



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

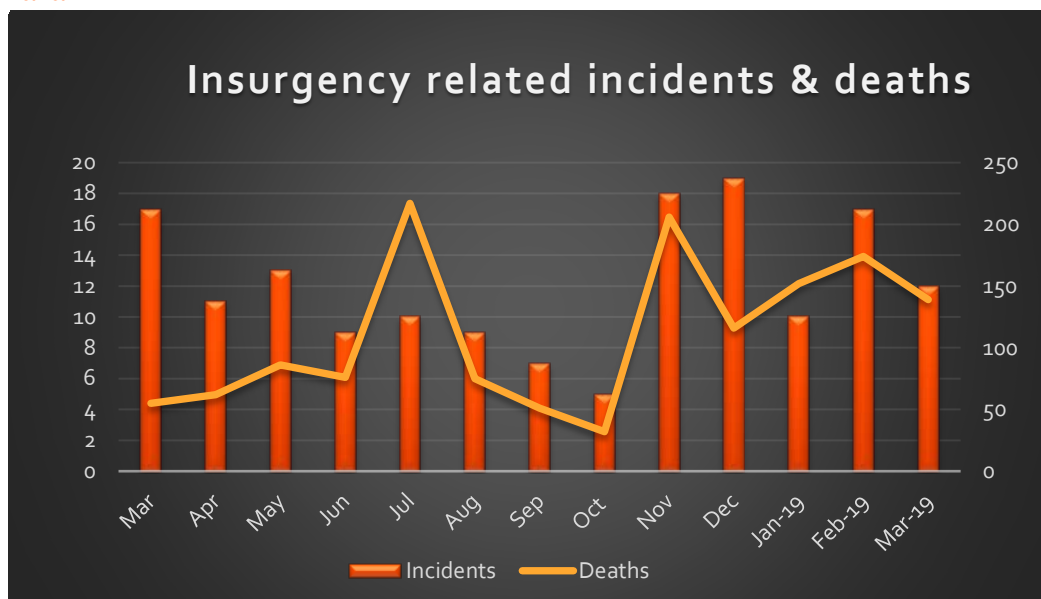
interference. This interplay of actors makes it difficult to determine the perpetrator and the victim in many cases. Nigeria is a country with specific needs, both development and increasingly, humanitarian, therefore access for international and domestic NGOs and developmental organisations is a must.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

March 2019 – *If any month has ever shown that violence in the middle belt has now surpassed deaths in the North East, March 2019 is that month. The deaths in Zamfara Kaduna and Benue show that this issue is not reducing despite assertions that the military have increased resources in the area. While these deaths have yet to hit the national headlines to any great degree, it is only a matter of time. However, it is not hard to imagine that the Nigerian Security Services are already stretched, exacerbated by the recent elections and related violence. This month illustrated that election related violence can continue weeks after the actual elections and has done so. Challenges in the North East still exist, and despite claims of a number of successful military operations during the month, Boko Haram still continue to frustrate and challenge the military. Within this backdrop, it is highly recommended that those travelling to or through Nigeria conduct a thorough security review and prepare a detailed security plan.*

North East Nigeria & Boko Haram

The military reported a number of successful operations during the month. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) reportedly claimed the lives of over forty suspected militants in their operations. While Nigerian troops reportedly killed over one hundred operatives in five different incidents in places such as Mafa, Abadam, and Bama all Borno State and one in Michika, Adamawa State. However, there was little information given as to the number of casualties on the part of the military, such successes do not appear to be deterring the group, given that there has been no significant reduction in incidents or deaths during March, despite a small reduction.

Furthermore, the month did experience a slight shift in activities. For example, at least four incidents this month claim that Boko Haram successfully used landmines to kill civilians and soldiers. While such reports are not rare, four in one month appears significant, at least in comparison with the last few months. Over thirteen people were reportedly killed in these attacks, alongside a similar number of soldiers. In other incidents, the group were blamed for the deaths of farmers in Askira, while two suspected militants allegedly lost their lives when they detonated suicide vests in Madagali, Adamawa. No-one else was said to have been killed in this incident. The group were also blamed for deaths in Biu and Chibok. They were also reported to have been very active outside Nigeria, but within their known area of operations. In the early part of the month, media reports claim that approximately ten soldiers and forty suspected militants lost their lives in a clash in Diffa, Niger. This did not appear to deter the group, as they were blamed for the deaths of over twenty five people and the abduction of two in Diffa, near the end of the month. The group were also blamed for the deaths of over twenty soldiers in Chad. As mentioned, incidents in this area are not uncommon, and only act to demonstrate the geographical range that the group comfortably navigate within.



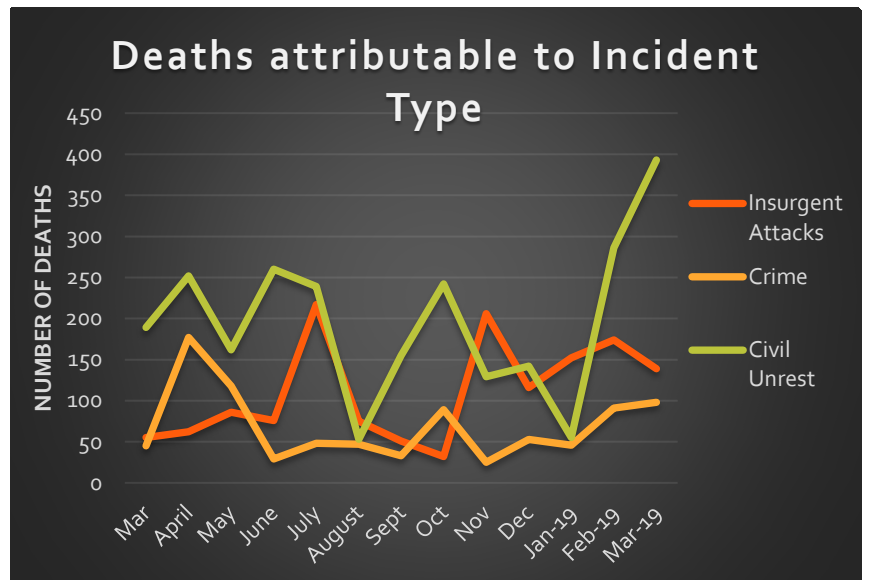
Assessment & Forecast: Activities in the North East continue to illustrate the capacity, commitment and capability of Boko Haram not only in the North East of Nigeria, but also in the neighbouring Lake Chad and surrounding areas. It serves to illustrate the continued need for a collective effort from security forces within the region. While March was not the worst month of the year in terms of incidents, it has seen the lowest number of deaths, but in no way is the reduction significant nor should it be seen as any indication that the group are on the back foot. That said, there appears to be a slight shift in the narrative emerging from the region, much of which relates to the group and its factions. For example, media reports emerged during March that the leader of the Islamic State backed faction of Boko Haram (ISWAP) had changed. Up until then, it was alleged that Al Barnawi lead the group, with many suggested he acted as a figure head of the faction, which was said to have been led by Mamman Nur. It is reported that Nur was killed in 2018. No one is categorically saying this shift in leadership is true, but many are suggesting that if it is correct, it could have a significant impact. However, most are more concerned with establishing what may have happened to Al Barnawi, if this information is found to be correct. Is he alive or dead? It remains to be seen how this will develop, but regardless of who is the leader of both factions and other armed group's active in the region, the violence is likely to continue. Secondly, ISWAP reportedly released a video at the end of March, early April, which was reportedly published by Islamic State's media outlet Amaq. The video reportedly saw the group execute five Nigerian soldiers. It was later reported that three of the men in the video were not members of the military, rather members of the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF). Others claimed that these three men had been abducted by the group in December and were presumed dead. While the video is an interesting development in the context of Nigeria, it might also be a mechanism which Islamic State are using to illustrate their reach and capacity elsewhere, outside the caliphate. It will be interesting to monitor whether this narrative continues over the next few months. However, in this backdrop and given continued incidents, vigilance is still recommended. Those travelling to or through the areas should try to tap into timely, reliable and robust information from the field. Furthermore, 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*

The number of fatalities reported during the month of March witnessed a considerable increase across a number of sectors. It is clearly evident from the graph that there was a sharp spike in deaths in the middle belt. The extent of this increase is significant. It might be fair to assume that this will reduce next month given that this spike was so high, but it will be monitored closely to see the extent of this reduction. Deaths associated with criminality also witnessed a slight increase on last month. From reviewing the incidents, it seems rational to suggest that this increase can largely be attributed to election related violence. If this is the case, there should be a reduction this month as election related violence reduces. On a positive note, the number of deaths associated with violence in the North East witnessed a slight reduction. *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

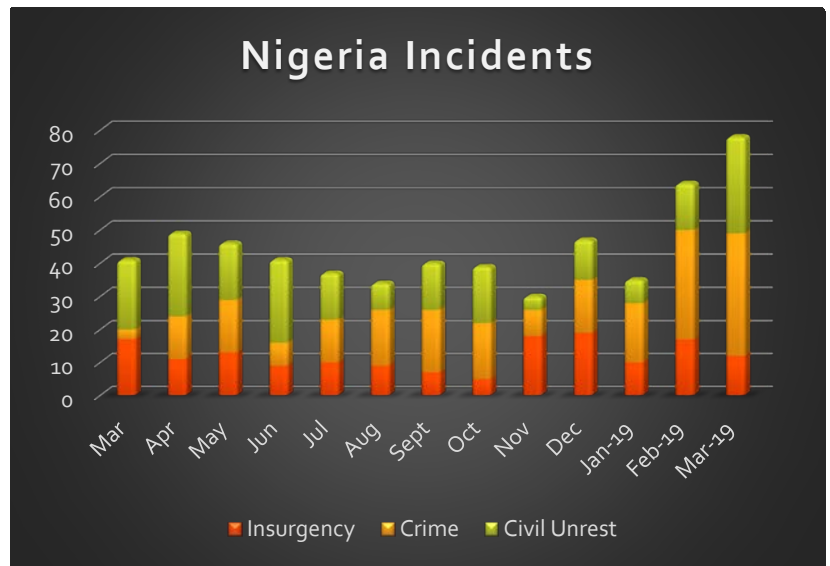
Once again, the violence in Zamfara dominated the middle belt this month. In the first week alone, over one hundred people reportedly lost their lives in four incidents. Such high levels of violence continued throughout the month, with reports that a further fifty people were reportedly killed in an incident near the end of the month. While specific details are hard to gather, the initial reports suggest the MOs used are similar to incidents over the last few months in the region. Despite these high rates of fatality reports, while emerging in Nigerian national press, they don't seem to have made the international headlines to any great degree. This is quite significant, given that incidents involving similar death tolls in the North East would likely make international headlines. The month was also littered with reports that the military had killed around thirty suspected bandits in different operations. However, these actions do not appear to be deterring these gunmen from continuing their actions. Kaduna also fell victim to some high fatality attacks. In three incidents alone, over one hundred people were reportedly killed, with others killed in other incidents. Deaths in Benue State were also worrying, with over fifty people reportedly killed across three incidents. Thirty people were reportedly killed in Kogi State, while single digit deaths were reported in Adamawa, Katsina, Nassarawa, Kogi and Kwara once again showing the range of incidents of this nature.



Forecast: Violence in the middle belt not only continued this month, but increased at a level that can no longer be ignored both at the national and international level. To say that on average thirty people are being killed a day in the middle belt is not an overestimate. In relation to Zamfara State, this violence is often attributed to the Fulani herdsmen and farmers, but for a number of weeks now, a new narrative is emerging. This narrative relates to gold mining. It is being suggested that this is motivating the increased violence. Some say that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, but even if both are somewhat correct with respect to Zamfara State, they fail to explain levels of violence in Benue and Kaduna State, which is also at worrying levels. The cumulative effect of this violence indicates that it is now resulting in similar if not more deaths than that experienced in the North East. This is not going unnoticed and increased military deployments have been made to the region, but with resources already stretched it does not appear to have yet had a significant affect. In fact, some have reported that this is having a negative impact, with clashes between the military and civilians reported. Despite this, military deployments alone are unlikely to have a significant impact, which has been clearly illustrated in the North East. More needs to be done to better understand the issue at hand, and a proper response strategy needs to be designed and implemented. As noted last month, some Nigerian analysts are doing great work in this areas, but it is largely being ignored. There is a significant problem and it needs to be accepted, in all its guises, before it can be addressed. Until then, those travelling to or through the middle belt should ensure they stay aware of these issues. Many of these locations often experience high rates of abduction, when security services are re-deployed, new opportunities can emerge. So it is advised to stay aware. **Note: At time of writing, April figures do seem to be seeing a reduction in deaths, which is positive to note.**

Kidnap and Abduction

March witnessed a large number of reported abductions during the month. Once again no region of the country appeared immune. As in similar months, at least fifteen people were reportedly taken from a bus in Rivers State. Given the number of similar incidents over recent months, it might have been easy to assume that action would have been taken to mitigate this happening again, but it does not appear to have been done. Further north in Katsina State, twenty Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) were said to have been abducted and a police officer killed in the incident. A number of days later, a Quranic reader and five others was also reportedly taken in the state. Six other INEC staff were also said to have been abducted in Kogi State. A Catholic priest was reportedly kidnapped in Kaduna State and in a separate incident over ten manual workers were also said to have taken. Further west, five people were reportedly abducted in Sokoto State, with four others killed in the incidents. In Zamfara State a North Korean doctor who was said to have been working in a local hospital was reportedly abducted from Tsafe. A Lebanese construction worker was reported taken in Kano during the month. His driver was reportedly killed during the incidents. Days later, media reports emerged that suggested the abductee had been found dead.



Weeks after the elections, election related violence continued, illustrating that the risk associated with elections can exist long after they are over. While the Southern part of Nigeria appeared to be most affected, incidents were reported nationally. It is difficult to get exact details relating to many of the incidents, but nearly fifty people were reportedly killed throughout the country. Non election related violence also continued. This month witnessed a number of attacks on police and military. For example, two soldiers were reportedly targeted and killed in Rivers State, while a police station was reportedly attacks and four policemen killed in Edo State. Cultist attacks also continued, with ten people reportedly killed in Imo State and five in Akwa Ibom. Next door in Cross Rivers State, at least twenty people were reportedly killed in sectarian violence.

Criminality, Cultist activity & Violence

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Piracy

Piracy continued during the month of March. Five sailors were reportedly taken from a boat off the coast of Brass, Bayelsa. A number of attempted boarding's were also reported from boats in Lagos. However, the majority were disrupted by the Nigerian Navy. On a positive note, the International Chambers of Commerce International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported that the first quarter of 2019 saw a reduction in the number of incidents relating to piracy and armed robbery against ships, than in the same

period in 2018. Although 22 of the 38 incidents reported occurred in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). Furthermore, 21 crew members were reportedly abducted during this period in five separate incidents. Nigeria waters fell victims to 14 of these incidents, a positive reduction from 22 last year. Despite this positive result, Nigerian waterways and the GoG still remain high risk.

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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.

info@sarconint.com
 Twitter @SAR_Consultancy
www.sarconint.com