



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.

December 2018 – *The North East continued to pose a significant security problem for the government and military in Nigeria. Boko Haram, or those suspected of being members, continued to conduct attacks against civilians and the military this month. In fact, the majority of incidents appear to have been targeted against the military. These incidents, coupled with increased online activity of the group, continue to illustrate the commitment and capacity of the group. Similar levels of violence were also middle belt, another region of the country that is presenting serious challenges for the government and security forces. However, in this case, the majority of those killed are civilians, which is extremely worrying. Within this backdrop, it is highly recommended that anyone travelling to or through Nigeria conduct a thorough security review and prepare a detailed security plan. This is increasingly important regardless of where in the country someone is, given the forthcoming Presidential Elections.*

North East Nigeria & Boko Haram

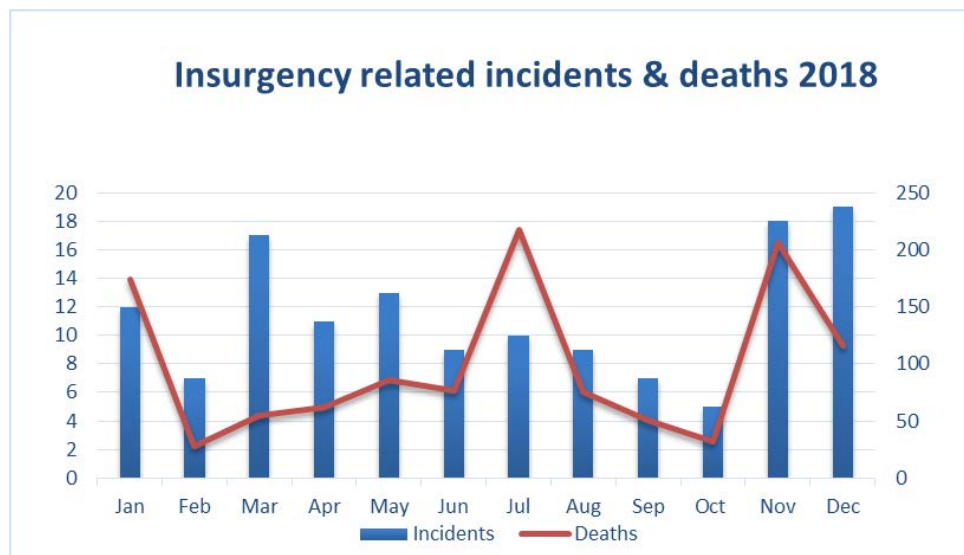
December's pattern of attacks is consistent with November with regard to incident numbers. Despite a slight reduction in deaths, Boko Haram continued to demonstrate their resilience, capacity and reach by conducting a range of attacks throughout Borno and Yobe.

The month started with a return of suicide bombers, with two females reportedly detonating their devices in Maiduguri. The two females were reportedly killed, but no one else was reportedly injured. The return to this MO is interesting given that the last few months have witnessed a noticeable reduction in this method of attack. This was not a once off, the style of attack continued throughout the month.

Another suspected bomber was neutralised before detonating her device in Maiduguri in the middle of the month, while at the end, three suspected suicide bombers were reportedly killed in Dikwa. The positive aspect of these incidents is that there was very little collateral damage due to timely intervention by the military.

Hotspots continued to emerge this month. Kukawa was such an example during December. In two incidents alone, the group reportedly killed over ten soldiers and the month ended with another serious attack in which over ten civilians were reportedly killed. However, the most serious incident in this area, occurred near the end of the month in Baga, also in Kukawa LGA, when suspected Boko Haram militants allegedly took over the town. It is claimed that a large number of soldiers were missing since the attack, and others were trapped in the town. However, while many sources appear to validate these claims, the military, while acknowledging that the group attacked the Headquarters of the Multinational JTF in Baga, they refute that the group have taken over the town and the number of missing soldiers. Whichever is the truth, reports emerged in early 2019 that the military had reclaimed the town.

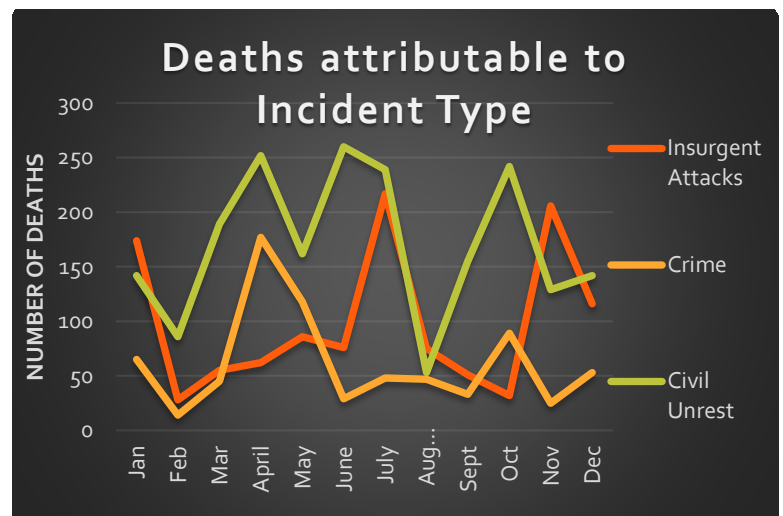
Boko Haram are also suspected of attacking the military elsewhere in the state during the month. They even did this, outside of Borno, in Yobe State where a clash reportedly resulted in the death of nearly twenty suspected militants and soldiers in Gujba. Whilst in Damaturu, also in Yobe State, the group reportedly ambushed the military and killed around fifteen soldiers and police. Ten suspected militants were also said to have been killed in this attack. While collectively these incidents indicate the reach of the group, incidents in Borno State appear more frequent and are more dispersed. The group were said to have killed four soldiers in incidents in Kaga and Bama, and a further two with a landmine in Ngala. The group were also blamed for the death of a soldier in Maiduguri, one in Monguno and maybe as many as five in Damboa, Borno. The group were also blamed for the death of civilians, five were reportedly killed in Kala/Balge and in Jere four farmers were reportedly killed. Three others were said to have been killed in Chibok by the group.



Assessment & Forecast: At the end of November 2018, the US designated Boko Haram as an entity of particular concern, which puts the group on their list alongside other terrorist groups. In light of activities in the last few months, it is somewhat understandable given the groups recent spike in attacks. However, for those monitoring the group over years, past incidents have been just as deadly and destructive, therefore making one question why the group were added to the list at this time. Nonetheless, the groups continued actions and attack indicate the risk is not diminishing. This was further evident during the month through the release of videos and related discourse online by the group, indicating alleged alliances to Islamic State. In short and contrary to the regular argument by the government and military, the group still contain the capacity, reach and commitment to conduct attacks and further their cause. Furthermore, the government and military seem to have yet developed the capacity to communicate credibly in the aftermath of incidents. This is very worrying. For one, it makes it more difficult to get the facts behind the group's activities. But more importantly, it undermines the role of the troops on the ground, because the sacrifice they make is unrecognised, thereby damaging morale within the force, which in turn empowers the group. This needs to be addressed. Given the continued risk, 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*

December witnessed a slight increase in deaths associated with criminal acts and incidents of civil unrest. Neither hit annual peaks, but deaths associated with violence in the middle belt are still considerably high. Conversely, the number of deaths associated with Boko Haram and the related insurgency slightly reduced, despite an increase in the number of incidents. That said, it became abundantly clear this month, after the incident in Baga that these figures are probably not inclusive of the number of soldiers killed by suspected insurgents. If even half the number of missing troops have been killed and were added to this graph, December would have witnessed the highest number of deaths in the North East in one month during 2018. *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

Violence in the middle belt continued, relatively unabated throughout December. Zamfara State continued to experience incidents despite continued military advances within the state. For example, the military reportedly killed nearly ten suspected gunmen early in the month, but violence against local citizens continues. In two incidents alone in the state, over forty people were reportedly killed by armed gunmen. This level of violence is not going unnoticed by the residents of Zamfara. Near the end of the month, residents took to the streets to protest against the level of violence and abductions being experienced in the state. However, the impact of this seems to be limited given that the violence continues.

Benue State was also victim to such attacks this month. Over ten people were reportedly killed in clashes in the state. Similar to Zamfara State, the military also reported success against aggressors, in repelling attacks in Logo LGA, but despite their efforts, violent attacks continue. Similarly, Plateau state was also impacted, over twenty people were reportedly killed in a number of incidents in and around Barkin Ladi, throughout the month. Whilst a further twenty were reportedly killed in Kaduna State, approximately ten in Niger, six in Kogi and three in Kano.

These incidents continue to serve to illustrate the level of violence in the middle belt region of Nigeria, which does not appear to be dissipating. Given the lack of consistent reporting, it is likely that these incidents only represent a portion of incidents occurring in the region, which in itself is worrying given the high number of deaths. More needs to be done in this area given that the loss of life is as high, if not higher, than that in the North East. The first step starts with garnering a better understanding of the nature of this violence and who is responsible.

Forecast: The level of violence in the middle belt was significant in December, resulting in considerable loss of life throughout the region. While the style of violence is relatively similar across the region, it is unclear as to whether there are links between the armed groups active in the region. Understanding who is responsible and what is motivating them is an important part of responding to such violence. For a few years now, much of this violence was framed around farmer and herdsmen clashes, but 2018 illustrated that while some of the violence may be between such farmers and herdsmen, motivated by competing access rights to water, grassland and hard to reach resources, the level, nature and violence of the last year, indicated a shift in nature of the violence that would suggest the entry of new agitators to the region. However, it is difficult to accurately determine this, without greater knowledge of the violence, targets, and MO of the actors concerned. However, even without this information and insight, the level and impact of this violence requires an urgent response, one not predicated on physical force alone, but one that addressed the drivers of the violence in the region.

Criminality, Cultist activity & Violence

Nigeria is a very large country, and while much of the violence is isolated to certain areas, incidents throughout 2018 illustrated that the number and geographical scope of violence is increasing. Furthermore, criminality and kidnaps are also being seen the length and breadth of the nation. This image illustrates the range of groups active, which was sourced from [Boko-biafra-nigeria-insecurity-2019-elections](#). The impact of this violence is that normal citizens of Nigeria feel less secure, with a number taking to the streets in different states to demonstrate their upset. However, while they demand a greater response, many Nigerians distrust the military and police, whilst also understanding that a more complex response is needed. Practices of the military and police have contributed to this lack of trust, often acting with little or no oversight and transparency. Two incidents of concern occurred in December that would make one think that the military. At least, actively avoid oversight by external bodies. Firstly, the army reportedly suspended the activities of UNICEF in the North East, alleging that they were spying for Boko Haram. However, this was later lifted. Secondly, the military also called for the closure of Amnesty International. Media reports claim that Amnesty had reported that at least 3,641 people had been killed in clashes between herdsmen and farmer in Nigeria since 2016. The army reportedly contested the figures and alleged that Amnesty were trying to destabilise the country.



Kidnap and Abduction

As noted over the last number of months, the number of kidnapping incidents appears to be increasing, impacting an increasing number of the population as it becomes more geographically dispersed. December was no different as can be seen from a number of the reported abductions this month. For example, in Osun State, unknown gunmen reportedly killed one person, while abducting eight others at a college in Obokun. The same day, three health workers and two lecturers were reportedly kidnaped in Ondo. A week later a further eight people were reportedly taken also in Ondo State. Further east, two Catholic priests were reportedly taken in Anambra State. While in Rivers State, eighteen people were reported taken from a bus. This MO has been used in the past in and around Rivers State, especially around Port Harcourt which was near to where this incident happened. More centrally, an incident in Abuja, a former defence chief was reportedly killed, while two of his aides were kidnapped during the incident. While in Katsina State, a group reportedly abducted 20 people, who were reportedly travelling through the state enroute to Sokoto where they were returning home. The group were said, in the media, to have been attending a first aid course in Dutse, Jigawa State. While in Niger State media reports calm that two people were killed and approximately fifteen abducted, some of whom may have been taken from just across the border into Kaduna. While the majority of these incidents are likely to be motivated by profit, spokespersons from a number of these incidents reported that no contact had been made by the abductors and no ransom demands had been made.

Piracy

The UN reported that between the start of the year and the 23rd of Nov. there were 82 reported incidents of maritime crime and piracy within the Gulf of Guinea, many of which occurred in the waters of Nigeria.

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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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many of which occurred in the waters of Nigeria. On a positive note, media reports claimed that eight Polish crewmembers, who had been abducted in October 2018 were released in December 2018. One interesting incident this month of note originated from Nigeria but ended in the UK. Four stowaways reportedly boarded a boat in Nigeria. The four were found on the boat before it docked and they were held in a cabin. However, they reportedly escaped and began threatening the crew members. Eventually the UK police boarded the boat and detained the four under the Immigration Act.