolved and soldiers blocking protesters from gathering in Burkina Faso’s capital. The junta reported Friday that interim President Michel Kafando has been freed from military custody, noting however that the country’s prime minister remains under house arrest. While protesters in the capital Ouagadougou were thwarted, unrest flared in other regions of the country, where sources reported that some burned the homes of former president Blaise Compaore’s associates. The country’s airport and land borders were re-opened just a day after they were closed.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the military power grab the presidents of Benin and Senegal have begun mediation efforts in a bid to restore constitutional rule. Senegalese President Macky Sall, who is also the chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) bloc, along with Benin President Thomas Boni Yayi, are due to arrive in the capital to hold negotiations in a bid to end the political crisis. General Gilbert Diendere, a former top Compaore aide now in power in Burkina Faso, has disclosed that

he has met with some members of the international community but not with local political leaders yet. On Friday, he indicated “we are considering meeting the different political parties very soon.” Sources in the capital reported that Ouagadougou was calm throughout the night, with people respecting a curfew that was imposed by the military. In the morning, there were fewer cars on the road than usual, with some shops remaining close. This is sharp contrast to Thursday’s events, with clashes erupted between coup forces and protests. According to one source, the fighting resulted in the death of thirty people and left upwards of 60 people wounded. Unrest however has continued in other parts of the country, with anti-coup protesters gathering in the city of Bobo Dioulasso and in the eastern city of Ngorma-Fada on Thursday.

Sources reported Friday that three people were killed and at least thirteen wounded in new clashes that erupted in the capital on Friday after this week’s military coup. The deaths in Ouagadougou bring to six the total number of people killed following the military takeover.

### **17 September**

On Thursday, General Gilbert Diendere was named the head of a new ruling council in Burkina Faso after a military coup. On Wednesday, officers from the RSP linked to former president Blaise Compaore burst into a cabinet meeting, seizing acting president Michel Kafando along with Prime Minister Isaac Zida and two ministers before announcing their coup on Thursday morning. In a statement that was read on the radio by spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Mamadou Bamba, the coup leaders made General Diendere president of the new National Council for Democracy (CND). He disclosed that they had been prompted to act by the “serious pre-election security situation” ahead of next month’s presidential and legislative elections. While for nearly three decades, Diendere was the chief-of-staff to Compaore, his friend from youth and fellow soldier, on Thursday, in response to a question on whether Compaore was involved in the coup, Diendere replied that he has had no contact with the former president after the Compaore fled to the Ivory Coast following his ouster last year.

On Thursday, French President Francois Hollande condemned the “coup d’état” in Burkina Faso, stating that he currently sees “no reason” for French troops, who are based in the West African country, to intervene. Speaking to reporters, President Hollande stated, “I strongly condemn this coup d’état because an electoral process was under way and the dates had been fixed...I call on these groups to immediately stop what they are doing,” adding, “France has friendly relations with Burkina Faso and we cannot just allow what is happening today.” The president noted however that the 220 French troops that are currently based in the capital Ouagadougou, as part of a regional force that is fighting jihadists in West Africa, “have no reason to intervene.”

### **16 September**

On Wednesday, soldiers from the presidential guard interrupted a cabinet meeting and detained Burkina Faso’s transitional president and prime minister, raising fears of a coup just weeks before the West African nation was due to hold an election to replace its longtime leader, who was ousted late last year in a popular uprising. In recent months, members of the presidential security unit, which was formed by former president Blaise Compaore, have been at odds with transitional leaders. On Wednesday, they



banned interim President Michel Kafando and Prime Minister Lt. Col. Yacouba Isaac Zida from leaving, with sources reporting that they put up barricades around the presidential palace. Hours after their arrest, sources reported that gunfire erupted in the capital city as soldiers behind the standoff attempted to disperse protesters who were marching on the presidential palace, where the two transitional leaders were being detained. According to sources, people were seen fleeing in all directions as the shooting continued. Moumina Cheriff Sy, the speaker of the transitional parliament, has called Wednesday's developments "a blow to the republic and its institutions." In a statement, he confirmed that "members of the presidential guard burst into the room of the cabinet of ministers at around 14:30 and took hostage the president of Burkina Faso, the head of state, Michel Kafando, the Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida, and the minister of public administration...and the minister of housing." UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was "outraged by the reports of the detentions. In a statement, he called for the officials' immediate release, adding, "this incident is a flagrant violation of Burkina Faso's constitution and transitional charter." So far, there has been no immediate claim by the military on public airwaves that they are now in control of the country. The move however created panic across the capital Ouagadougou and prompted people to close shops early and to head home over fears of violent demonstrations. It comes just two days after a commission charged with drafting reforms for Burkina Faso's transitional government proposed dismantling the elite unit. The presidential guard, known as the RSP, was a key pillar of President Compaore's regime before he was toppled by demonstrations in October last year. Burkina Faso is due to go to the polls on 11 October.

### **15 September**

According to a commission, which has been charged with proposing reforms after a popular uprising toppled the country's longtime president late last year, Burkina Faso's powerful presidential guard should be dismantled. The elite unit, which is known locally as the RSP, was a key pillar of President Blaise Compaore's regime before mass demonstrations forced him to flee the country. Its interference in the interim administration that followed Compaore's ouster, including attempts to force the prime minister's resignation of over his plans to reduce its size and pay, provoked further protests and prompted the authorities to call for a review of the RSP's role. In a report submitted to Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida, who himself is a former commander in the RSP, the national reconciliation and reform commission described the 1,200 troops strong unit as "an army within an army," calling for the regiment to be broken up and for its members to be redeployed within the framework of a broader reform of the military. The commission further disclosed that responsibility for ensuring the security of the West African's president and state institutions should be conferred upon special units of the police and gendarmes. A decision on the RSP's future however will most likely take place after the 11 October elections.

### **10 September**

According to officials, fourteen candidates will take part in next month's election. According to a statement, which was issued on Thursday, two candidates out of the 16 have been declared unfit for the 11 October vote. A new electoral code, which was adopted by the transitional parliament, effectively excludes everyone who backed former president Blaise Compaore's proposal to amend the constitution so that he could seek

another term in office. Candidates of the former ruling party have also been declared ineligible.

## Ivory Coast

---



### Security Update

Presidential elections have been scheduled for 25 October, with a possible second round of voting on 22 November. All travellers to Ivory Coast in the weeks leading up to the polls, and during the voting period, are advised to maintain a high level of security awareness and exercise caution. In what is the first major outbreak of violence ahead of the presidential elections, on 11 September one person was killed as protesters torched vehicles and clashed with police in a number of towns. Reports have indicated that the worst fighting occurred in the western village of Logouata, with clashes erupting between rival groups. Officials also reported that incidents occurred in former president Laurent Gbagbo's hometown of Gagnoa, as well as in the town of Banoua, which is the hometown of his wife, Simone Gbagbo. In the capital Abidjan, protesters set fire to a bus in the district of Yopougon. The protesters occurred in the wake of the Constitutional Council's release of a list of ten contenders running in the 25 October election. Opposition groups urged civilians to launch protests on the grounds that both incumbent Alassane Ouattara's parents were not Ivorian – the same objection that was cited ahead of deadly unrest that erupted in 2010 – 2011. As the presidential elections approach, further demonstrations may occur. We advise that during the election period, all travellers avoid political rallies, demonstrations and campaign events as well as polling stations and large crowds. Demonstrations may turn violent with minimal notice. We advise that all travellers monitor the local news for updates.

MS Risk currently advises against all but essential travel to the western regions of Dix-Huit Montagnes, Haut Sassandra, Moyen-Cavally and Bas-Sassandra, particularly the area to the west of Duekoue up to the border with Liberia. This is due to the risk of serious violence by local militias. As recently as February 2015, fatal clashes between militias and the security forces have occurred in this area.

### Major Incidents

**13 September** President Alassane Ouattara has called on his supporters to “forgive” their political opponents and has urged them to mobilise for the upcoming presidential elections, in which he is seeking a second term in office. Speaking at Sunday's rally, Ouattara stated that we must “reinforce reconciliation and social cohesion,” adding, “I ask each of you to forgive...to act as if nothing had happened in the past, whatever the insults and humiliations.” The upcoming poll, which is due to take place on 25 October, is seen as crucial to return the country to stability. The last presidential election in 2010 resulted in deadly violence.

On Sunday, a supporter of former president Laurent Gbagbo, Samba David, was arrested at his home, which is located west of the capital city. While the reason for his arrest remains unclear, David is a member of a political party,

the CNC, which opposes President Alassane Ouattara, and which on Thursday called for protests against the incumbent. His arrest also comes just days after David stated that the conditions for “a peaceful election have not been met. We march to avoid a new election crisis.” Ten candidates are running in the presidential race, with the election due to take place on 25 October.

### **11 September**

In what appears to be the first major outbreak of violence ahead of next month’s presidential election, one person was killed as protesters torched vehicles and clashed with police in a number of towns in Ivory Coast on Thursday. Sources have reported that the worst clashes occurred in the western village of Logouata between rival groups who were armed with knives, clubs, and rocks. According to one eyewitness, one elderly man was killed in the unrest and several houses were set on fire. Incidents were also reported in former president Laurent Gbagbo’s hometown of Gagnoa, where protesters constructed barricades and set fire to tyres. Meanwhile in the town of Banoua, which is the hometown of his wife Simone Gbagbo, a security source reported that police used teargas when clashes broke out between southerners and northerners. There were also reports that in the district of Yopougon, in the capital Abidjan, protesters set fire to a bus and stoned another. The protests, which were called by part of the opposition, come just a day after the release by the Constitutional Council of the official list of ten contenders running in the 25 October election. That list includes incumbent Alassane Ouattara. Opposition groups urged civilians to launch protests on the grounds that both the president’s parents were not Ivorian. This is the same objection that was cited ahead of deadly unrest that erupted in 2010 – 2011, which left more than 3,000 dead following presidential elections.

Police officials reported Friday that at least nineteen people were killed and 37 left injured when a crowded minibus and another passenger vehicle collided in the port town of San Pedro. According to police chief Seydou Ouattara, the accident was caused by “a technical problem in the vehicles.”

## Mali

---



### Security Update

Security in Mali has continued to remain unstable, particularly in the northern area of the country. On 15 September, the UN mission in Mali reported that a government-allied militia has withdrawn from a northern town, which it occupied last month in the wake of clashes with Tuareg separatists. In a statement, the UN disclosed that members of the Platform militia coalition had withdrawn from the town of Anefis two weeks after they first indicated that they would do so. Officials however have warned that some Platform members have been seen moving further north, towards Aguel'hoc, which is another separatist stronghold. Days later, officials reported that Mali's former rebel alliance, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) has taken control of Anefis.

Elsewhere in the country, jihadist militants demonstrated over the past few weeks their continued threat to the stability and security of Mali. In particular, the Macina Liberation Front (FLM) appears to be increasing its operations across the West African nation. On 13 September, military and local government sources reported that Islamists killed two police officers at the Ouekoro post in the Bankass circle. While no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, officials believe that the FLM is behind it. Meanwhile on 19 September, security officials reported a gun battle, also blamed on members of the FLM, which occurred in central Mali near the border with Burkina Faso. In that incident, two policemen and two civilians were killed in the village of Bih, which is located 5 km (3 miles) from the Burkinabe border.

MS Risk currently advises against all travel to the provinces of Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu. We currently advise against all but essential travel to the rest of the country.

#### *Terrorism Threat*

There is a high threat from terrorism. MS Risk advises all in Mali to be aware that attacks could be indiscriminate and can occur in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. Following the French/African military intervention in January 2013, the threat of retaliatory kidnap or attack against Western interests has increased. While the threat of kidnap exists across Mali, it is particularly high in areas north of Mopti. Recently, there have been a number of bomb attacks that have occurred in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. Further such attacks are likely to occur.

### Major Incidents

#### **21 September**

The Malian government announced Monday that it is postponing regional elections, which have been opposed by a separatist group in the north. Late on Monday, Malian ministers reported that municipal and regional elections, initially scheduled to take place on 25 October, have been delayed because of insecurity in the northern region of the country coupled with a lack of

administration in areas. Sources have disclosed that this decision may calm tensions pertaining to the vote. While in August, the Malian government announced the elections, stating that they could help reassert the government's authority in the north, earlier this month, the main Tuareg separatist coalition announced that it would oppose efforts to hold the elections.

**19 September**

Security officials have reported that a gun battle, which has been blamed on jihadists, in central Mali near the border with Burkina Faso has killed two policemen and two civilians dead on Saturday. According to a provincial police official, the victims were killed "by armed Islamists in the village of Bih," which is located 5 km (3 miles) from the Burkinabe border. The official further reported that the gunmen were travelling on motorcycle. Meanwhile a Malian security source has reported that one of the policemen and one of the civilians died immediately as a result of the shooting while the other two victims died of their injuries soon after. A source has disclosed that the attackers were members of the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), a new group that emerged earlier this year and which has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, some of which have targeted security forces in the central region of the country.

**18 September**

Officials reported Friday that Mali's former rebel alliance, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) have taken control of the northeastern town of Anefis after loyalist fighters, who seized it last month, withdrew. According to a security official in MINUSMA, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, "CMA rebels have retaken control of the locality of Anefis today...But without a fight. Several of their vehicles arrived in the city." The news was confirmed by Almou Ag Mohamed, a CMA spokesman, who disclosed that "Anefis is under our control...In violation of the ceasefire, militias took the town. Under pressure, they left."

**15 September**

The United Nations mission in Mali has reported that a government-allied militia has withdrawn from a northern town that it occupied last month in the wake of clashes with Tuareg separatists. In a statement released Tuesday evening, the UN mission disclosed that elements of the Platform militia coalition had withdrawn from Anefis two weeks after they first indicated that they would do. The mission however noted that it was concerned that some Platform elements had been observed moving even farther north towards Aguel'hoc, which is another separatist stronghold.

**14 September**

According to sources, fighting erupted between rival groups near Mali's desert border with Algeria on Thursday in what is the latest violation of a UN-backed peace agreement. Attaya Ag Mohamed, a representative of the separatist Coordination of Azawad Movements has reported that "fighting resumed this morning in Inafarak where pro-government militias arrived recently to prepare an offensive against the CMA," adding that around seventy pick-up trucks belonging to the rival groups, which are collectively known as Platform, were spotted in the area. He indicated that 15 fighters, including 13 from pro-government militias, were killed. Mehdi Ag Almoubareck, spokesman for the Platform's largest group, GATIA, reported that its fighters were assaulted by the CMA early on Thursday, adding that they fought back. In August, the two sides clashed near the town of Anefis in fighting that killed at least twenty people. While after months of

negotiations the militias signed a peace accord in June, mediators have been struggling to make them abide by its terms, with sources reporting that the battle for positions amongst armed groups has been motivated party by a competition for the control of smuggling routes through the desert to neighbouring Algeria and Niger. On Wednesday, Algerian media reported a large arms seizure, including heavy machine guns, grenades and ammunition in Inafarak.

**13 September**

Military and local government sources reported Sunday that Islamists from a group that has been linked to a deadly hotel siege have attacked a police post in the central region of the country, killing two police officers. According to army spokesman Colonel Souleymane Maiga, “this afternoon at around 17:00 GMT, unidentified armed men opened fire on two police officers at the Ouekoro post in the Bankass circle,” adding that “the two police officers were killed.” Mahamane Cisse, a councillor in the Mopti region, has disclosed that the “terrorists” were fighters for radical Islamic preacher Amadou Koufa’s Macina Liberation Front (FLM). Cisse further disclosed that the fighters in Saturday’s attack moved on after killing the police officer to a nearby local government building, adding, “there, they set fire to two vehicles and the residence of the sub-prefect, who fortunately was not there.” While minimal information is current known about this extremist group, it has been linked to the hostage drama, which occurred in August in the nearby town of Severe. During that incident, thirteen people, including five UN workers, were killed.

**12 September**

A separatist coalition in Mali has disclosed that it will oppose efforts to hold elections next month, an announcement that could potentially worsen the already fragile security situation in Mali’s northern region. In August, the Malian government announced that it would organize regional and local elections on 25 October, in an election that would effectively help extend the government’s authority in the north. However this week, a spokesman for the main separatist coalition reported that the timeline was “inconceivable.” Almouzamile Ag Mohamed further reported that a June peace accord requires that a transition team be established in the north first. According to sources, a document dated 9 September and signed by the coalition’s military leaders indicates that any attempts to campaign in northern separatist-held territory “will be punished.”

## Niger

---



### Security Update

MS Risk currently 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 that links Assamakato Agadez and the city of Agadez; areas of Tahoua province north of the city of Tahoua, including the city itself; the area of Tillaberi province north of Niamey to Menaka; and areas within 40 km of the border with Nigeria in the provinces of Diffa, Maradi and Zinder. We currently advise against all but essential travel to the rest of the country, including the capital city Niamey.

#### *Terrorism and Kidnapping*

There is a high threat from terrorism and kidnapping. Attacks could be indiscriminate and may occur in places that are frequented by foreigners.

There is a growing threat from Nigerian-based Boko Haram. On 6 February 2015, Nigerian and Chadian military forces were attacked by Boko Haram in the towns of Bosso and Diffa. On 8 February 2015, there was an explosion in the town of Diffa, which resulted in a number of deaths and injuries. With military operations, aimed at ending Boko Haram's six-year insurgency, ongoing in northeastern Nigeria, it is likely that further attacks may take place, particularly in those areas of Niger that border northern Nigeria. MS Risk advises all travellers to the Diffa region to remain alert and to monitor local updates.

### Major Incidents

#### **15 September**

The former head of parliament and exiled opposition figure Hama Amadou, who is currently being sought in connection with an investigation into child-trafficking, vowed on Monday to return to Niger and to stand in next year's presidential election. Some thirty members of Niger's political and social elite, including Hama's wife, have been charged with acquiring around thirty new-born babies from "baby factories" in neighbouring Nigeria. Last year, Hama, who was once a close ally of President Mahamadou Issoufou but who is now considered to be one of his chief rivals in the February 2016 elections, fled to France before he could be questioned by investigators. Throughout the case, Hama has maintained that the case is politically motivated, and on Sunday, he was nominated as his MODEN party's candidate for the presidency. In an interview, Hama stated that he "...will be in Niger. I will participate in the elections, even if I am in prison. I'll be there soon," adding, "I will be with the opposition and if I finish third once again, I will support the opposition candidate in the second round, whoever that is." Recently, Niger's Interior Minister Hassoumi Massaoudou disclosed that Hama would



be arrested if he returned to Niger. While Hama finished third in the last presidential election in 2011, and subsequently supported Issoufou in a run-off, effectively helping seal his victory, the two men fell out in 2013 over the president's formation of a government of national unity. At the time, Hama accused the president of making the decision unilaterally.

### **11 September**

On Friday, the United Nations called for “peaceful and credible” elections in Niger, stating that the key polls are necessary to keep the West African nation stable despite on going political tensions and threats from radical movements. Speaking at a press briefing, UN special envoy to West Africa elections Mohamed Ibn Chambas stated that “it is vital to support the electoral process in order to consolidate gains...for peace...by way of peaceful and credible, transparent and participatory elections.” On Thursday, Chambas ended three days of talks with political parties, civil society leaders, local and international non-governmental organizations as well as the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which organizes the elections. The UN diplomat also held talks with President Mahamadous Issoufou, who is planning to seek a second term in office in next year's polls. Chambas disclosed that everyone he had spoken with “wishes to avoid a political crisis in Niger,” stressing “the importance of maintaining stability.” He added that “Niger is caught in a vice between the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram in the south, the instability in Libya in the north and the precarious situation on the west on the border with Mali,” where armed groups linked to al-Qaeda continue to operate. The UN envoy noted however that in spite of these threats, “Niger remains an island of stability, but this stability is fragile.” Political tensions across the country have remained high, particularly amongst opposition parties who have accused the president of provoking rifts in their ranks in a bid to win a second term in office.

## About MS Risk

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

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 Human Rights and Security. 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 in the field. MS Risk supports clients in a variety of business sectors with the following services:

- Security Consulting
  - Risk assessments and intelligence reporting
  - Planning and management
  - Due diligence and investigations.
- Project Management
  - Interim security
  - Training
  - Special assignments
- Crisis Management
  - Crisis response
  - 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)

Contact Information:

Email: [info@msrisk.com](mailto:info@msrisk.com)      24/7 Telephone: +44 207 754 3555



South Suite, Ragnall House, 18 Peel Road

Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 4LZ

**Directors**

S.J. Bingham, V.K. Prentice, P.O.J Tracy

Registered in the Isle of Man No. 007435V