



SAR Consultancy



Security Information Bulletin: Nigeria

IN THIS ISSUE

Summary of Security Situation

By our Senior Analyst

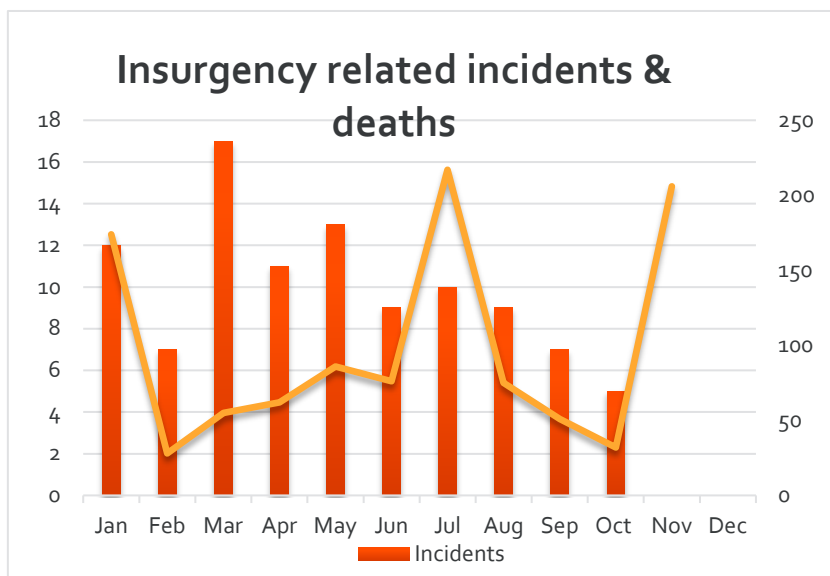
The Security Situation in Nigeria is multi-dimensional and complex. It is influenced, for the most part, by perceived political, economic and social injustice, which results in a high level of violence throughout the country. This violence is exhibited in differing dimensions and to differing degrees from state to state and region to region. This level of unrest and complexity provides the environment for more opportunistic types of criminal and militant activities to take place. Deconstructing the relationships between all these factors and influencers is very difficult and contributes to the complexity that surrounds the security situation in Nigeria. Another dimension which adds to this complexity is the diversity with regard to the actors at play throughout the country. Violence is perpetrated by a wide range of groups, such as insurgents, militants, nomadic herdsmen, cultists, and ordinary criminals, notwithstanding the allegations of security force involvement and alleged political

interference. This interplay of actors makes it difficult to determine the perpetrator and the victim in many cases. Nigeria is a country with specific needs, both development and increasingly, humanitarian, therefore access for international and domestic NGOs and developmental organisations is a must. It is a country with a potential for great growth in a wide number of commercial areas; as a result it is an attractive country to commercial organisations. These access requirements, coupled with the security environment, results in a need for up to date and thorough analysis of the security situation across the country on a regular basis. Forecasting the likely evolution of the security situation for the short and medium term can be difficult, due in part to the influence of underlying elements of a political, economic and social nature, which impact differently throughout the country. Nonetheless, the presence of existing trends and patterns can assist greatly in strengthening the credibility of forecasts.

November 2018 – In stark contrast to October, the North East re-emerged as the most significant security problem in the country. That said, there was still significant loss of life in the middle belt. However, this sharp increase in suspected Boko Haram activities should be viewed with concern by those working in the North East, as the group's activities of this month indicate that a large scale attack by the group on a high value target may be likely in the near future. Within this backdrop, it is highly recommended that anyone travelling to or through the North East conduct a thorough security review. Furthermore, for those working outside the territory of Nigeria but within the Lake Chad region, they too should take extra care, as the group continue their reach into this area. This may be the result of a withdrawal of troops from the border in recent months. On a separate note, and while politically motivated crimes appear to have reduced this month, an increase or amplified risk in advance of the Presidential elections is likely.

North East Nigeria & Boko Haram

If incidents of any month showed us that statements about the defeat or demise of Boko Haram should be given a measured response, November 2018 did. Incidents during the month, appear to clearly indicate, as argued by us and others, that the group are still capable of conducting large scale attacks, and therefore, still remain a significant threat. Furthermore, the incidents of this month also continue to illustrate the diverse range of MO and targets accessible to the group. For example, the group clearly illustrate by their attacks that they are willing and capable of attacking military targets, but also still see value in conducting lower level attacks. Furthermore, unlike previous months for a while, the group demonstrated their ability to conduct attacks outside of Borno State. For example, the group reportedly attempted to conduct an attack in Gujba, Yobe State. However, the military claimed that they repelled the attack killing at least five insurgents.



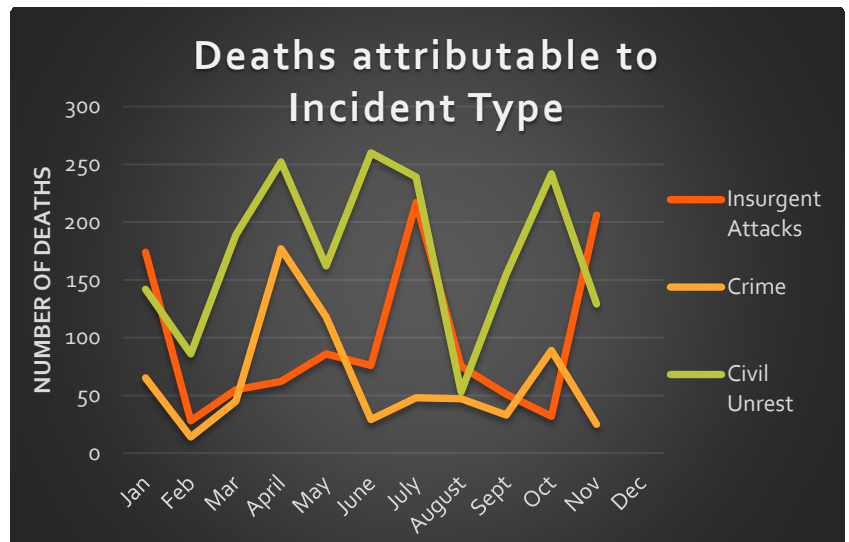
Such altercations between the group and the military were anything but rare this month. The group were blamed for the death of killed three soldiers in Mobbar, a further three in Kukawa and one soldier in Abadam. However the most serious attack reported related to an attack on a military base in Metele, in which around 120 soldiers were reportedly killed. Reports claim that the group took the military off-guard when they attacked the base. Interestingly, in the aftermath of this incidents, some military personnel reportedly stated that the village remained under the control of Boko Haram for some time. The ability to conduct this large scale attacks either shows a retained capacity within the group or a military on the back foot, or both. However, the military did reported a number of success this month. For example, they reportedly killed eight suspected insurgents in Gubio, two in Damboa and two in Gwoza. In airborne operations, the Nigerian Air Force reportedly killed twenty suspected insurgents. Interestingly, there have been few, if any, reports of suicide bombers in Borno for a few months, but November say reports that the military killed a suspected bomber before she could detonate. It will be interesting to watch to see, if this MO re-emerges. The group also continued to conduct attacks on villages and civilians. They attacked Maiduguri, Borno, but there were no casualties reportedly. However, they reportedly claimed the lives of one in Jere and sixteen in Monguno. In other incidents in Maiduguri, one person was reportedly killed in one attacks and four farmers in another. The group were also blamed for a number of abduction this month. They reportedly, abducted ten women in Bama and a further fifty loggers in Ngala, Borno. In a separate incident in Maiduguri, nine farmers were reportedly killed and twelves others abducted. Furthermore, they were also active outside Nigeria. In the region, the group were also blamed for attacks. Eight people were reportedly killed in a French drilling camp in Toumour, Niger. In another incident in Niger, fifteen girls were reportedly taken by the group. While next door in Cameroon, a suicide bomber reportedly killed herself, but no others. Soldiers reportedly killed a suspected bomber before she could detonate her device.

Assessment & Forecast: Unlike previous months, November witnessed a significant upsurge in terrorism related incidents this month. However, as mentioned last month, elements were emerging that was suggesting that the demise of the group was not likely. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that the increase in incidents is quite shocking. This, alongside increased video and audio accounts by the group and alleged announcements with Islamic State, do little but to heighten concerns that Boko Haram still pose a significant threat in Nigerian and the Lake Chad region. Another really worrying aspect of these incidents this month, is the number of military personnel allegedly killed by the group. This is clearer a call for concern to both the military and the government. For one, it illustrates the brazen confidence within the group, that they do not seem afraid to attack the group. While, from the military perspective, it calls into question whether the military have the capacity, resources and knowledge to respond to such a group. As a result, the situation in the North East remain particularly precarious at the moment. Incidents during November, would suggest that the group may still retain the capacity to conduct a large scale attack. An attack on Maiduguri could not be ruled out given the range of attractive targets it has. As a result, SAR recommends that anyone considering to travel to or through the North East conduct a detailed risk assessment, informed by shared knowledge, that considers the dynamic conditions of the region at present, including a contingency plan for evacuation and/or extraction with limited or any military assistance.

Loss of Life*

Unlike the last number of months, November witnessed a significant increase in the number of deaths associated with Boko Haram. This was seen alongside a reduction in the number of deaths in the middle belt, which is much welcomed. Unlike last month, which saw a slight increase on the last four months, November saw a return to similar figures on previous months. This will be welcomed given the fast approaching presidential election in 2019.

**As with incident numbers, it is acknowledged that exact death rates in the aftermath of incidents in Nigeria are hard to assess, the graphs included provide only an indication of the trends.*



Middle Belt Violence

Most of the focus on violence this month was on the North East due to a significant increase in insurgent activities. That said, the middle belt was not without its own incidents and while not at the level of previous months, it is still at a worrying level. For example, early in November, gunmen reportedly killed health workers in Toto, Nassarawa, a crime type not typical for the middle belt. The traditional form of violent attacks were more evident in Plateau State. In one incident two people were killed in Barkin Ladi and in a second incident, a monarch from the state was reportedly abducted. Whilst in Benue State, a clash reportedly claimed the lives of nearly fifteen in Ushongo. Further south, another ten people were said to have been killed in Safana, Katsina.

As in similar months, the military and police responded with force to this violence. For example, since October, fourteen alleged aggressors were reportedly killed in Birnin Gwari, Kaduna by the police in and in Benue State, they reportedly killed seventeen in the last three weeks of November. However, the largest operation appears to have taken place in Zamfara State, when police repelled an attack from armed gunmen, resulting in reports of the death of over 100 suspected aggressors by police. It is unclear as to whether any police officers were killed during the incident. The aggressors killed were reportedly responsible, at least in part, in the recent increase in kidnappings and cattle rustling, in the state.

The killing of health care workers is an interesting departure from typical crimes in the middle belt. Until now, much of the violence was relatively isolated between villagers and aggressors, whoever they be. This attack may indicate, as we previously suggested, that there has been a change in aggressors in the last few months. This should be monitored closely, as such changes can give great insight into those responsible.

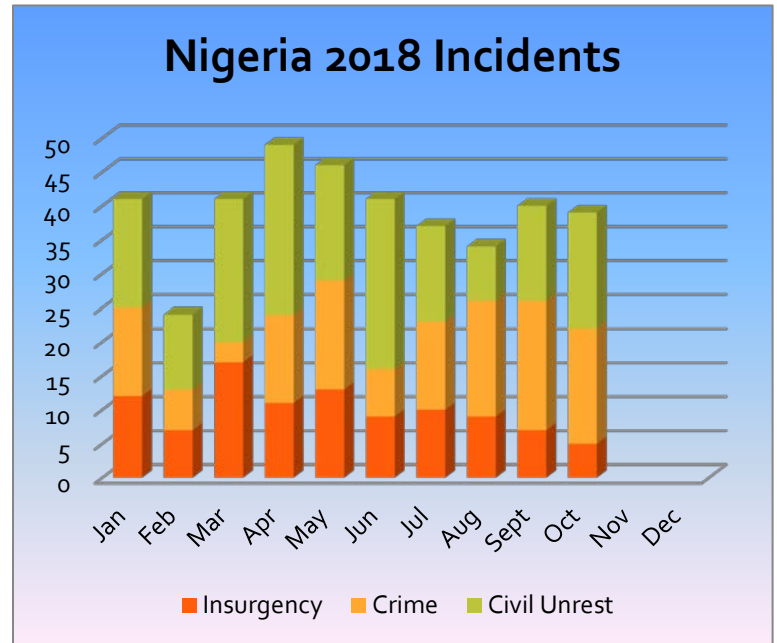
Forecast: Once again the violence in the middle belt this month illustrates the geographical scope of this behaviour, which in turn would suggest that many different actors are at play. This makes it a very complex situation to respond to, given that different methods of response are likely to be necessary in different areas, against different aggressors. A further reason to suggest a range of actors, or at least a shift in actors, is the attack on the health workers. Unlike last month, the security response this month seems to have re-engaged against the aggressors, which resulted in considerable loss of life this month. It will be interesting to see if this has a significant impact on the level of incidents, especially in Zamfara, given the considerable operations targeted at suspected aggressors this month. To date, such operation do not appear to have had a significant impact on aggressors, but this may be just taking time. The reductions in incidents this month may be indicative that this working, but reduction could also be due to a seasonal nature of much of this violence. It is way too early to determine.

Criminality, Cultist activity & Violence

Violence in the south continued this month. For example, over ten lives were lost in clashes in Odukpani, Cross River, while two policemen and two civilians were reportedly killed in Ijero, Ekiti State. A further two policemen and four others were also reportedly killed during an IPOB protest in Nnewi North, Anambra. While in Rivers State, gunmen reportedly killed three people in Obio/Akpor. Such violence is not rare in the South, but like a range of different locations in the country, the level of violence proportionate to the incident seems to have increased considerably. This is worrying given the upcoming elections in 2019. That said, political violence in the south appeared to reduce in comparison with previous months. Such violence is likely to be closely monitored in the period before the elections.

Kidnap and Abduction

As mentioned before, kidnappings are not rare in Nigeria, in fact they are an important MO in the arsenal of many armed groups throughout Nigeria, who are motivated to conduct them to acquire much needed resources and income. However, of late, this MO appears to be increasing in desirability for many throughout the country. Some have even suggested possible links criminal links with ‘authorities’ and business men, due to the amount of money that can be acquired. Incidents of kidnap and abduction this month, do little to reduce such fears. For example, down South, in Edo State, four Catholics priests were reportedly abducted. It is unclear whether a ransom was paid for the priests, but they were later released. Days later, five people were reportedly abducted in Ondo State. While later in the month, reports emerged that a business man was abducted very close to his new Southern Atlantic Polytechnic. In Kogi State, a brother of the Speaker of the Kogi State House Assembly and his wife who were reportedly kidnapped. A ransom was reportedly demanded for the safe release of these two. They were later released alongside two others, with many suspecting a ransom was paid. In a much rarer type of incident, a 3 day old baby was reportedly abducted by armed gunmen in Owerri, Imo State. However, details for this incident are vague. These range of incidents, illustrate the risk of abduction throughout Nigeria, a crime often viewed in the past as synonymous with the South. However, this has changed, the risk is now national and income is less important, with many groups happy to go for the less well-off, albeit that they then receive lower ransoms.



Piracy

Despite reports throughout the year that the Nigerian Government were responding with a more concerted effort to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the country is still at the top of the global list when it comes to piracy in territorial waters. The number of incidents globally raised from 121 to 156, according to the IMB's report into incidents in the first nine months of 2018. 107 of these 156 were reportedly boarding offence, 32 attempted attacks, 13 vessels fired upon and four hijacked. 41 one these incidents were reported to have occurred in and around Nigerian territorial waters. On a more positive note, the number of crew members abducted during these incidents reduced from 49 in 2017 to 39 in the first nine months of 2018. That said, 37 of these abductees were taken in the Gulf of Guinea.

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We would like to thank you for taking the time to read this bulletin. We hope you found it interesting & informative.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@sarconint.com to discuss any part in greater detail or to discuss how we may be able to help reduce your exposure to any of the risks mentioned within.

Furthermore we are very happy to receive feedback on your thoughts regarding the bulletin. Hope to see you again next month.

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