



SAR Consultancy (Security Analysis and Research) Special Bulletin – Evolving Security Situation in Advance of Presidential Elections, 14 February 2015

As the general election in Nigeria approaches, the prevailing security situation is such that many are questioning the feasibility of conducting elections in all 36 states. While the security situation in the North of Nigeria is attracting much of the focus at present, much of the politically related violence and other violent criminality go relatively unmentioned. Furthermore, other factors such as the drop in oil prices, the outbreak of bird flu, and reported increase in piracy of the Gulf of Guinea are all contributing to a perceived deterioration in the security situation in Nigeria at present. This bulletin will examine events over the last month from this perspective and will attempt to highlight related potential threats and risks in advance of the forthcoming elections.

Insurgency in the North

The last month has witnessed sustained attacks in the North of Nigeria by suspected Boko Haram, with explosions reported in Gombe, Yobe and Borno States. Further to that village and town attacks have been reported in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe State. These all contribute to a growing narrative that Boko Haram are controlling more and more territory throughout Borno and surrounding states making it easier for them to conduct their attacks with relative impunity. However, although there is a general growing acceptance that Boko Haram are controlling territory, there has yet to be little evidence that they are administering a level of governance within these communities as of yet. Another indicator of wider territorial access and coverage is evidenced by recent attacks in Cameroon, albeit they have been met with increased resistance by the Cameroonian authorities. In the past Boko Haram have used these areas as a safe zone, but of late, have widened their areas of attack to include these border areas. It could be argued that these attacks are due to recent statements by the Cameroonian authorities that they will increase their military actions against Boko Haram and the resulting statements by Shekau (or the person purporting to be Shekau) that they will increase their targeting in Cameroon. The kidnap of approximately 60 in Tourou village seems to evidence his threat. This widening of attack zone could be seen as an indicator of sustained capabilities, if not increased. In the next two weeks coming up to the elections such attacks in the North East are likely to continue, in addition to likely attacks into neighbouring states, including Kano and Kaduna.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) allegedly offer support for

General Muhammadu Buhari

In early January, MEND announced their support for Buhari's candidacy for the President of Nigeria, via spokesperson Jomo Gbomo. This has resulted in suggestions by the Director of Media and Publicity of the PDP that more should be done to investigate APC and Buhari and their alleged support of such groups, including Boko Haram. However MEND have responded by saying they are supporting Buhari because of the current state of the country, and that they believe he is the man to bring about the change Nigeria needs, whilst also proclaiming their discard for and lack of confidence in the incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan. However, other former Niger Delta militants have reportedly threatened violence if the incumbent President does not maintain his position, fearing a reduction in payments with respect to the amnesty programme.

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Will the elections take place in the three states of Emergency?

This sustained violence in the North East has resulted in many political analysts forecast that the elections will not take place in the three states of emergency. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have contributed to this discourse by providing some clarity as to the condition necessary in the three states for the elections to take place. The INEC are reported to have said that unless the security agencies of Nigeria can guarantee the security and safety of their staff elections will not take place. From a security perspective it would be easy to argue, given the events of the last few weeks and months, that such a guarantee could not be provided. However, given statements made by the military over recent months, a proclamation that they are not in position to maintain security is not unlikely. In addition, the recent alleged statement by the incumbent President that 'the end of terrorism is near' leaves little expectation of an admittance that elections will not take place due to insecurity. Nonetheless, insecurity is not the only factor that is likely to contribute to such debate. The issue of displaced people and their inability to cast their vote is also likely to add to discussions relating to free and fair elections. Figures released last week by Human Rights Watch, say that about 1 million people have been displaced. It is likely that no definitive decision will be made as to whether the elections will or will not take place until nearer the date, especially given current tensions about discussions to date about maintaining an interim government or postponing the elections has been met with resistance by the APC.

Alleged Political Violence

Historically the period before elections in Nigeria has resulted in increased violence

Angelina Jolie (Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) called on the International Community to help Nigeria

In response to the alleged massacre in Baga, Borno State, Angelina Jolie came out and condemned the actions of Boko Haram. She highlighted that every attack left unresolved provides a breeding ground for an environment of impunity, empowering such actors to evolve their violence and attacks further. She called for the international community to provide assistance in collecting evidence to bring these actors to justice.

Many others have joined Ms. Jolie in her call, but in a back drop of alleged human rights violations by the Nigeria military, a fear of exacerbating tensions, allegations of corruption within the Nigeria authorities, there appears to be a reluctance of many international countries to get further involved.

It should be noted that many countries continue to support Nigeria through the provision of expert advice and training in relation to security and counter terrorism, but putting international boots on the ground is unlikely in the short term.

Then, are these calls in vain? While it is unlikely that such calls will result in immediate international military action, increased international coverage may influence the Nigerian authorities to be more proactive in their response having frequently been criticised for having no political will to tackle the insurgency, furthermore, the oversight may act as a deterrent against further human rights abuses if there is more international focus on the country, military and administration.

throughout the country; while limited coverage appears to be targeted at this area at present, such violence is evident throughout different parts of Nigeria. The existence of pre and post-election violence has rarely been denied in Nigeria, so it was not surprising when January saw the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and the oppositional candidate General Buhari met in Abuja to discuss mitigating violence during the election process. However, reports of politically motivated violence has been reported since then and such incidents appear to be increasing day by day and are likely to continue, if not further increase as the elections draw closer. Furthermore, if the elections go to a run off, further violence is likely. A number of incidents which occurred in January illustrate ongoing politically related violence in Nigeria. Albeit there has been limited reports of loss of life, such activities are likely to increase and put further strains on tensions and frustration throughout the country. Reports of attacks in Jos, Bauchi, Katsina, Ekiti, Port Harcourt, Ogun Osun and Kaduna, against both PDP and APC campaigns continue unabated. Katsina State had witnessed increased security operations attempting to reduce opportunity for political thuggery, even prior to the alleged attack on the President. Claims that the police seized 850 cutlasses, allegedly smuggled into the state by a political party did little to reduce tensions when the President was in town. Further attacks on the President and his aides were reported in Bauchi days later. APC have reportedly been victimised in Rivers State twice in ten days, after bombs exploded in their party's offices in Okrika LGA and in Andoni LGA, another more recent attack was reported in Ekiti on the APC Secretariat. PDP have been targeted too at their office; reports claim that one of their offices in Zamfara was set on fire. Reports of a politically motivated kidnapping was also made during January. A member of Bayelsa State Assembly, representing the National Conscience Party (NPC) was kidnapped, while the 87 year old mother of the former Commissioner of Agriculture in Ondo State also reportedly kidnapped.

Other incidents of violent criminality

Although much focus is on the level of violence in the North East and related insurgency, violent crime continues elsewhere in the country. For example, January saw reports of fifteen people being killed in an armed bank robbery in Ondo State, four of which were reported to be policemen. In addition, reports of kidnapping continue, with one report from Imo State. An incident in Benue State, reported the loss of at least 17 lives, while 7-10 lives were reportedly lost in a gun attack in Kano State. In addition, an IED reportedly exploded at the National HQ of the Igbo Socio-Cultural Institute.

Other related factors

Other issues likely to contribute to the security situation, growing tensions, and frustrations include, but are not limited to, the recent alerts over Bird Flu in seven states, the drop in the oil price and the reported increase in piracy, amongst others.

Given the increased likelihood, SAR Consultancy recommends travel to the North Central and East during the forthcoming two weeks to only occur where detailed security management plans are in place. Furthermore any travel in Nigeria should be reviewed closely prior to departures, as the security situation is likely to be quite dynamic over the next few weeks. Political rallies should be avoided.

What does SAR Consultancy Offer?

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