

Special Incident Bulletin – Bomb Blast in Sabon Gari, Kano, Nigeria

Due to recent re-emergence and continued increase in the strategic use of VBIEDs by Boko Haram in the North East and more recently in Nyanya, Abuja, SAR Consultancy highlighted the growing risk of an insurgent led incident in significant locations outside of the North East. In addition, due to the presence of international personnel in Nigeria, assisting in locating the girls abducted in Borno State, SAR Consultancy forecasted a growing risk of attacks in other locations outside of the SOE. In addition, and although there had been a lull in Boko Haram initiated attacks in the aftermath of the two Nyanya bombings and the abduction of the girls in Chibok, Borno State, their pattern of behaviour in the last 18 months, indicated that this lull would be short lived. While a number of positive indicators had been reported in respect of Kano State with regard to an improved security infrastructure and response capability, it has been evident that Kano State is an important target in the eyes of Boko Haram. Kano has been a significant victim of Boko Haram attacks, although of late, the frequency of incidents had reduced. That being said, the last two incidents of note have targeted the Sabon Gari of Kano City, similar to this recent incident.

Preliminary Incidents Details

On 18 May 2014, at approximately 21:30/22:00, in Sabon Gari, Kano State, Nigeria, an explosion was detonated, reportedly killing between 10 and 13 people. Official figures have reported five deaths. The incident was said to have occurred along the Middle Road, off the Gold Coast Road, within Sabon Gari. The Commissioner of the Police, Kano State, confirmed the attack stating that the explosion resulted from a VBIED. There has been no claim of responsibility of yet, but this is nothing out of the ordinary. Boko Haram rarely claim incidents immediately after the event, ordinarily waiting a number of days, before they issue a statement. On 19 May 2014, at approximately 9am, the police reported that they discovered another unexploded device, in a car at Tafawa Balewa Street. This vehicle was said to have been loaded with the necessary components of an IED. However, this should be viewed with caution. Similar reports have emerged after other incidents in the past, which have not been shown to be correct, rather a means of trying to encourage confidence in the aftermath of an attack.

Initial Assessment*

Given the perceived improvements in the security infrastructure and the noted positive policing approach on behalf of the security forces in Kano State, reports of an explosion are disappointing, although not totally unanticipated. Given the symbolic significance of Kano State as the Northern Capital, and its history as a target for Boko Haram attacks, the selection of Kano for this attack is not surprising. Furthermore, given similar attacks in the Sabon Gari area last year, the specific location appears logical. Last year, Sabon Gari was targeted in March, at least 25 people were reportedly killed when another VBIED was detonated at a bus park. Interestingly, the bomb on this occasion was said to have been placed in a VW Golf, the same type of car allegedly used in the two incidents in Nyanya. In July 2014, Sabon Gari was targeted again. Around the same time as this recent attack, a serious of

explosions were reported. Reports on casualties varied between eye witness reports and official figures, but the death toll was somewhere between 25 and 30 people.

Previous successful attacks in the same general area illustrate that vulnerabilities still exist within the security forces response capability. This has been seen more recently in Borno State, where target locations are attacked on more than one occasion, with limited evidence of increased security systems in the aftermath of the initial attacks. This appears to also have been the case in Nyanya, a location targeted again only weeks after the initial attack. Recent reports from the police and security forces had suggested that they had arrested many of the key players involved in the Nyanya bombings, if this is true, this demonstrates that the skills to conduct VBIEDs are spread wider within the group. If these reports were not correct, the incident could be a sign by Boko Haram that they have not gotten the correct people. This is credible given previous responses by the insurgents in the past. **A more detailed assessment will be provide in this week's weekly situational assessment.*

What this shows?

This incident illustrates that the insurgents have a continued capacity to attack outside of the state and a continued focus to do so. This along with recent attacks, in Abuja, and the foiled attack in Lagos, illustrate the desire to attack outside of the SOE is present.

What's next?

It is a little early to assess the likely impact, however, given the pattern of events after the Nyanya bombing, security personnel should prepare for a secondary attack in the next days or weeks. Assuming it is Boko Haram, it is likely that Shekau will wait a while before making a statement, but it is likely he will within days. Heightened security measures should be put in place throughout the city and suburbs, as a secondary attack is likely.

Why Sabon Gari?

Successful attacks have been achieved in area in March and July 2013

It is just outside the area where the security forces have their most influence

The area is more acceptant, than the centre of the city, to strangers

Risk of reinforced security presence was low, proven to be absent in the past

Risk of detection or pre-detonation arrest was low, proven in the past

Chance of success was high, demonstrated in the past

Requirement for large attack team was greatly reduce by using a VBIED

Planning would have been required but not difficult as there are known cells in the city

Choice of timing and location ensured the impact was large scale, similar timing to July 2013 incident

Kano is a symbolic capital in the North

Sabon Gari is often frequented by people attending restaurants and bars in this area

Said to be a predominantly Christian; alcohol is sold and consumed in this area.

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