

Special Incident Bulletin – Bomb Blast in Nyanya, Abuja, Nigeria

Over the last two to three weeks SAR Consultancy has highlighted the growing risk of an insurgent led incident in Abuja, or at least in a location of particular note, in its weekly analytical reports. The justification for such a forecast was based on a number of factors, amongst which included the following, the re-emergence of the use of VBIEDs, Shekau's recent call for brethren to conduct incidents, the likely impact of the illustrated recent attempted jail break in Aso, Abuja, which SAR Consultancy forecasted may inspire others to that incidents in Abuja were possible, and the growing frequency and impact of recent incidents.

Preliminary Incidents Details

On 14 April 2014, at approximately 6:30am, at Nyanya Mass Transit Park, Abuja, Nigeria, explosives were detonated while people gathered in the park to head to work and to conduct their business. Nyanya is located on the outskirts of Abuja, and the park is used by residents of the area, and from neighbouring areas such as Mararaba, and other locations in Nasarawa State, travelling to Abuja central for work and to other locations throughout the country which are serviced by this Transit Park.

A number of reports have emerged as to how the explosives were detonated; one report suggested the IED was thrown into the area, while more credible reports suggest that a VBIED was used, driven into the park and detonated at the desired time and location close to a row of buses that were full with people ready to start their journeys. Reports have also emerged that there was a second explosion in the park, setting off smaller explosions as some of the petrol tanks of the vehicles exploded. Sixteen buses were reportedly damaged in the incidents, which gives perspective of the impact zone of the explosion.

The initial death toll is estimated to be around seventy, with over one hundred reportedly injured. Official death tolls are often contested by independent observers present at incidents such as this, so these estimated figures may in lower than the real figures. As of yet, there has been no claims of responsibility, but the majority of analysts are laying blame at the feet of Boko Haram. This is quite justifiable given their recent role in similar incidents. Only last year they conducted a similar event in Kano State.

Initial Assessment*

While reports of the incident may have shocked many this morning, the incident is not a huge surprise to anyone closely monitoring the security situation in Nigeria, especially those with a long term historical view. Since the declaration of the State of Emergency, the natural assessment would have been for the insurgents would attack Abuja in the short to medium term. Albeit that this took longer than many had expected, recent developments had provided indicators of possible conditions conducive to an attack in Abuja or a place of prominence.

Furthermore, Shekau's recent statement called on his brethren within the country to take up arms and fight may have motivated sympathizers to join the insurgency without travelling north. Or, the recent attempted jail break may have motivated insurgents in the North to travel south, to demonstrate that Abuja was no longer protected and was now worthy of an attack. In addition, the recent increase in successful VBIED attacks provided growing evidence of a re-emergence of this skills, which would have greatly reduced the number of actors they would have required to conduct such an attack and therefore would have made an attack outside the safe haven more accessible.

**A more detailed assessment will be provide in this week's weekly situational assessment.*

What this shows?

Contrary to what many believed or wanted to believe, this incident illustrates that the insurgents have a continued capacity to attack outside of the state and a continued focus to do so. Furthermore, this re-emergence in VBIEDs could illustrate an outside influence, especially when one views other patterns and trends in the North East over recent months. It also shows that the insurgents do not have to attack the center of Abuja to get at the heart of the capital. The majority of those working in the center of the capital commute into the city from Nyanya and other similar suburbs, hitting these people impacts each and every suburb be it directly and indirectly and therefore, affects the city at large. While a successful attack on a member of the powerful in Abuja may make headlines, this type of attacks break hearts and resolve.

What's next?

It is a little early to assess the likely impact, when actually no group has claimed the attack. Assuming it is Boko Haram, it is likely that Shekau will wait a while before making a statement, but it is likely he will and it will most likely be in the next week or so. Heightened security measures will be put in place throughout the city and suburbs, but a second attack in likely within the next month to six weeks.

Why Nyanya?

Area is known for a heightened level of criminality in the last six months and therefore is a proven weak target.

Risk of reinforced security presence was low

Risk of detection or pre-detonation arrest was low

Chance of success was high

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

Planning would have been required but not difficult in this location as it is used to strangers travelling through

Choice of timing and location ensured the impact was large scale

If political agreements are in place to prevent Abuja central being hit, this could act as a warning to continue support.

Experienced with similar targets, from last year's attack in Kano State.

What does SAR Consultancy Offer?

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