



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

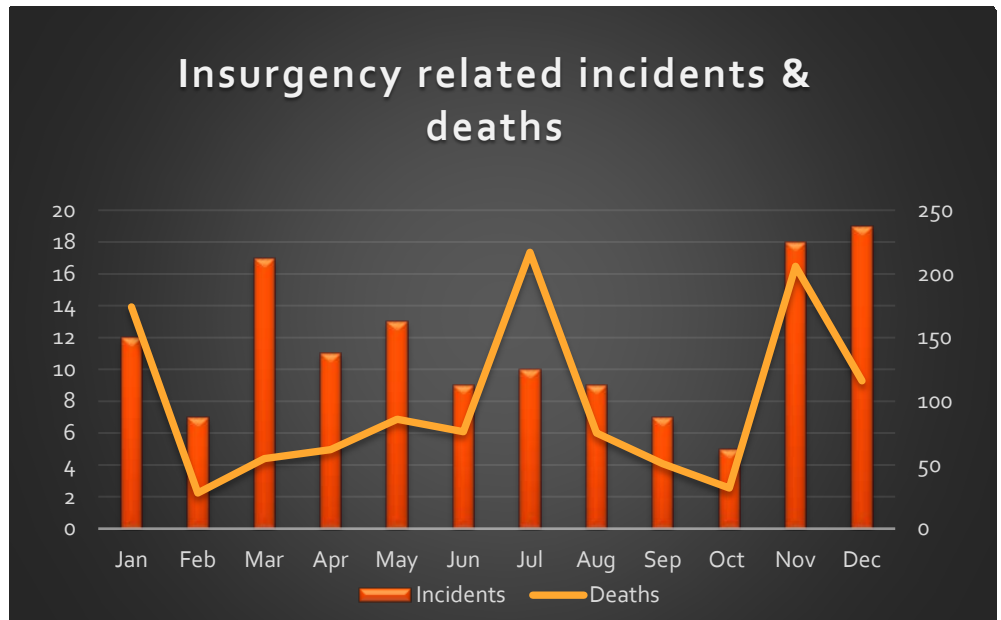
interference. This interplay of actors makes it difficult to determine the perpetrator and the victim in many cases. Nigeria is a country with specific needs, both development and increasingly, humanitarian, therefore access for international and domestic NGOs and developmental organisations is a must. 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.

January 2019 – Similar patterns of violent activity were recorded in Nigeria throughout January. For example, in the North East, military operations reported progress against Boko Haram and Boko Haram responded back with force. In the Middle Belt, violent incidents continued, but with a geographical spread into Katsina and Sokoto, with Zamfara remaining a hotspot. Further south abductions continued, as did incidents of violence. This serves to illustrate the continued risk in Nigeria, which is significant at this time, given the forthcoming Presidential elections on the 16th February. Increased travel throughout the country by Nigerians and internationals is likely to increase as people travel to vote and monitor elections. Safety and security should not be taken for granted. 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, because security forces are likely to be stretched at this time.

North East Nigeria & Boko Haram

The Nigerian military started the New Year with continuous reports of operations against suspected Boko Haram militants. For example, early in the month, soldiers reportedly killed six militants in Mafa, followed days later by reports that military operations both in Yobe and Borno States claimed the lives of over 100 suspected Boko Haram members. This in turn was followed by claims that troops killed around eighty militants in Kukawa, losing two troops in this operation. Other incidents during January in Nganzai, Mafa and Kukawa reportedly resulted in another twenty militants killed. Whilst in Gujba, Yobe State, a state known for Boko Haram presence but less targeted of late, approximately forty suspected militants were reportedly killed.

As a result, over the course of the month, the military claimed to have killed over 200 suspected militants, whilst reportedly losing less than five members of the military. Many question these figures given reports that Boko Haram militants reportedly killed over fifty during the month. These differences are not uncommon, but clearly illustrate the difficulties attached with gathering accurate details on incidents in the North East of Nigeria, and throughout the country for that matter.

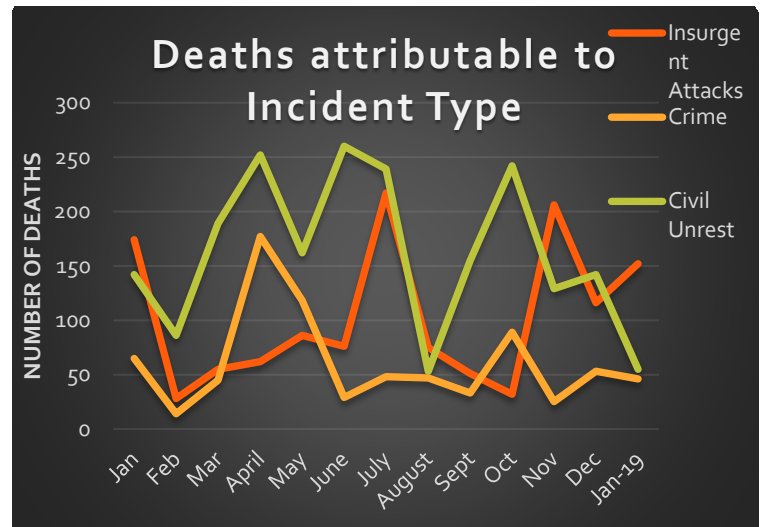


Even if the figures in respect to Boko Haram militant deaths are correct, they did not appear to deter the group for conducting their operations. They too started the month with gusto, attacking right back at the military throughout the state. For example, suspected militants reportedly killed two soldiers in Bama and a further three in Konduga. This altercation with the military reportedly resulted in the loss of life for five suspected militants. A similar incident occurred in Ngala, where three soldiers were said to have been killed and fifteen suspected militants. Days later, reports emerged that suspected militants killed a further thirty soldiers in a separate incident, but the military refuted this report. They also refuted claims that over sixty soldiers were killed by suspected militants in Kala/Bilge near the end of the month. In Geidem in Yobe State, Boko Haram reportedly claimed the lives of eight soldiers. Elsewhere in Borno, the group continued to target civilians. Additionally, reports emerged of the groups reportedly abducting two in Konduga. That said, there appears to have been a reduction in the number of reports of incidents of this nature. Furthermore, there was a reduction in the number of reports of suicide attacks, consistent with previous months.

Assessment & Forecast: Reading a headline as this bulletin is being prepared and Boko Haram's resurgence and its potential impact on the elections sits uneasy for us at SAR. While we do not disagree that their activities may have an impact on the elections, it is the use of the word 'resurgence' is unhelpful. This is not to say that the military and security services have not had an impact on Boko Haram and their capacity, the group, as whole or in part, were never defeated. Any examination of the incidents over the last year clearly evidence this. 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. As noted last month, the government and military seem to have yet developed the capacity to communicate credibly in result to the group's activities. This is very worrying, especially in light of the elections. Do reports of a suggested resurgence indicate that the military think they have new capacity? Or do they just want to be seen to be pre-empting what might happen? Do they have the resources if targeted actions were undertaken by the group to influence or impact the elections negatively? This statement and previous accounts make it more difficult to determine what is actually being said, or not said. Nonetheless, despite these statements, the incidents alone indicate that the risk remains high and 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*

Interestingly, violence associated with the middle belt and criminality both experienced a reduction this month. However, looking from this perspective alone fails to take into account the geographical shift in middle belt violence discussed above, which in itself is significant. Conversely, deaths associated with the insurgency in the North East witnessed a slight reduction. However, if the number of deaths of suspected militants, as reported by the military, were included, this number would significantly increase. The graph presented here shows significant flux in all forms of incidents in the last twelve months. It will be interesting to monitor these this year to see if seasonal patterns are identifiable in all or any of these three areas. *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

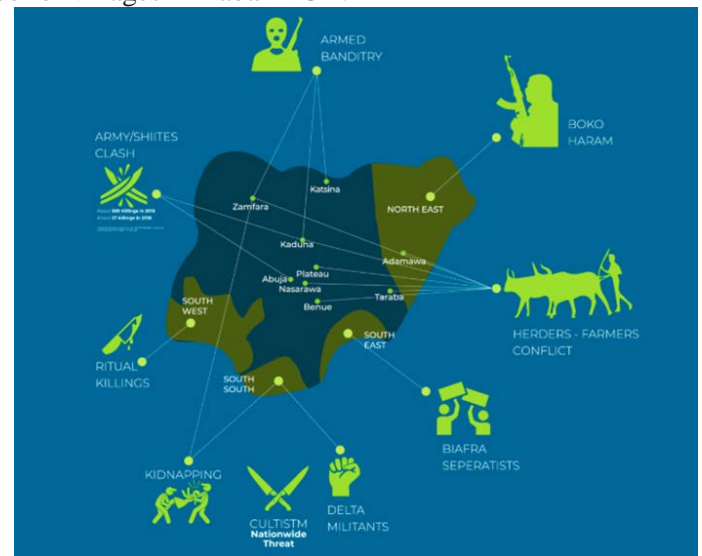
Incidents in Zamfara State continued this month. On the first of the month, approximately 18 people were killed in Tsafe LGA. The aggressors also destroyed property in the incidents. Near the end of the month, reports emerged that seven civilians were abducted whilst gathered to watch a football match in Birnin Magaji. This was followed by reports that a further twenty plus civilians were taken from Zurmi area of the state only days later. The military were also active in the state this month. Reports emerged very early in the month of a military air operation resulting in the loss of around forty suspected bandits in the state. This was followed two weeks later, with reports that the military killed nearly sixty suspected bandits in an operation. Further reports indicate that two soldiers and two others were also killed in the operation. That said, little detail was provided in the reports about the type and nature of these aggressors targeted. Katsina State also witnessed a lot of activity this month. For example, four people were reportedly killed in Kankara LGA when their village was attacked. This was followed by two separate reports of abductions. The first occurred in Jibia LGA, where a business man and a local ward head were reportedly taken. While in a separate incident, gunmen reportedly ambushed a car of an ex-Supreme Court Justice and abducted his driver and orderly. Some speculate that the ex-Supreme Court Justice was left because of his age and inability to move unaided. Reports also claimed that aggressors attacked and burnt down a Nigeria Immigration Service building in Kankara LGA. While in Batsari LGA, fifty armed men reportedly attacked a village killing two police officers. As in similar months, armed gunmen reportedly killed three people in Jema'a, Kaduna State, three in Toto, Nasarawa State and ten in Bassa, Kogi State. Whilst in Taraba State, gunmen reportedly abducted four people, one of whom was said to have been the Chief Press Secretary of the State Governor. Reports also claimed that herdsmen killed fifteen in Benue State. But of the more interesting incidents of the month took place in Sokoto State. Reports claim that over twenty five

Forecast: Looking at the middle belt incidents of the past twelve months, a number of interesting factors emerge, the evolution in the type of attacks, the target of attack, the geographical distribution of attacks, and the military response, to name but a few. This has all lead to indications of a change in aggressor(s). January has proved no different, continuing in the same vain, with the two most significant changes this month being the further expansion of such incidents into other neighbouring states such as Katsina and Sokoto and the level of military response. Having monitored such patterns for a number of years now, SAR has noticed both a seasonal and geographical pattern to much of the violent activity in the middle belt. It will be interesting over the next few months, to see if these recent areas of increased activities are in fact a shift in this pattern or just an increasing intensity of incidents. The interesting and valuable element of understanding this evolution is that it might provide some deeper insights into who is responsible, whether activities are linked across states, and/or whether the actors responsible are in fact from Nigeria, or are part of the migrating groups who move seasonally through the region. Such questions require deep analysis and understanding, over time. Nonetheless, it is clearly evident that there has been a spread in violence and an increase in the number of incidents, and as a result, an increased military response. These come with increased risk. While this is important for all, such information is likely to be relevant for those travelling throughout Nigeria in the run up to the Elections. While it does not appear that this type of violence has a political dimension, aggressors might see a valuable opportunity to attack 'high value' target as they move through their area of operations. As a result, a high degree of situational awareness is advisable for those planning travel to this region.

people were reportedly killed when armed gunmen attacked a number of villages in Rabah LGA.

Criminality, Cultist activity & Violence

Violent crime in the South continues this month, with two interesting dimensions. The first, in the light of the fourth coming elections, was the killing of three people at an APC rally in Ikeja, Lagos. While in Edo State, an APC candidate was reportedly abducted and a police officers killed in Owan West. Incidents of this nature are not uncommon in the south during election periods, so further incidents should not be surprising. That said, the killing of police officers is not confined to political incidents. In fact, the second interesting element emerging from the data, relates to police killings. There was a significant number of incidents of this nature reported this month. For example, gunmen reportedly killed one police officer and two civilians in Ila, Osun. Herdsmen reportedly killed a police officer in Delta State. Reports emerging do not attempt to identify the motivation for these incidents. While cultists allegedly killed one police officer and two rival cult members in Ikpoba Okha, Edo. It is alleged that the police officer was a member of the cult. Cultists were also blamed for the deaths of three others in Port Harcourt during the month. Elsewhere in Rivers State, gunmen reportedly killed three and kidnapped fourteen in Emuoha. While in Port Harcourt, police were said to have killed three murder suspects during the month. **Note:** As shown last month, the above image illustrates the range of groups active throughout Nigeria. It was sourced from [Boko-biafra-nigeria-insecurity-2019-elections](#). It serves as an interesting reminder of the range of violent actors at play within Nigeria and the complexity of understanding violence and violent actors in the country.



As noted in the other sections, abductions continue to occur throughout the country and are increasingly seen as part of strategies of choice by groups like Boko Haram and aggressors in the middle belt. However, abduction as a single MO, largely motivated by money, are also still present, especially down south. This was evident this month, where two people were reportedly abducted in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti. Followed by the abduction of the Governor's aide in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This came days after gunmen reported attacked a commercial bus, killing its driver and two passengers while it travelled from Delta State to Port Harcourt. The incident reportedly occurred at Emohua LGA in Rivers State. The remaining passengers were reportedly abducted by the attackers. These attacks on commercial buses are becoming increasingly common in this area of Nigeria, increasingly targeting locals. Further north, in Katsina State, a football coach was reportedly kidnapped whilst travelling between Kaduna and Malumfashi in Katsina State. Reports claim that a ransom was paid, but this has yet to be verified.

Kidnap and Abduction

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Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region has been calm of late. However, the President's action against the Chief Justice of Nigeria appear to re-ignite the Coalition of Niger Delta Agitators somewhat. In response, they reportedly stated that they would mobilise all the Niger Delta fighters and commence serious action if the President's decision was not reversed. It is alleged that they feel aggrieved that the Chief Justice is being attacked just because he is from the Niger Delta region. Furthermore, the coalition also warned that if any attempt was made to rig the polls in the Niger Delta region, there would be problems. They noted that they would have their members out and about at polling stations to ensure rigging did not happen. Media reports suggest that the coalition is not supporting the return to office of



President Buhari. While things remain calm, at least for now, this area can be dynamic and the situation can change quickly. As a result, it is advised that it is monitored closely.

Piracy

According to the International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) latest annual piracy report, incidents of Piracy increased globally in 2018, from 180 in 2017 to 201 in 2018. Furthermore, they noted a rise in attacks against ships and crews around West Africa. They noted that "*The Gulf of Guinea remains*

increasingly dangerous for seafarers. Reports of attacks in waters between the Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo more than doubled in 2018, accounting for all six hijackings worldwide, 13 of the 18 ships fired upon, 130 of the 141 hostages taken globally, and 78 of 83 seafarers kidnapped for ransom" ([IMB link](#)). More specifically, with regard to Nigeria, they noted that in the last three months of 2018 alone forty one kidnappings were recorded in waters off Nigeria. Interestingly, they also stated "*how armed criminals are reaching further out to sea and targeting a wider variety of ships: bulk carriers, container vessels and general cargo vessels in addition to local attacks on tankers, oil industry support vessels and fishing vessels*" ([IMB link](#)). It will be interesting to see if this pattern continues into 2019, or if action will be taken.

President Elections 2019 – 16th February

The Presidential Elections will take place in Nigeria on the 16th of February 2019 and the state elections two weeks later. In the complex environment that is Nigeria, these elections come with significant risk. This assertion is based on the fact that the past three elections have been deadly, albeit the last was significantly less violent than the previous two. This history, coupled with the number of significant violent conflicts at play throughout the country at present, such as conflicts in the North East, the middle belt, the Niger Delta and many others throughout the country, makes for a worrying cocktail. The Nigerian government is responsible for defusing tensions, increasing police presence and ensuring peaceful voting during the elections. However, the police and military are already stretched in Nigeria given these violent conflicts. Furthermore, their job is made more difficult by low levels of trust in security agencies in many states throughout the country. That said, while the risk of violence is present in every state, the dynamics of such activity is likely to vary considerably from the perspective of politics, safety, tensions, etc. For example, some of the conflicts are in political areas which are expected to be heavily contested, resulting in a high risk of violence. Furthermore, routine violence overlaps with political fault lines in some states, such as in Rivers State, where there is always fierce intense competition between the APC and the PDP. This year is unlikely to be any different. Additionally, Zamfara State, for example, has experienced significant violence of late within the state, coupled with political violence in the party primaries in October. Further violence is cannot be ruled out. Other high risk states include, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Adamawa. That said, it should be acknowledged that there was a significant reduction in violence in the run up to the Presidential Elections in 2015, and many lessons were learnt at this time that are likely to positively influence the state of play this year. For one, more preparation and planning to prevent election violence is taking place. However, interventions are often not maintained long enough after the election, resulting in increased loss of life. This was very apparent in the aftermath of the elections in 2011 and somewhat after those in 2015, posing a risk. As a result, if you are travelling to Nigeria prior to, during or post the elections, it is highly recommended that you:

- Review your security plan regularly even after the elections
- Inform yourself about risks, flash points, hotspots, etc. and on what to do in response
- Monitor local media for breaking events and be prepared to adjust your plans
- Prepare for a likelihood of increased restrictions on movement during the elections
- Avoid areas known for protests and demonstrations
- Take into consideration, increased international presence throughout the country for election monitoring, etc. and stay alert in locations frequented by Westerners.
- Ensure alternative response capacity is available given that security services are likely to be stretched
- If possible, register with your embassy and monitor their website for updates.

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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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