



The West Africa Report

*Security and Piracy - At Sea - On
Land - Domestic News
and Developments for the
International Resources Sector*

The West Africa Report ~ SUMMARY

March 18 – 31, 2013



Follow us on Twitter @ MS Risk_Security for regular updates on topical security events and issues.

[Special Report: Threats in the Sahel Region](#)

[Benin](#)

- **29 March 2013** - Ousted Central African Republic President Francois Bozize has requested exile in Benin, just days after rebels invaded and overthrew his government.

[Burkina Faso](#)

- Travel Summary

[Cameroon](#)

- **18 March 2013** - The French man who was abducted with his family last month in Cameroon has spoken in a recording reportedly made by a Nigerian Islamist group linked to al-Qaeda and released on Monday.

[Central African Republic](#)

- Travel Summary
- April 2013 Monthly Forecast
- **29 March 2013** - Michel Djotodia has confirmed that his government will be looking into mining contracts which were signed with Chinese and South African companies while President Bozize was leader.
- **28 March 2013** - Army chiefs in the Central African Republic have pledged their allegiance to the country's self-proclaimed president Michel Djotodia.
- **26 March 2013** - Two days after a coup that effectively plunged the mineral-rich country into chaos, looters and gunmen have been roaming the streets of CAR's capital city Bangui as regional peacekeepers struggle to restore some degree of order.
 - Meanwhile Central African rebels have suspended the country's constitution, dissolved parliament and declared transitional rule just days after a coup forced the country's president into exile and drew condemnation from the international community.
- **24 March 2013** - Rebel leader and self-proclaimed President Michel Djotodia, who has accused CAR President Bozize of breaking past peace accords, has requested regional peacekeepers in the country to help him restore order.

Equatorial Guinea

- **29 March 2013** - Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan is in Equatorial Guinea for a two-day working visit to the state, which is expected to expand political and economic cooperation amongst the two countries.

Gabon

- **21 March 2013** - At least thirty people have died when their boat capsized off the coast of Gabon, near the capital city of Libreville.

Ghana

- 2013 has seen a sharp increase in the number of foreigners and expats who have been targeted in armed robberies in Ghana. Furthermore there has also been a rise in reports of armed robberies taking place in expatriate residential areas.

Guinea

- **29 March 2013** - A government minister has confirmed on Friday that Guinea will hold its long-delayed parliamentary elections this year regardless whether or not the country's main opposition coalition will participate.
- **26 March 2013** - Guinea's opposition leaders abandoned talks with the government on Tuesday, threatening to resume street protests and further accusing the President's camp of not respecting the terms of a planned dialogue over preparations for elections which are due to occur in May.
- **22 March 2013** - Due to the ongoing political deadlock, Guinea's government and opposition leaders have agreed to bring in an international mediator in order to facilitate talks over the organization of the much-delayed legislative elections.

Guinea-Bissau

- **27 March 2013** - The United Nations has indicated that it has been forced to delay desperately-needed food aid to nearly 300,000 people in Guinea-Bissau as it has not received no donations in order to support the operation.
- **21 March 2013** - Officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are planning to meet with representatives of the African Union's Peace and Security Council on Friday in order to discuss ongoing efforts to restore constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau.

Ivory Coast

- April 2013 Monthly Forecast
- **25 March 2013** - The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Ivory Coast and in Liberia have reinforced their patrols after an attack by armed elements occurred in Petit Guiglo, which is located in the western region of the Ivory Coast.
- **21 March 2013** - Former President Laurent Gbagbo's party has announced that it will boycott regional and local elections that are scheduled to take
- **15 March 2013** - The United Nations mission in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) has condemned a deadly attack on a village in the western part of the country.

Liberia

- Travel Summary
- **26 March 2013** - United Nations officials in Liberia have confirmed that they have temporarily halted the repatriation of tens of thousands of refugees from the Ivory coast due to the ongoing unrest that is occurring near the border between the two countries.

Mali

- Travel Summary
- MS RISK guidance to organizations in Mali
- Breakdown of the Mali Intervention
 - **Summary** -

On the Ground Analysis

- April 2013 Monthly Forecast
- **21 March 2013** - A Malian soldier has died and two others have been lightly injured in the first suicide bombing to target the city of Timbuktu.
- **19 March 2013** - France is hosting talks focusing on Mali's post-war development.

Domestic News

- **26 March 2013** - United Nations Secretary General announces that up to 11,200 troops could be needed for a peacekeeping mission in Mali but that a "parallel" military force will be necessary in order to battle the radical Islamists.
- **20 March 2013** - International charity Oxfam has warned that the humanitarian crisis in areas of northern Mali is alarming despite the region being recently recaptured from Islamist militants.

International Developments

- **24 March 2013** - Al-Qaeda has announced that the group has named a replacement for Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, a key commander of its North African wing who was killed in fighting with French-led forces in northern Mali.
- **21 March 2013** - The United Nations Human Rights Council has announced that the UN will be appointing an independent expert to investigate and help improve the human rights situation in Mali.
 - Meanwhile the United States State Department and the United Nations have added Ansar Dine, a Mali terrorist group that has close ties to al-Qaeda, to their respective lists of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

Special Report: Mali - One Year Later

[Mauritania](#)

- Travel Summary
- **18 March 2013** - Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal will travel to Nouakchott for a two-day working visit to Mauritania at the invitation of his Mauritanian counterpart, Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf.
 - Meanwhile, a Mauritanian official has confirmed that a military plane which was on a training mission, crashed near the desert town of Aoujeft, which is located roughly 500 km (300 miles northeast of the capital).

[Niger](#)

- Travel Summary
- 21 March 2013 - The drone base in Niger has provided the United States with a strategic foothold in West Africa.

[Nigeria](#)

- Travel Summary
- Travel Advisory: Nigeria's Troubled Regions
- On the Ground Reporting: Maiduguri

On the Ground Events

- **27 March 2013** - In the last week, sectarian clashes in central Nigeria have left at least twenty-three people dead in region where bitter ethnic disputes have killed thousands in recent years.
- **24 March 2013** - According to the police spokesman for the western Adamawa state, Mohammed Ibrahim, the gunmen carried out four simultaneous assaults in Ganye, which is located in the Adamawa state.
- **23 March 2013** - Two suspected members of Boko Haram have been killed after an explosive they attempted to throw as policemen at a checkpoint went off in the flashpoint city of Kano.
- **22 March 2013** - Police have confirmed that suspected Islamist gunmen have launched a series of gun and bomb attacks in a remote town along the border with Cameroon.
- **19 March 2013** - An explosion that targeted a security patrol outside a bank has killed two soldiers and a policeman in the northeast city of Maiduguri.
- **18 March 2013** - Two suicide bombers exploded their car into a bus station in Kano, Nigeria's second largest city, setting off a large explosion that hit five busses.

Kidnappings

- **28 March 2013** - Meanwhile the US consulate has announced that a foreigner has been kidnapped in Nigeria's largest city of Lagos. However few details have emerged.
- **24 March 2013** - A journalist at a Nigerian state-owned television station, who was kidnapped along with her baby and maid last week as she left work, was released on Sunday.

Domestic News

- **25 March 2013** - Shell has announced that it will close the Nembe Creek oil pipeline temporarily in April, a decision which reflects the rampant oil theft in the country.
- **21 March 2013** - the Nigerian president has announced that President Goodluck Jonathan will embark on a two-day official visit to Equatorial Guinea as part of his administration's efforts to boost economic and trade relations between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries.

International Developments

- **26 March 2013** - A court in South Africa has jailed Nigerian national Henry Okah to a period of twenty-four years in prison after he was found guilty of thirteen terrorism charges relating to the deadly twin bomb attacks that occurred in Abuja in 2010.

[Senegal](#)

- **20 March 2013** - Karim Wade, who is the son of former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, has been given one month by state prosecutors in order to justify assets that he accumulated when he served in his father's government.

[Sierra Leone](#)

- **27 March 2013** - The United Nations Security Council has given a one-year extension to of mandate to the ongoing mission in Sierra Leone.

[Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea](#)

Unsuccessful Attacks/Robberies:

- **25 March 2013** - Shore security guard on board a berthed US-flagged general cargo ship, the **Ocean Charger**, noticed two robbers on the aft mooring stations at 0300 LT in Abidjan Port, Ivory Coast.

[About MS Risk](#)

Special Report: Threats in the Sahel Region

The Sahel regions runs across Northern Africa and covers areas of the following countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eritrea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan.



There is currently a high risk of kidnapping and terrorism throughout the areas of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. In the past, militants have kidnapped a number of Westerners throughout the Sahel region. As such, we assess that further kidnappings and kidnap attempts, especially of Westerners and French nationals, are highly likely to continue. If you are traveling to the region, or have workers based in these countries, we advise you to consult our travel advice for country specific information.

Who are the Terrorists?

Although the terrorist in the Sahel region generally comes from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the splinter group, the Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), a number of other terrorist groups and crime groups have developed throughout the region. Both AQIM and MUJWA are aspiring to establish Islamic law across the Sahel region and northern Africa and to attack Western interests throughout the region.

Both groups have kidnapped a number of Westerners either for financial gain, prisoner exchange or to exert political pressure on governments. Since the March 2012 coup in Mali, and the ongoing unrest that is occurring in the northern region of the country, we assess that there is a continued heightened threat of kidnap in the region which will be likely carried out by militants from AQIM and MUJWA. Furthermore, this kidnap threat is not isolated to be carried out solely by Islamist militants in their strongholds. On previous occasions, criminal gangs have been engaged to carry out kidnappings for terrorist groups in return for financial rewards. In turn, criminal gangs who support their beliefs may also turn towards the kidnapping of Westerners as a means of further pressurizing Western nations to withdrawal from the on going intervention in Mali. Since 2008, over twenty-five Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel. Victims have included tourists, NGO workers and diplomats of

varying nationalities, primarily European. A number of these hostages are still being held, including a group of French nationals who were kidnapped in September 2010.

While AQIM militants have used northern Mali as an operating base, the group has proven its capabilities of travelling long distances to carry out its attacks, including in Algeria, throughout Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

How Serious is the Threat in the Sahel Region?

The UK's Prime Minister David Cameron has indicated that Islamist extremists in North Africa pose a "large and existential threat." This comment was made shortly after the siege of a gas facility in Algeria where dozens of people, a majority of which were foreigners, were killed. The group responsible for the incident in In Amenas, Algeria appears to have been led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a former commander of AQIM. After leaving the group last year, he branched out and founded an independent faction known as the Signed-in-Blood Battalion. The group seems to operate outside of the territory which is controlled by the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in northern Mali. Although Belmokhtar's militants have claimed that the assault in Algeria was in response to the recent launch of France's intervention in Mali, it is evident that this attack was a long-term plot that was brought forward by the French assault.

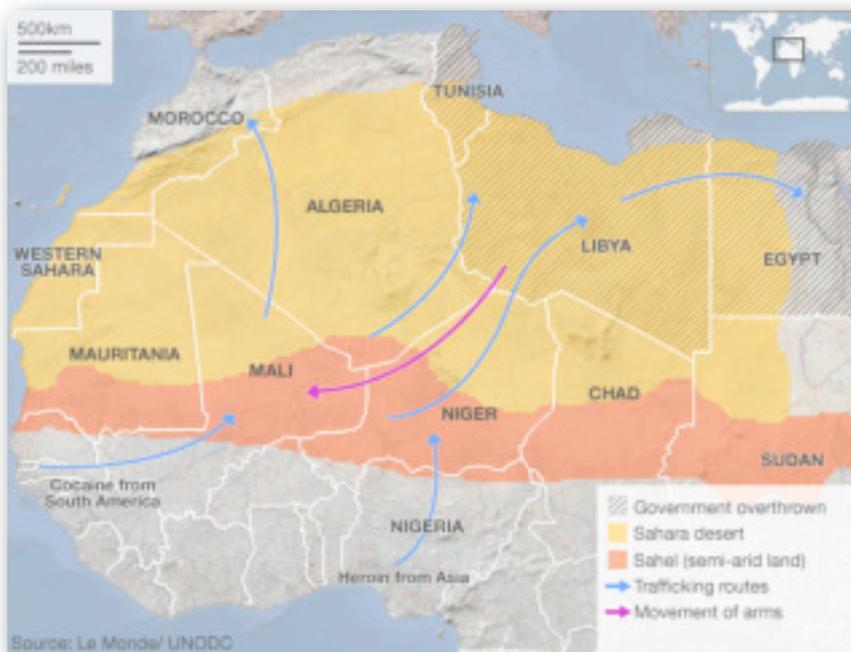
While the fact that Belmokhtar's group would desire to attack a Western target is not entirely surprising, as AQIM has had a history of kidnapping foreigners and attacking Western targets, the fact that violent groups espousing similar extreme rhetoric can be found in a number of countries throughout the Sahel and West African regions is a rapidly growing concern.

In Mali, along with AQIM, MUJAO, and the Signed-in-Blood Battalion is Ansar Dine, which is another splinter group stemming from AQIM. Since the March 2012 coup in Mali, the group has held large parts of the northern regions of the country and has imposed its own version of Sharia Law. Meanwhile in Nigeria, Boko Haram has conducted a destabilizing and bloody campaign of terrorism in a fight that is rooted in long-standing local, social and economic tensions. Sources have also indicated a possible existing connection between AQIM and Boko Haram militants.

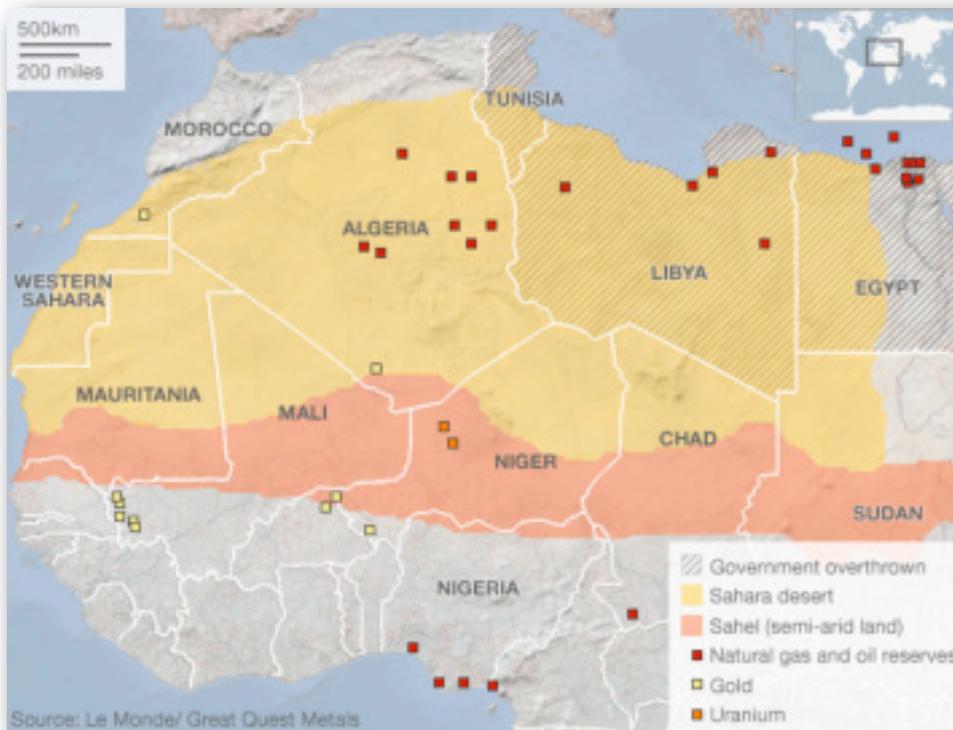
Across the African continent, in the Horn of Africa is Somalia, a country which for the past few years has been home to al-Shabaab, another jihadist group which last year officially aligned itself with al-Qaeda. The group has been responsible for a number of kidnappings however it typically focuses its objectives on carrying out hit and run attacks throughout the country in order to destabilize the newly formed government and to gain back territory it has lost throughout the past year. Reports have also indicated that Boko Haram fighters have trained alongside al-Shabaab fighters. In turn, the Somali group is also known to have deep connections with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is al-Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate.

The porous borders throughout the Sahel region have also enabled these groups to freely move around the region in order to demonstrate their capabilities.

However while it seems evident that links can be drawn between these groups, it is necessary to note that in most cases, while they may have similar goals, they typically do not operate in unison.



Often local issues will trump international ones, even if they claim to be operating under the banner of an international organization such as al-Qaeda.



The biggest threat currently will be to Western interests and nationals throughout the African continent. Sites such as In Amenas will now be looked at closely and will likely be categorized as potential targets for those terrorist groups who are seeking international attention or to gain revenge for the French led military operation in Mali.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Operating North Africa's Sahara and Sahel region, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a militant group that has been designated by the United States onto its Foreign Terrorist Organization list. While the group can trace its origins back to Algeria's civil war, the group has transformed into an al-Qaeda affiliate which currently holds broad regional and international ambitions.

Over the past year, AQIM's activities have garnered a heightened level of concern, particularly after the group, along with several other jihadist factions, expanded its foothold into Mali's northern region. While the 2013 French-led military intervention has halted their southward advancements, analysts warn that the operation may fail unless it is followed up by a robust contingent of African ground forces that will maintain security throughout the country.

Objectives

While AQIM's exact objectives are not known, the group's principle goals include ridding North Africa of any Western influence, overthrowing apostate governments, including those in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, and establishing fundamentalist regimes based on Islamic Law, or Sharia law, in its place. Since the January 2013 French-led military operation in Mali, AQIM's objectives have focused on pushing French and African forces out of the country. AQIM-linked militants have carried out suicide attacks and bombings throughout the country and have been responsible for a number of kidnappings of Westerners. Neighbouring countries have also elevated their security precautions, in which many have increased border security due to fears of reprisal attacks.

Where the Group Operates

A successful counter-terrorism campaign effectively forced AQIM from its base of operations along Algeria's Mediterranean coast towards the Sahel region, which includes Mali, Mauritania and Niger, where the group has

established a number of footholds throughout the major cities. Unlike other al-Qaeda affiliates, AQIM has not been able to execute attacks on targets within Europe and the United States however arrests of suspected terrorists who have links to AQIM have been made throughout Europe including in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Evidence of thwarted attacks and arrests of AQIM-linked terrorists throughout Europe has indicated that the group is capable of carrying out attacks in Western Europe.

In 2012, the US State Department announced its concerns that AQIM had begun to network with other prominent terrorist groups in the region as a means of carrying out their objectives and further strengthening their numbers. Reports have indicated that they maintain contact with Nigeria's Boko Haram, Somalia's al-Shabaab and Yemen's al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The September 2012 assault on the US Consulate in Benghazi has also raised concerns in regards to AQIM's presence in Libya.

Numbers and Leadership

Although the precise data on the number of AQIM militants is unavailable, estimates have placed that number at several hundred members. It is believed that most of AQIM's major leaders, who are all Algerian, have trained in Afghanistan during the 1979 - 1989 war against the Soviets as part of a group of North African known as "Afghan Arab." Since 2004, the group's top leader, or emir, has been Abdelmalek Droukdel. Also known as Abou Mossab Abdelwadoud, he is a trained engineer and explosives expert who has fought in Afghanistan and has roots with the GIA in Algeria.

One of AQIM's most violent and radical leaders was Abdelhamid Abou Zeid. He has been linked to a number of kidnappings and executions of European nationals in the region. In June 2009, his men kidnapped British tourist Edwin Dyer. According to a number of eyewitness reports, Abou Zeid personally beheaded the British national. He has also been credited with having significantly expanded AQIM's field of operations into Tunisia and Niger. Officials in Chad claimed that Chadian forces fighting alongside French troops in northern Mali had killed Abou Zeid on 22 February 2013. France did not confirm the death until 23 March 2013, stating that DNA samples had made it possible to formally identify him. On 24 March 2013, AQIM announced that the group had named a replacement for Abou Zeid. Sources have indicated that Djamel Okacha, a 34-year-old Algerian, is set to replace Abou Zeid. He will take charge of AQIM's operations in both southern Algerian and throughout northern Mali. Although he did not train in Afghanistan, Okacha has had a meteoric rise in the group. He spent around eighteen months in prison in Algeria in the 1990's during a time when the country was mired in Islamist violence. As a member of the feared extremist organization the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salfist Group for Preaching Combat (GPSC), he was active throughout the northern regions of Algeria.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a founding member of AQIM, reportedly broke with the group in late 2012 and formed his own organization known as the Signed-in-Blood Battalion. He is believed to have masterminded the deadly hostage-taking raid on a gas facility in Algeria in January 2013. Although reports, which surfaced on 2 March 2013, have indicated that Belmokhtar had also been killed in fighting in the mountainous regions of northern Mali, his fate has yet to be confirmed.

Tactics

AQIM utilizes a number of conventional terrorist tactics, including assassinations, guerrilla-style raids and suicide bombings that target military, government and civilian targets. Perhaps the group's most bold attack was the December 2007 bombing of UN offices in Algiers, which resulted in the killing of dozens.

The group has also been responsible for the kidnapping and execution of a number of Western nationals, including aid workers, tourists and diplomats. Employees of multinational corporations are also increasingly becoming a prominent target.

The group raises money through the carrying out of a number of criminal activities including kidnapping for ransom (KFR) as well as the trafficking of arms, cigarettes, vehicles and persons. Kidnappings not only raise funds but also support prisoner exchanges and in some instances discourage foreign enterprises from setting up in the region. A number of officials have also indicated that AQIM is heavily involved in the smuggling of

narcotics and that the group provides a vital way-station between suppliers in Latin America and the European market.

Boko Haram

What is Boko Haram?

Although from 2002 - 2009, Boko Haram was initially a close knit sect with a high degree of loyalty within the group, the July 2009 government offensive against them resulted in the group altering their modus operandi, one that would focus on their survival. With the absence of a territorial safe haven, the group was forced to disperse in a bid to avoid detection and elimination. Since 2009, Boko Haram have demonstrated their capabilities of regrouping, in large numbers, an example which was aptly demonstrated through the attack in the Damboa local government area in Borno state on 27 May 2011. Official police reports have cited that the attack involved seventy Boko Haram members. Since then, Boko Haram has staged a range of attacks, demonstrating their capabilities of planned operations and rapid hit and run attacks. They range from the careful and skilled planned operations that have targeted high profile individuals. They have also used tactics such as the placement of improvised explosive devices along known patrol routes that are used by members of the joint security taskforce. In turn, they have also claimed responsibility for a number of arson and vandalism attacks as well as opportunistic attacks against security personnel.

While a large number of attacks have been linked to Boko Haram militants, the group itself has claimed responsibility for only a small number of attacks. With often no claim of responsibility, it is often difficult to know who is carrying out the attacks that are being attributed to the group. In turn, the dispersed and incoherent nature of the group's threats indicates that there may be a number of groups and individuals who have independent agendas but who operate under the Boko Haram threat umbrella. Consequently, this poses heightened difficulties on Nigerian security forces as it is

Intentions

The group's main intentions are to transform Nigeria into an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. They have indicated that they will fight until Nigeria has an Islamic system of government in place. The vast majority of their attacks have focused on those individuals or groups that are against their beliefs and desires. This includes politicians, religious leaders (who do not subscribe to their philosophy), non-Muslims and Nigerian security forces.

Other Groups

Ansar Dine - The group's full name in Arabic is Harakat Ansar al-Dine, which translates to "movement of defenders of the faith." The group is seen as a home-grown movement which is led by former Tuareg rebel leader Iyad Ag Ghaly. Its objective is to impose Sharia law throughout Mali.

Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA or MUJWA) - It is an active militant organization that broke off from AQIM in 2011. The group's objectives are to spread jihad further into areas of West Africa which are not under the scope of AQIM. In 2012, the group was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council which cited an allegiance with AQIM.

Recent Kidnappings in the Sahel

- **Cameroon** - 19 February 2013, Islamist militants from neighbouring Nigeria abducted a French family of seven, including four children, in northern Cameroon. The seven French nationals were abducted in Dabanga, about 10 km (6 miles) from the Nigerian border near the Waza national park. **Outcome** - Militants who have indicated they belong to Boko Haram are still holding the family.
- **Nigeria** - 17 February 2013, at least seven foreign workers were seized and one security guard was shot dead after gunmen attacked a construction company site in the northern state of Bauchi. The hostages comprised of nationals from Italy, Britain, Greece and Lebanon. **Outcome** - Nigerian militant group Ansaru claims to have killed the seven hostages. Western governments confirm that claims are credible.

- **Algeria** - 16 January 2013, militants belonging to the group controlled by Mokhtar Belmokhtar attacked the In Amenas gas plant. Twenty-nine of the militants who overran the facility had been killed while three were captured alive. The militants included eleven Tunisians, two Canadians and nationals from Algeria, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. **Outcome** - Thirty-seven foreigners of eight nationalities and one Algerian worker were killed during the hostage crisis at the gas plant. Japan indicated that seven of its nationals had been killed while three others were missing. US officials confirmed that three Americans were among the dead, with seven survivors. UK Prime Minister David Cameron confirmed that three Britons had been killed, with three others missing.
- **Mali** - 21 November 2012, a French national was kidnapped in Mali near the border with Mauritania and Senegal. The man had crossed into Mali from Mauritania by car and had been kidnapped near the Malian town of Kayes. **Outcome** - the man is still being held by AQIM.
- **Mali** - 15 April 2012, a Swiss national was kidnapped in Timbuktu. **Outcome** - She was released on 24 April 2012.
- **Mali** - 4 April 2012, seven Algerian diplomats were kidnapped in Gao. **Outcome** - Three were released on 5 July 2012 however the remaining four are still being held.
- **Mauritania** - 20 December 2011, Mauritanian military police were attacked in Adel Begrou, Mauritania, which is located near the Mali border. **Outcome** - One Gendarme was kidnapped in the attack and was held for almost three months before being released.
- **Mali** - 25 November 2011, four tourists were attacked in Timbuktu. **Outcome** - One was killed while the three others were kidnapped. The hostages are still being held.
- **Mali** - 24 November 2011, two French nationals were kidnapped in the town of Hombori, which is located northeast of Mopti. **Outcome** - One is still being held while reports have surfaced that the other hostage, Philippe Verdon, was killed by AQIM militants on 10 March 2013 in retaliation for France's intervention in Mali. The reports of the death of the French national have not yet been confirmed by officials in France.
- **Algeria** - 23 October 2011, two Spanish nationals and one Italian national were kidnapped from a refugee camp near the town of Tindouf in the province of Tindouf, in the western region of Algeria, near the borders with Morocco, Western Sahara and Mauritania. **Outcome** - They were released on 18 July 2012.
- **Algeria** - 4 February 2011, an Italian national was kidnapped in south-eastern Algeria near the city of Djanet. **Outcome** - She was released on 17 April 2012.
- **Niger** - 7 January 2011, French aid worker Antoine De Leocour and French citizen Vincent Delory kidnapped in Niamey. **Outcome** - After a pursuit by Nigerian and French forces, and a battle with AQIM, De Leocour and Delory died during a rescue attempt on 8 January. The French Foreign Ministry indicated that the two victims were shot, further indicating that they were killed by their captors and not by French fire.
- **Niger** - 16 September 2010, five French nationals were kidnapped in the town of Arlit. **Outcome** - Four are still being held. One was released in February 2011.
- **Mauritania** - 23 August 2010, two Spanish nationals kidnapped in November 2009 were released. The third had been released earlier in the year.
- **Niger** - 19 April 2010, French citizen Michel Germaneau kidnapped in northern Niger and moved to Mali. **Outcome** - AQIM threatened to kill Germaneau unless some of its members were released from prison. Following a French and Mauritanian army raid on AQIM members in Mali that reportedly killed six militants, AQIM announced that it had killed Germaneau on July 25.
- **Mauritania** - 18 December 2009, Italian citizens Nicola Sergio Cicala and Philomen Kabouree are kidnapped. **Outcome** - AQIM released Cicala and Kabouree on 16 April 2010. Italian officials indicated that the release came about due to diplomatic negotiations however they did not indicate whether a ransom payment was made.
- **Mauritania** - 29 November 2009, Spanish aid workers Albert Vilalta, Roque Pascual and Alicia Gamez are kidnapped near Nouadhibou. **Outcome** - AQIM released Gamez on 10 March 2010. Unconfirmed reports indicated that the Spanish government had paid a ransom. AQIM released Vilalta and Pascual on 22 August 2010.
- **Mali** - 25 November 2009, French citizen Pierre Camatte kidnapped near the border with Niger. **Outcome** - Prisoner exchange. After AQIM threatened to kill Camatte, Mali released four AQIM militants around 20 February 2010. AQIM released Camatte on 23 February 2010.
- **Niger** - 14 November 2009, Attempted kidnapping of American Embassy personnel in Tahoua. **Outcome** - Attempt failed.

- **Mauritania** - 23 January 2009, American aid worker Christopher Legget murdered in Nouakchott during an attempted kidnapping. **Outcome** - Several arrests of AQIM members.
- **Mali** - 22 January 2009, European tourists Edwin Dyer, Marianne Petzold, Gabriella Greitner and Werner Greiner kidnapped near the Niger border. **Outcome** - AQIM freed Petzold and Greitner on April 22. AQIM claimed that four militants had been released in exchange. After demanding the release of Abu Qatada, an al-Qaeda member held in Britain, and meeting refusal from the British government, AQIM killed Dyer on May 31. AQIM released Greiner on July 12. Various sources have indicated that the Swiss government paid a ransom for Greiner's release.
- **Niger** - 14 December 2008, Canadian diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay kidnapped in Niger. **Outcome** - AQIM released Fowler and Guay in Mali on 22 April 2010, along with other hostages, potentially in exchange of AQIM prisoners.
- **Tunisia** - 22 February 2008, Austrian citizens Wolfgang Ebner and Andrea Kloiber kidnapped in Tunisia, subsequently moved to Mali. **Outcome** - AQIM released the Austrians on 31 October 2008, sources have alleged that the Austrian government paid a US \$4 million ransom and that several AQIM members were released.
- **Mauritania** - 24 December 2007, Four French tourists killed. **Outcome** - Mauritania sentenced three AQIM members to death.



No restrictions
in this travel
advice

Although there are currently no travel warnings which have been issued for Benin, France has issued a warning indicating a possible threat of attacks and kidnappings occurring near the border with Niger and Nigeria. As such, MS Risk advises against any travel to the border regions with these two countries. There is currently a low threat from terrorism in Benin however terrorist attacks may occur at any place, and at any time.

Domestic News:

- **29 March 2013** - Ousted Central African Republic President Francois Bozize has requested exile in Benin, just days after rebels invaded and overthrew his government. Benin's Foreign Affairs Minister Nassirou Arifari Bako confirmed late on Thursday that President Bozize had made a request to reside in the country. He further indicated that "it is true that he has asked Benin to welcome him but nothing has been decided yet...it's a delicate subject." The request for exile comes after thousands of armed rebels invaded the capital of the Central African Republic last weekend. Since then, President Bozize and his family have fled to neighbouring Cameroon amidst the chaos. Over the past week, thirteen South African soldiers have been killed in the intense fighting and an untold number of civilians have also died. A South African military official in Uganda has indicated that all the wounded South African soldiers have since been airlifted back to South Africa after being stabilized in Uganda. Furthermore, the government is keeping at least twenty-five military personnel in Uganda "until the decision to reinforce or withdraw" from the Central African Republic is made by the government in Pretoria. He also denied reports that South Africa was considering sending troops into the Central African Republic with the intention of retaking the capital city of Bangui. It is unlikely that South Africa will go it alone and will likely require the backing of another African country. President Bozize has already lived in exile in Benin during the 1980's. Since then, he has made a number of private visits over the years. After seizing power in 2003 following a rebellion, he has faced threats from a number of armed groups. The latest rebellion was launched in December 2012, when armed fighters began declaring control of towns across the sparsely populated north. While regional mediators brought the rebels and Bozize together for peace talks that were held in Gabon in January, in which an agreement was reached to keep the rebels from attacking Bangui, the accord quickly unraveled as the rebels accused Bozize of failing to deliver on his promises. Days after President Bozize fled the country rebel leader Michel Djotodia has declared himself president until 2016.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country



Travel Summary:

Any citizens traveling to, and residing in, Burkina Faso are urged to exercise and maintain a high level of security awareness at all times.

An incident on 15 March 2013 at around 05:00 am local time has resulted in the driver of a catering contractor being killed. According to local officials, the driver departed the company’s office at around 4am. While travelling to Ouagadougou, the victim noticed that a transport bus ahead of him was parked on the side of the road, with a number of people waving torches, signaling at him to stop. While the victim refused to obey their order, and instead forced his way through the barrier which had been set up, one of the bandits fired at his vehicle with a firearm. The bullet caused a perforation to the left side door of the vehicle. It then passed through the driver’s stomach from his left toward his right. Although the victim was evacuated to a hospital in Ouagadougou, he later succumbed to his injuries. In assessing the attack, security officials noted that the two main reasons for this incident were the victim’s refusal to obey the stop order from the highway bandits and the fact that the departure had been made too early in the morning. Security officials in Burkina Faso have since recommended that travel times must commence no earlier than 0600 hours and vehicles must reach their destinations no later than 1800 hrs. If you find yourself in such a situation, MS Risk advises you to remain calm and to comply with the bandits’ requests. This incident further demonstrates that such attacks can occur at any time and any place throughout the country.

Threats and Concerns

There is a general threat from terrorism throughout the Sahel region. Given the on-going French military intervention in Mali, the threat of retribution against Western private sector interests, especially French, has increased. Although there are currently no known Islamist operatives in Burkina Faso, the country’s shared border with Mali may enable such elements to gain access. Furthermore, such militants may have disguised themselves as refugees in an attempt to blend in and to cross the border without detection. The regional Islamist elements that could impact Burkina Faso include: al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar al Dine, Ansar al Sharia and Boko Haram.



Kidnapping Threats

Over the past several weeks, regional Islamist militants, such as members of AQIM, have specifically targeted Westerners for kidnapping for ransom in neighbouring countries. Although no known kidnappings have taken place in Burkina Faso, the instability throughout the region, specifically in Mali, has increased potential vulnerabilities. Intelligence reports have confirmed that terrorists are highly likely to be planning kidnap operations in Burkina Faso. Consequently there is a heightened risk that such kidnap activity may cross the northern borders from Niger and Mali into Burkina Faso. MS RISK advises against all travel to the northern region of Burkina Faso, specifically north of the town of Boulsa, which is located 25km north of the capital city of Ouagadougou. This includes the border provinces of Lebara, Kenedougou, Banwa, Kossi, Sourou, Yatenga, Loroum, Soum, Oudalan, Seno, Yagha, Komondjari and Tapoa. Since 2008, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has captured over 25 hostages of a variety of nationalities, primarily European, in which a number of these hostages are still being held.

There is also a high risk of crime involving armed groups stopping vehicles (including public buses) in order to rob them. Such incidents have occurred in various parts of the country, particularly at night. As such all travel between towns by road at night is to be avoided, especially from Ouagadougou to Po where there is a heightened risk posed by bandits. This is especially severe on market days when highwaymen often operate in the hopes of catching merchants with stock or cash en route to and from the urban areas.

MS RISK Guidance to Organisations in Burkina Faso:

Although the biggest concern at this time remains to be in the northern areas of the country, specifically along the porous Mali border and at the junction of the Niger border, the attack and kidnapping that occurred in Algeria has demonstrated that such attacks can occur at any place and at any time. In turn, the attack on BP in Algeria came just days after Islamists announced that they would retaliate against French interests in the region. Consequently, it is highly likely that more attacks will take place over the coming months.

There is an increased Burkinabe military presence in the north of the country and companies should review their respective security situations and consider the following:

- Location and safety of personnel
- Security controls, communications and contingency plans at static locations
- Work tempo implications
- Journey management systems in place and working
- Liaison with the military - use of military escorts, coordination between multiple assets, confirmation that military escorts are coordinated and competent for the task.
- Reviewing all crisis management contingencies including but not limited to the following:
 - Kidnap (for ransom or ideological purposes)
 - Medical emergency and evacuation cycle for northern area
 - Interdiction of road moves for personnel and any convoys
 - Loss of communications with remote locations - enhanced comms options, access to stores if replenishment is restricted or cut off.
 - Media and public affairs contingency
- Liaising with insurers to ensure appropriate cover is in place to meet speciality risks where needed.

Companies that rely on police escorts in the northern region of the country should ensure that travel patterns do not become predictable. Varying routes are difficult due to the limited road networks, as such, it is even more important to vary the types of vehicles that are used as well as to time the journeys and to avoid travel patterns becoming widely known. This is especially critical given the current tensions that are occurring along the Mali border and the impending ECOWAS operations. All companies that are linked to the World Bank/International Finance Cooperation should familiarise themselves with the IFC Voluntary Principles on the Use of Security Forces. This applies to military, police or private security services.

Finally, unconfirmed reports have suggested that there is an elevated banditry threat that exists on the main routes south and east of the town of Fada N'Gourma en route to Pama and Diapala respectively. Road moves

to these areas should be risk assessed and liaison with police should occur until the nature of the threats have been clarified. Companies with operations in the region are invited to report incidents to MS Risk in order to aid in assessing the local atmospherics.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country

With the recent kidnapping of seven French tourists, who were kidnapped by militants near the Waza National Park in the Far North Region and whose whereabouts are currently unknown, MS Risk advises against all travel to areas of the Far North Province within 25 km of the Nigeria/Cameroon border as well as the northern city of Maroua and Lake Chad. This is due to the heightened risk of terrorist attacks, kidnappings and armed banditry. A recent video statement issued by supposed Boko Haram militants, and read by one of the seven French nationals, indicated renewed threats of kidnap and suicide bombings throughout Cameroon. We also advise against all travel to the Bakassi Peninsula and within 25 km of the border with Nigeria in the Ndian Division of the South West province. MS Risk also advises against all travel to areas within 40 km of the border with Chad as well as within 40 km of the border with the Central African Republic. We advise against all but essential travel to the south Far North Province, up to and including the town of Maroua. There has been an increase in violence in the Limbe area of Cameroon and incidents of armed robbery involving taxis hailed from the roadside in Yaounde. There is general threat from terrorism throughout the country. Attacks could be indiscriminate and may occur in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. The ongoing instability in northern Nigeria has increased the potential for attacks by militants on Western interests throughout Cameroon. There is also a risk of retaliatory attacks against Western interests in Cameroon following the French military intervention in Mali. Attacks could take place at any time at locales that are frequented by Westerners, including tourist, commercial and transport facilities. There is currently an increased presence of Islamic extremism in northern Cameroon. The government of Cameroon is expected to cut fuel subsidies in the near future. This may trigger strikes and civil unrest throughout the entire country. You are advised to avoid all crowds and political demonstrations and rallies.

On The Ground Events:

- 18 March 2013** - The French man who was abducted with his family last month in Cameroon has spoken in a recording reportedly made by a Nigerian Islamist group linked to al-Qaeda. The recording is said to have been distributed to a number of journalists in the northern region of Nigeria by members of Boko Haram. Sources close to the family have confirmed that the voice on the recording is that of Tanguy Moulin-Fournier, who was kidnapped along with his wife, four children and brother while vacationing in northern Cameroon. During the recording, where he speaks in both French and English, the man identifies himself as Moulin-Fournier. He pleads with "our ambassador in Nigeria" to work in order to free them. He further states that "I have been arrested 25 days ago, with my wife, my four kids, and my brother who came from Europe by an

armed commando of Jamaatu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad," a name by which Boko Haram has stated that it wants to be called by. Mr. Moulin-Fournier further adds that "we have been detained since 25 days in a desert place. Living conditions are very hard." In the statement he also repeats previous Boko Haram demands of the release of prisoners in both Cameroon and Nigeria. The extremist group is demanding the release of a number of wives and children of members who have supposedly been arrested in Nigeria as well as a number of members of the group they claim to have been detained in Cameroon. In the video Mr. Moulin-Fournier later addresses Cameroonian President Paul Biya, asking him to free Boko Haram prisoners. Stating that "they will liberate us if you liberate their men who have been arrested in Cameroon...they don't want to enter in conflict with Cameroon, however, if you arrest again their members in Cameroon, they will multiply the kidnap operations and suicide operations in Cameroon more than Nigeria." It is also believed that suspected Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau speaks in the recording, in both the Housa language, which is common throughout Nigeria's northern region, as well as in Arabic. However it can not be confirmed whether the man identified as Shekau and the family are in the same location. At the time of their kidnapping, the family were on holiday in the region around Cameroon's Waza National Park. Since then, officials in Cameroon have indicated that the victims have been taken over the border and are believed to be in the northeastern region of Nigeria, however their precise location remains unknown. Last week, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius held talks with Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan in Abuja. Those talks mainly focused on ongoing efforts to free the family. Another Frenchman was kidnapped in December 2012. His whereabouts are also currently unknown. While Boko Haram is typically known for its suicide attacks in the northern region of Nigeria, the group is believed to include a number of factions, such as Ansaru, which hold a variety of interests and shifting demands. Last week, officials in Britain, Greece and Italy confirmed claims by a splinter faction of the group, Ansaru, that it had killed seven foreign hostages abducted from a construction site in Nigeria. Officials in those countries have indicated that the claims appeared to be true.

Update - A video, which accompanies the audio clip that was released earlier this week, has been released and it reportedly depicts the alleged leader of Boko Haram. The video shows the purported leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, as well as the seven French hostages. Although officials have yet to confirm the man's identity, the man in the video resembles previous images of the person who has identified himself as Shekau. His voice is also similar. In the nearly 11-minute video, Shekau, who is wearing camouflage and has a rifle resting against his soldier, states in Arabic that the kidnapping of the French family was carried out because of the arrest of Boko Haram members or their family members in Cameroon and Nigeria. During part of the video, the screen is split in which one half depicts him while the other shows a photograph of the family. In what is called a message to the presidents of Cameroon, France and Nigeria, Shekau states that "God sent us the French hostages...the proof that we are holding them is that our brothers and sisters were captured in Nigeria and Cameroon...we seek no money but the release of our brothers." The father of the French family is later seen reading a statement from a piece of paper. He is surrounded by his wife, brother and four children. All seven are standing in front of what appears to be a tarpaulin.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country



Central African Republic

Travel Summary:



MS Risk advises against all travel to the Central African Republic (CAR). The armed rebel coalition Seleka has renewed their offensive against President Francois Bozize's government and over the past week, they have taken control of the capital city of Bangui. The security situation throughout the country continues to rapidly deteriorate, with reports that Seleka are moving into the south-western regions of the country. There is also continued gunfire, violence and widespread looting throughout the capital city.

Armed rebels took control of a number of towns in the northern and central areas of the country in December 2012 and January 2013, stopping 75 km from the capital of

Bangui. While a ceasefire agreement was made in Libreville, Gabon on 11 January 2013, the situation remains to be fragile and unpredictable. The rebels restarted their offensive in mid-March and took control of Bangui on 24 March.

There are reports of rebel activity, banditry and hostage-taking across the country. Currently the government has very limited control over much of the country. In the capital city of Bangui, there has been looting, clashes and gun fire. Reports have also surfaced that hospitals throughout the capital city are running dangerously low on supplies.

Any individuals in the country are advised to leave now. Those who remain should take all the necessary precautions in order to stay in a safe place with sufficient stocks of food and water. If the situation deteriorates further, leaving the country by commercial means will likely become increasingly difficult. Currently regional country flights have been suspended. We advise those remaining in the country to keep up to date with local political developments and to avoid all political rallies, demonstrations or large public gatherings.

Domestic News:

- **29 March 2013** - Michel Djotodia has confirmed that his government will be looking into mining contracts which were signed with Chinese and South African companies while President Bozize was leader. He indicated that his new authorities will reconsider any deal that had been "badly done." Although CAR has

large deposits of minerals, including diamonds and gold, decades of conflict coupled with mismanagement, have left its people amongst the world's poorest. Meanwhile the Red Cross has indicated that since the seizure of power last weekend, at least seventy-eight bodies have been found in the capital city. It has also been announced that after initially fleeing to Cameroon, President Francois Boizize is currently in Benin where he is seeking asylum. Mr. Djotodia has also requested the help of former colonial power to help retrain CAR's army.

- **28 March 2013** - Army chiefs in the Central African Republic have pledged their allegiance to the country's self-proclaimed president Michel Djotodia. According to Maurice Ntossui, a commander of the African peacekeeping force in the country, "the former FACA (national army) officers wanted to meet with President Djotodia to tell him they recognize him as the new president. Meanwhile a spokesman for the Seleka rebels has indicated that their leaders have been struggling with restoring calm in Bangui, a city of 600,000 where armed civilians have been pillaging the shops, hospitals and homes over the past few days. There have also been sporadic shootings in parts of the city.
- **26 March 2013** - Two days after a coup that effectively plunged the mineral-rich country into chaos, looters and gunmen have been roaming the streets of CAR's capital city Bangui as regional peacekeepers struggle to restore some degree of order. The ousting of President Francois Bozize by a coalition of rebel groups known as Seleka, coupled with the political turmoil surrounding the takeover, has sparked fears of a humanitarian crisis in the former French colony. It has also resulted in embarrassment for South Africa, a regional power which sent troops to CAR in order to defend the government. On Sunday, thousands of Seleka fighters entered the capital city, brushing aside a 400-strong South African force which attempted to block their path. Clashes resulted in the deaths of at least thirteen South African soldiers, with another twenty-seven being wounded. While a 1,000-strong five-nation regional force (FORMAC) is present in the capital city, senior officers have indicated that the process of restoring security and stability is slow and things are far from being back to normal. FORMAC commanders have been attempting to persuade Seleka leaders to get their fighters off the streets and into barracks amidst the concerns that they were responsible for some of the looting which has been going on.
 - Meanwhile Central African rebels have suspended the country's constitution, dissolved parliament and declared transitional rule just days after a coup forced the country's president into exile and drew condemnation from the international community. Mr. Djotodia has also indicated that he will rule by decree until elections are organized in three years time. Mr. Djotodia also announced that he would keep Nicolas Tiangaye as Prime Minister. He has indicated that he will not rule himself out of the running for the next elections which, according to him, are set to take place in 2016. Since the coup, the African Union promptly moved in order to suspend the nation while the United Nations Security Council has convened emergency discussions. Over the past weekend, president Francois Bozize fled across the Oubangi river into the Democratic Republic of Congo before surfacing in Cameroon where authorities indicated that they are "awaiting his departure to another host country."
- **24 March 2013** - Rebel leader and self-proclaimed President Michel Djotodia, who has accused CAR President Bozize of breaking past peace accords, has requested regional peacekeepers in the country to help him restore order. The announcement comes as rebels seized control of the capital city of Bangui and the presidential palace. Reports have also confirmed that the rebels deposed President Francois Bozize. The Seleka rebel coalition, whose members have long opposed Bozize, took the city late Saturday, fighting their way to the strategically important city center in Bangui. Currently the whereabouts of President Bozize remain to be unknown however it is believed that he fled the country prior to losing power. Some reports indicated that he crossed into the Democratic Republic of Congo early on Sunday. In response to Sunday's coup, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has condemned what he called an "unconstitutional seizure of power" in the Central African Republic. He has called for the restoration of constitutional order. On the eve of the invasion, local residents in the capital city indicated that people were attempting to flee the city as the rebels were approaching. Schools and banks also closed early following reports of the advance.

April 2013 Monthly Forecast:

In April, the United Nations Security Council is scheduled to hear a briefing on developments of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). Although the Secretary-General's report on BINUCA is expected to be released on 31 March, it may be delayed in order to reflect the most recent developments that have occurred in the country.

BINUCA's mandate expires on 31 January 2014 however it is likely that given the current situation, the UN Peacebuilding office will be extended.



No restrictions
in this travel
advice

Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Equatorial Guinea, MS Risk advises to remain alert and to take sensible personal security precautions. Roadblocks and unannounced identification checks are likely to occur. As such, you are advised to carry the appropriate form of identification (such as a passport or resident card) with you at all times.

Domestic News:

- 29 March 2013** - Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan is in Equatorial Guinea for a two-day working visit to the state which is expected to expand political and economic cooperation amongst the two countries. President Jonathan was joined by his delegation which included Governors Emmanuel Uduaghan (from Delta State), Ibrahim Geidam (Yobe State); ministers including Deziani Allison-Maduekwe (Petroleum Resources), Stella Oduah (Aviation), Edem Duke (Culture and Tourism), Nurudeen Mohammed (Minster of State for Foreign Affairs II), Dr. Samuel Ortom (Minister of State, Trade and Investment); and some members of the National Assembly. Experts in areas specific to the sectors where bilateral cooperation was scheduled to be discussed were also present. This included defence and security; trade, aviation, energy, culture and tourism, telecommunications, shipping, environment, education, health and consular matters. To round off the first day of the state visit, President Mbasogo organized a dinner in honor of President Jonathan at the Presidential Palace in Malabo, where he awarded the Nigerian president with the prestigious honor of Grand Collar of the Order of Independence, which is the highest honor in Equatorial Guinea. The honor was given to the Nigerian president in recognition of his contributions to peace, stability and development of the oil-rich country. The honour, which is normally reserved for visiting heads of state, effectively grants President Jonathan the rights and privileges of an Equatorial Guinean citizen. On the final day of the state visit, President Jonathan undertook a tour of some infrastructure in the capital including Malabo La Paz Medical Center, and the Panta Europa Oil Processing Complex, the hub of the nation's gas sector. The two heads of state later presided over the signing of bilateral agreements which were completed by the countries' respective foreign ministers before the two presidents fielded questions from the media in regards to the benefits of the state visit. In a joint communique that was issued at the end of their bilateral talks, both leaders agreed to concretize cooperation in areas of mutual benefit including defence and security; trade, aviation, energy, culture and tourism; agriculture, telecommunications, shipping, environment, education, health and consular matters. The communique stated that "in this context, the two heads of state instructed the Foreign Ministers of their two countries to ensure the completion of all draft agreements exchanged between the two countries before the sixth session of the Joint Commission of Cooperation." The two heads of state also reiterated their support for the efforts made by the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the search for lasting solutions to the conflicts that are plaguing the states of the Central African Republic, the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

No restrictions
in this travel
advice



Currently there are no travel restrictions for Gabon. However there is a low threat from terrorism, in which attacks can occur at any time and at any moment. Crime has been increasing, particularly in Libreville and Port-Gentil. There have been a number of incidents of robbery, armed attacks and rape. There have also been a number of car-jackings in Libreville. MS Risk advises you to keep your car windows closed and doors locked if you are travelling at night. Do not stop to pick up strangers and do not resist car-jackers.

On the Ground Events:

- **21 March 2013** - At least thirty people have died when their boat capsized off the coast of Gabon, near the capital city of Libreville. Police officials in Gabon have indicated that the boat, which was carrying 65 people who are thought to be illegal immigrants, capsized in stormy weather overnight as it was travelling from Nigeria to Libreville. A gendarme has stated that there are at least eight survivors who are thought to be illegal immigrants from Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo. This latest incident on the West African coast comes just one week after a boat carrying an estimated 128 people sank off the southern coast of Nigeria. On Thursday, an emergency official indicated that 29 people have so far been rescued in that accident but that officials were still searching



for additional survivors.



The Gambia

No restrictions
in this travel
advice

There has been an increase in political tension which may lead to unannounced demonstrations in Banjul and in other regions of the country. MS Risk advises you to avoid all demonstrations as they may turn violent. Local government elections will take place across the country on 4 April 2013. Attacks on foreigners throughout the country are on the rise. MS Risk advises against all travel by road from the Gambia to the Casamance in southern Senegal. The Casamance region of south western Senegal remains affected by incidents involving presumed separatist groups and by incidents of banditry. Travel to the other areas of The Gambia is reasonably safe as long as you take sensible precautions to safeguard your personal possessions. There is an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks, although unlikely, could be indiscriminate, including in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers.



Ghana

No restrictions
in this travel
advice

Although there are currently no restrictions on travel to Ghana, the French military intervention in Mali has increased the possibility of retaliatory attacks occurring, such as the attack and kidnappings that occurred in Algeria in January 2013. As such, MS Risk advises to remain vigilant as if such attacks occur in Ghana, they will likely target Western interests in the region. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the number of expats who have been targeted in armed robberies, in which some have resulted in murders.

On the Ground Events:

2013 has seen a sharp increase in the number of foreigners and expats who have been targeted in armed robberies in Ghana. Furthermore there has also been a rise in reports of armed robberies taking place in expatriate residential areas. Armed robbers have also begun to target travellers following their arrival at Kotoka airport. Another tactic which is increasingly being used involves the deliberate cause of a minor road accident in order to make the car stop. The passengers of the vehicle are then robbed. Those individuals who are at a greater risk of sustaining serious injuries are those victims who resist their attackers.

Security measures which should be taken include travelling in groups and avoiding all travel at night. While armed robberies have also occurred during the mid-day hours, travellers to Ghana are advised to remain vigilant at all times. Armed robbers are also known to travel on unregistered motorbikes. In December 2012, Ghana announced that it will be collaborating with security officials in Burkina Faso in order to counter attacks of armed robbery in the upper west region.

Incidents

- Over the past week, Ghana's Police Service has stated that despite the increase in armed robbery attacks across the country, the service has strategies in place in order to combat this growing issue. In recent weeks, police patrols have been mounted in the major cities across the country, including in Accra, Kumasi and in other major cities.
- The city of Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region, has been put under 24-hour police surveillance following days of gun attacks on local residents. On the ground reports have indicated that the city has been taken over by a large number of police personnel to secure the local residents. The heightened security comes after at least thirty gunmen entered the city and shot indiscriminately into the air and attacked and robbed residents before fleeing. The attacks have left the city in a panic while a number of local MP's have accused the police of doing minimal work in order to secure the city. According to some reports, armed robbers have taken advantage of the inconsistent power supply and have sought to attack residents when the lights are off. Police officials have confirmed that some fifty suspects have been arrested while a number of unregistered motorbikes have been seized.
- **March 2013** - A Dutch woman was shot and killed on 8 March during an armed robbery. The 25-year-old Dutch national was robbed and killed when she and six others were returning from Sege near Ada at about 1600 hrs local time. Just a few meters from their residence, the group was stopped by men on unregistered motorbikes. The Dutch national was robbed of her two mobile phones and an unspecified amount of money. She was then shot in her chest and died later in hospital. So far two people have been arrested in connection to the armed robbery and shooting; police have indicated that they are looking for an additional two suspects.
- **February 2013** - during the first few days of the month, three expatriates were attacked by robbers who have since been arrested.
- First victim was a Spanish national. She was attacked by two men on motorbikes as she stopped her car in front of her residence in Dzorwulu at about midnight. She was robbed and shot; had to be evacuated to Spain for medical treatment.
- Same gang robbed a Forex Bureau in Dzorwulu. They made away with a laptop computer, mobile phone and cash amounting to US \$110,000. An Egyptian diplomat who was doing a business transaction at the time of the robbery was also robbed and shot.
- On the evening of 2 February 2013 (around 9:30PM local time) two men robbed and shot a German national on his right shoulder through his vehicle's windscreen at Haatso Block Factory near Ecomog road. They took his money, an iPhone and a wristwatch.
- **January 2013** - Two separate incidents occurred in late January in which two Westerners were shot while driving alone at night.



No restrictions
in this travel
advice

Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Guinea, MS Risk advises against all travel to the country due to the fact that the current political situation remains unpredictable. Although Guinea has been relatively calm since the democratically elected President Alpha Conde took office in December 2010, legislative elections, which should have taken place shortly after the presidential elects were held, have been delayed. On several occasions, large crowds of demonstrators representing members of various political parties have gathered to stage protests. Most recently, protests, which were staged in the capital city on 27 February 2013, have turned violent and have resulted in at least nine people killed and hundreds injured. Since then, protests have occurred throughout the country despite calls for peace. Opposition groups have called on a protest and strike which is set to occur on 8 April 2013. MS Risk advises anyone in the capital city and in the major towns throughout the country to avoid any protests or large groups of demonstrators as it is highly likely that such protests may turn violent as they have in recent weeks. A number of reports have also surfaced that the country's security forces have been using violence as a means of resolving the protests. Although the Government and Opposition leaders are scheduled to meet and discuss the situation over the coming week, the political situation throughout the country remains vulnerable and continued protests and violence may occur at any time. MS Risk therefore advises any citizens in the country to remain vigilant over the coming days as protests may turn violent. We advise you to monitor the local media reports and to keep away from any large gatherings and military barracks. There is currently a low threat from terrorism, however with the on-going French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks targeting Western interests in the region. Guinean authorities maintain police and local militia checkpoints throughout the entire country as such you are advised to carry the appropriate form of identification (such as a passport or residence card) with you at all times.

Domestic News:

- 29 March 2013** - A government minister has confirmed on Friday that Guinea will hold its long-delayed parliamentary elections this year regardless whether or not the country's main opposition coalition will participate. Speaking at his office in the capital city's administrative district, Alassane Conde, Guinea's Minister for Territorial Administration, confirmed that "yes, the elections will be held this year, very soon, with or without the opposition...we don't want to do it without them, but if necessary, we will go ahead and hold the election without them." The vote is meant to be the last step in an already drawn-out transition to civilian rule after a coup in late 2008 led to two years of instability in which the army was in charge. Mr. Conde has accused some members of the opposition of making unacceptable conditions to try and delay the elections. In turn, the opposition groups have alleged that there were irregularities in awarding a contract to update the electoral register to the South African firm Waymark. Although they have demanded a replacement, Mr. Conde has noted that "if we were to bring in a new company to replace Waymark, there is no way we'll be able to organize the election within the next six months." Although the European Union, which is a major donor, unblocked 174 million euros (US \$223 million) in aid after the elections commission proposed a date

for the parliamentary polls late last year, Mr. Conde has indicated that the country risks losing out on future donor funding if elections are not held by September 2013. Over the past week, the opposition walked out of talks with the government which were organized in the wake of this month's violence. The opposition has accused the ruling coalition of failing to respect the terms of a planned dialogue over election preparations (See *Below*). Furthermore, the opposition groups on Friday called for another round of protests and a strike to occur on 8 April, citing that the government has not contacted them since they abandoned the talks.

- **26 March 2013** - Guinea's opposition leaders abandoned talks with the government on Tuesday, threatening to resume street protests and further accusing the President's camp of not respecting the terms of a planned dialogue over preparations for elections which are due to occur in May. Earlier this month, opposition leaders had accepted to take part in talks with the government, following two weeks of sporadic protest that killed eight and wounded hundreds more in the world's top bauxite-producing nation. However since then, a spokesman for the opposition Aboubacar Sylla has indicated that "we have decided to quit the negotiating table because the government has not respected its promises to us." Sylla further indicated that the government had added political groups that should not be part of the dialogue and an extra mediator, throwing the process into disarray. In response, Alassane Conde, Guinea's Minister for Territorial Administration, has noted that he was surprised by the opposition's reaction, stating that "the government has made a lot of concessions to the opposition who has not given any ground." There are now growing fears that the opposition may call for fresh protests to occur in the capital and throughout the country. The legislative election is meant to be the last step in a drawn-out transition to civilian rule after a coup in late 2008 was followed by two years of hostilities, with the army being in charge. The country's political uncertainty has led to billions of dollars in mining investments being put on ice, resulting in having an impact on Guinea's growth last year, with the mining-dependent economy registering 3.9 percent, 1 percentage point lower than forecast.
- **22 March 2013** - Due to the ongoing political deadlock, Guinea's government and opposition leaders have agreed to bring in an international mediator in order to facilitate talks over the organization of the much-delayed legislative elections. This decision will likely be a critical first step towards easing the political deadlock which has already delayed the polls by two years, resulting in a number of violent street protests. Guinea has not had an elected National Assembly since before the death of longtime President Lansana Conte in December 2008. A military coup which occurred just days after the President's death, followed by a tumultuous two-year transitional period, resulted in a violent presidential election in 2010. Although legislative elections were set to be held four months after the election of current President Alpha Conde in 2010, they have been pushed back a number of times due to disputes over the organization of the polls. Although on a number of occasions, the opposition has accused the government of trying to rig the elections in their favour while the government has stated that the opposition is holding up the election process, it seems to be apparent that the two sides may now be ready to work out their past differences. This has been evidenced by the fact that the government has accepted an opposition request to hold talks in the presence of an international mediator in order to get the electoral process back on track.

No restrictions
in this travel
advice



There are currently no travel restrictions in place for Guinea-Bissau. In April 2012, the country's armed forces staged a coup in the capital city of Bissau. Although the current security situation remains calm, the political situation can change unexpectedly. There remains to be an underlying threat from terrorism.

Domestic News:

- **27 March 2013** - The United Nations has indicated that it has been forced to delay desperately-needed food aid to nearly 300,000 people in Guinea-Bissau as it has not received any donations in order to support the operation. Elizabeth Byrs, a spokeswoman for the UN's World Food Programme, stated in Geneva that "the assistance was due to start 1 March 2013, but operations are stalled because, so far, we have not received any donor support for the operation." She further indicated that the WFP was urgently seeking US \$7.1 million in order to provide food and nutritional aid to 278,000 people in Guinea-Bissau this year, "including young mothers and children at increased risk of malnutrition...but we can't buy food without paying for it." Guinea-Bissau is considered to be one of the world's poorest countries, where sixty-nine percent of the 1.6 million inhabitants live on less than two dollars. A coup which was staged in April 2012 has only brought further turmoil to the country which has already suffered chronic instability since gaining its independence from Portugal in 1974. According Byrs, six percent of the country's population is currently suffering from acute malnutrition, with the rate rising to eight percent in some regions. The WFP aims to provide meals to 85,000 children through school feeding programmes, including take-home rations to girls to help boost their access to schooling. The WFP also wants to provide food supplements to some 5,000 malnourished children under the age of five and for 1,960 malnourished pregnant women and new mothers. In 2012, the UN agency reached 211,300 people through school feeding, health and nutrition and community projects using food assistance in exchange for labor.
- **21 March 2013** - Officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are planning to meet with representatives of the African Union's Peace and Security Council on Friday in order to discuss the ongoing efforts to restore constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. The conference is set to be held at the headquarters of the African Union in Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa. According to ECOWAS political director Abdel-Fatau Musah, the meeting will also be focusing on building consensus amongst the international partners to deal with the political and security situation in the West African nation. According to Mr. Musah, the conference "will see how we can find some kind of international consensus to accompany the people of Guinea-Bissau, as they try to transit this very difficult period to restore constitutional order in the country." Guinea Bissau has had a history of suffering from the increasing political instability that is going on. It has also developed into a trans-shipment point for South American cocaine, which is headed to markets in Europe. While discussing the problem of drugs, Mr. Musah indicated that "Guinea-Bissau simply lacks the equipment; they lack the capacity to police their territory to prevent the drug trade...so, we say that instead of making Guinea-Bissau a victim, lets put in the resources and help them to check these illegal activities in the country. Although ECOWAS is keen on finding solutions that will aid Guinea-Bissau's stabilization, some reports indicated that since the 12 April 2012 military coup, there have been sharp differences between the

international partners on how best to resolve the crisis which followed the coup. In turn, a number have indicated that the coup forced donors to cut assistance to the West African country which is heavily reliant on international aid. Although Guinea-Bissau was originally scheduled to hold presidential elections next month, regional experts have stated that the country is not yet prepared to organize a peaceful and credible vote.



Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country

MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to parts of the country, including the western regions of Dix-Huit Montagnes, Haut-Sassandra, Moyen-Cavally and Bas-Sassa. Since August 2012, there has been a rise in the number of shootings occurring in Abidjan. These attacks have mainly occurred at night and have typically targeted police and military personnel. It is likely that such further incidents may occur. Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. MS Risk advises companies and individuals in the Ivory Coast to remain vigilant. There has been a rise in attacks in the western region of the country, specifically near the border with Liberia. MS Risk advises against all travel to these border regions as armed groups may still be operating in these areas.

Domestic News:

- 25 March 2013** - The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Ivory Coast and in Liberia have reinforced their patrols after an attack by armed elements occurred in Petit Guiglo, which is located in the western region of the Ivory Coast. The UN Operation in the Ivory Coast (UNOCI) has condemned the attack which occurred on 23 March in which at least two civilians were killed and a traditional hunter, known as “dozo,” was injured. According to reports, three assailants were reportedly killed in the fighting, including a well-known local militia leader named Oulai Tako. In addition, two Ivory Coast national army soldiers were injured. Local residents have indicated that the militants first targeted an army position in Petit Guiglo, before moving to the village itself where they burned down numerous houses, leaving many people homeless. UNOCI has been supporting the reunification and stabilization of the West African country which was split by a civil war in 2002. A 2010 presidential election, which was meant to be a culminating point in the peace process, only resulted in months of violence when former President Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down after losing his presidential bid to Alassane Ouattara, who finally took office in May 2011. While the country has made political progress, last year saw a resurgence of

April 2013 Monthly Forecast:

In April, the United Nations Security Council expects a briefing by the Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in the Ivory Coast. The Security Council also expects to receive the Secretary General’s special report requested by resolution 2062, which will likely include recommendations on possible adjustments in the structure and strength of the UN Operation in Cote d’Ivoire (UNOCI)

The current mandate of UNOCI expires on 31 July 2013.

violence which occurred over a period of several months. There were a series of attacks that targeted national security forces in and around Abidjan as well as along the borders with Ghana and Liberia. Currently more than 64,000 Ivorian refugees remain in Liberia since the post-election violence in the Ivory Coast forced them to flee. Furthermore, some 25,000 former Liberian refugees, who returned home last year, continue to need essential humanitarian assistance. UNOCI is also liaising with the UN mission in neighboring Liberia (UNMIL), which has also reinforced its patrols of the border regions.

- **15 March 2013** - The United Nations mission in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) has condemned a deadly attack on a village in the western part of the country. UN Spokesman Eduardo del Buey has confirmed that UN peacekeepers have been put on high alert as a result of the attack. In a news briefing released by the UN, Mr. Del Buey stated that "The UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire has condemned the killing of at least four people in an attack by unidentified assailants on Wednesday in the village of Zilebly in the country's western region." He further indicated that "the mission's peacekeepers in the area have been put on high alert and are mobilized in support of Cote d'Ivoire's security forces."

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country



Travel Summary:



MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to parts of Liberia. We advise against all but essential travel to the Grand Gedeh and River Gee counties. This is due to reports of armed groups living in areas that border the Ivory Coast. Over the past few weeks, there has been a rise in clashes occurring near the border with Ivory Coast. MS Risk advises against all travel to these border regions as armed groups may still be operating in these areas.

Avoid all travel at night outside of the capital city of Monrovia, except to or from Roberts International Airport.

There is currently a low threat from terrorism however there is a risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks which could occur in public areas, including those that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. There is a possibility of retaliatory attacks in Liberia due to the country's participation in the intervention in Mali.

Domestic News:

- 26 March 2013** - United Nations officials in Liberia have confirmed that they have temporarily halted the repatriation of tens of thousands of refugees from the Ivory Coast due to the ongoing unrest that is occurring near the border between the two countries. Officials have indicated that a convoy of people returning to the Ivory Coast on Tuesday had to return due to the ongoing security situation there. Since the Ivory Coast's 2010 post-election violence, more than 150,000 Ivorians have fled to Liberia, in which more than 60,000 are still living their. After the conflict, many fighters who supported ex-Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo also fled to neighboring Liberia, where they are believed to have launched a series of deadly cross-border attacks. One such attack, which occurred in June 2012, resulted in the killing of seven UN peacekeepers and ten civilians.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Travel Summary:

MS Risk advises against all travel to Mali. If however you remain in the country, we advise you to closely monitor the daily developments which are available in English through the BBC World Service (88.9 FM in Bamako). The Government of Mali declared a State of Emergency across the whole country which became effective from midnight on 12 January 2013. This effectively enables the government to take extraordinary measures to deal with the crisis in the North and elsewhere. Although currently no curfew has been established, changes could be announced at any time. On the ground and air assaults by French forces are ongoing in the northern regions, especially in the mountainous region near Kidal and Tessalit. You are therefore advised to avoid the regions north of Timbuktu. The Malian government has also placed severe



restrictions on travel north of Segou towards the town of Mopti. Consequently, we advise everyone to monitor the local media for reports of any new measures. In view of the deteriorating security situation in Mali, MS Risk recommends that unless you have pressing reasons to remain, you should now leave the country by commercial means. Bamako International Airport remains open.

The recent death of a senior AQIM leader will likely result in militant rebels in Mali, and possibly in other West African countries, to carry out retaliatory hit-and-run attacks in an attempt to place increased pressure on France to withdraw its military intervention. Any citizens remaining in the country are advised to relocate to Bamako and avoid the main former strongholds, including Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

Currently there is a high threat from terrorism in Mali. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. With the first suicide bombing occurring this week in Gao, it is highly probable that such attacks will continue to be staged in the major cities and former strongholds of the al-Qaeda-linked groups.

There is also a high threat of kidnapping in Mali by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and by the splinter group, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). Although AQIM uses the northern region of Mali as an operating base, it has proven its capability of travelling long distances in order to carry out attacks, some of which have occurred in neighbouring countries. As such the kidnap threat cannot be isolated within the northern regional stronghold. In turn, criminal gangs have previously been engaged to carry out kidnappings for terrorist groups in return for financial rewards. Subsequently attacks can take place throughout Mali. In the past, a number of Westerners have been kidnapped by terrorists in Mali and in the Sahel region. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel. Victims have included tourists, NGO workers and diplomats of a variety of nationalities, primarily European. These attacks have on occasion resulted in the murder of the hostages. The recent kidnapping of a French citizen in the western region of the country has come as a shock as the area where he was taken has been perceived as being stable and under governmental control. In the past, kidnap threats have typically emanated from the Azawad region in the north and east part of the country, as such this incident in the west has caused great concern. MS Risk forecasts that there will be an increased and sustained kidnap threat across Mali and in certain border-regions for some time to come. Incidents of kidnap are likely to occur for three primary reasons:

- For Ransom - insurgents will raise finances for future operations. With the ECOWAS operation, this is accelerating as a concern.
- Human Shields - Insurgents will kidnap persons in order to deter/reduce the risk of direct action by governmental forces against them.
- Ideological - Kidnappings will occur for political purposes.

Since the coup in March 2012, and due to the ongoing political unrest, MS RISK judges that there is a continued heightened threat of kidnap for ransom in Mali and as such further attacks and kidnappings are highly likely to occur. Furthermore, although it is difficult to forecast how severe this threat will emerge, all affected organisations are recommended to review their current operations and contingencies which is in line to the previous advice which has been given. MS RISK currently advises against all travel to Mali.

MS RISK Guidance to Organisations in Mali:

With western diplomatic missions all warning against unnecessary travel to Mali, those companies with fixed interests in the country need to take measured precautions if they have not done so already. This is especially an issue for organisations with any interest in the so-called Azawad region - that portion of the country which is under insurgent control. Preparations should include the following:

- Thinning out non-essential staff and dependents
- Restricting expat and local national internal travel
- Seeking advice from the security forces

- Ensuring journey management systems are in place and work
- Reviewing crisis management contingencies and carrying out exercises of these plans
- Registration of expatriates with relevant diplomatic missions and seeking advice on what support will be forthcoming (if any) if conditions deteriorate
- Liaison with insurers to know any exclusions or limits to existing cover

The most extreme risks will be in the Azawad region. There is expected to be military clashes there between the various insurgent groupings against the ECOWAS-bolstered Mali army force in line with the UN Security Council authorization to use force. Despite the obvious threats in the Azawad, organisations in Mali should be braced for nuisance attacks and isolated terrorist attacks in the capital of Bamako. When al-Shabaab was weakened in Somalia, these types of attacks were experienced in Uganda and Kenya. Although the two conflicts are not connected, it is logical to predict that similar tactics may evolve and be witnessed in Mali and inside contributing nations.

Breakdown of the Mali Intervention:

- **18 March** - German Defence Minister Thomas de Maier arrives in Mali where he is set to meet German soldiers who are deployed in the country to support French and African troops fighting Islamist rebels. After first visiting German forces stationed in Senegal, the Defence Minister headed to the Malian capital of Bamako where he was due to meet French General Francois Lecointre. German troops in Senegal are providing logistical and plane refueling support to French forces in Mali. Germany has approved the deployment of up to 330 soldiers to Mali. Up to 180 German troops have been earmarked for the European Union Training Mission in which 100 of them will provide logistical and administrative supports in areas such as energy and water supply. Additionally 150 German soldiers will provide logistical backup to the French deployment in Mali via help with transport and refueling of planes. Currently no German combat troops are planned for the mission.
- **19 March** - France hosts talks focusing on Mali's post-war development. Meanwhile media in Mali have announced that they will continue to boycott government coverage in protest over the detention of a journalist who published a letter criticizing the former military junta chief. Boukary Daou was remanded in custody on Monday and charged with "incitement to disobedience" after he published an open letter that criticized the salary earned by Captain Amadou Sanogo, the leader of a coup that ousted the Mali's government last year and which effectively plunged the country into chaos.
- **20 March** - French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault told parliament on Wednesday that French troops will begin pulling out of Mali "from the end of April." The Prime Minister further indicated that a meeting set for next Monday between lawmakers in France's National Assembly and Senate will assess the involvement of French troops to help flush out Islamist rebels in the west African country "even if our troops will begin coming home from the end of April." The Prime Minister's announcement comes on the same day that President Francois Hollande announced that Mali's sovereignty over almost all of its territory would be restored within "a few days." Speaking at a dinner, the French President stated that "in the last phase where we are, almost the entire territory will return to Mali's sovereignty in a few days." The announcements come just hours after President Hollande presided over a meeting of French defence council which met in order to assess the ongoing situation in the West African country. The panel has met at least once a week since French troops were sent to Mali in January. Currently about 1,200 troops are deployed in the northeastern region of the country where they are continuously carrying out clean-up operations.
- **21 March** - A Malian soldier has died and two others have been lightly injured in the first suicide bombing to target the city of Timbuktu. Meanwhile Chadian Foreign Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat has indicated that the mission in the Ifoghas mountains is "70 percent" completed. While speaking to journalists in Paris, the Foreign Minister stated that "the joint Franco-Chadian drive has accomplished an important task in the Ifoghas where cleaning-up operations are now underway...I believe that more than 70 percent of the work has been done. But we have a special adversary in a special setting and therefore we have to be careful. There is still work to be done in Mali and especially in the north." France has confirmed that it has recalled its ambassador to Mali. Christian Rouyer, an outspoken advocate of the military intervention, has been brought back to Paris earlier than expected. Although the reasons for the decision currently remain unclear, diplomatic sources have

indicated that the French envoy had reportedly fell out with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. The French Foreign Ministry has since announced that foreign affairs advisor Gilles Huberson will replace Mr. Rouyer, claiming that this change is part of a routine reshuffle of French diplomatic posts in Africa.

- **22 March** - Today marks the one year anniversary since mid-level army officers carried out a coup which effectively paved the way for the Islamist takeover of Mali and the eventual collapse of one of West Africa's stable democracies. Meanwhile at least five people have been killed in an ambush by armed men in central Mali. The Malian military has blamed this recent attack on ethnic Tuareg separatist rebels. A statement released by the military indicated that "elements of" the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) attacked two vehicles, killing and discarding the bodies of five occupants of one vehicle before forcing passengers in the other to strip naked.
- **23 March** - The French Presidency has confirmed the death of AQIM commander Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, stating that he was killed in fighting in Mali. Officials in France noted that DNA samples had made it possible to formally identify him. A statement released by the Elysee President Palace indicated that "the President of the French Republic confirms with certainty the death of Abdelhamid Abou Zeid after an offensive by the French army in the Adrar des Ifoghas mountains in the north of Mali, at the end of February." The statement went on to indicate that the death of "one of the main leaders of AQIM marks an important stage in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region."
- **24 March** - Residents in Gao have reported prolonged gunfire as the military carried out what it called a "clean-up" operation after Islamist militants claimed an attack on an army camp. A Malian military source confirmed that "we're currently carrying out a clean-up to dislodge any Islamists that may have infiltrated" the city. The source added that the clean-up stemmed from the fact that "some individuals fired three AK-47 shots at a Malian military camp in Gao overnight...our men responded forcefully. We see it as a very minimal incident. You can't even call it an attack." This description is in sharp contrast to the words used by the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) who indicated that "Saturday at midnight, nine mujahedeen arrived in Gao. They attacked the Malian army camp in Gao itself. The mujahedeen are going to continue fighting until the final victory." French and Malian forces have confirmed that at least six people, including a civilian, were killed in the fighting. Meanwhile al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has renewed a threat to kill a number of French hostages, calling on their families to pressure the French government to end its military operation against radical Islamists. AQIM is currently holding at least five French hostages in the region, after announcing last week that it had killed a sixth Philippe Verdon. However Paris has yet to confirm this report. In a statement released to Mauritanian news, AQIM stated that the hostages are "very much alive, except for the spy Philippe Verdon...however we cannot guarantee they will remain alive indefinitely, because of your government's aggression and your army's attacks against mujahedeen bases." It further added that "we recommend the hostages' families and the French people pressure President Hollande and his government to withdraw their army from Mali." The group has condemned what it has called an "unjust occupation" by France, stating that it risked "transforming all of Africa into a swamp in which the French will drown."
- **26 March** - United Nations Secretary General announces that up to 11,200 troops could be needed for a peacekeeping mission in Mali but that a "parallel" military force will be necessary in order to battle the radical Islamists. Meanwhile an armed Islamist group, which occupied northern Mali last year, has vowed to continue its fight to drive French and African troops out of the country. Ansar Dine, one of the militant organizations to take advantage of the disarray following a coup to claim control of Mali's vast northern desert, indicated on Tuesday that "we reassure our parents in Mali, particularly in Azawad (northern Mali), that their sons within Ansar Dine are in a good situation, resist by the grace of Allah and continue to lead the fighting under the command of Iyad Ag Ghaly, who is doing well."
- **27 March** - Malian army announces that 63 of its troops and 600 rebels have died since the launch of the French led operation two months ago. The army further indicated that one Togolese and a Burkinabe soldier had also been killed in Operation Serval, which has claimed the lives of five French soldiers. France currently has 4,000 troops in Mali while AFISMA has around 6,300 soldiers from West African countries and Chad. Meanwhile a secular rebel group which is seeking independence in northern Mali has appointed its own administrator to govern the region of Kidal, a move which signifies its growing strength after a French-led intervention forced its rivals into the desert regions of the country. The national Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MLA) announced that Mohamed Aly Ag Al Bessati will serve as the civil administrator for Kidal. MNLA representative Moussa Ag Assarid indicated that "today our priority is to protect people and property...these people need an administration to better lead activities and regain daily life." Meanwhile British Defence Secretary Philip Hammond has confirmed that twenty-one British soldiers have arrived in Bamako.

They will later be joined by additional personnel troops who will complete the forty-man training unit. However British forces stationed in Mali will not be involved in combat operations. Instead, they will help to ensure national integrity through a support mission.

- **28 March** - French President Francois Hollande announced on Thursday that “we have achieved our objectives” and that the 4, 000 French soldiers that are currently deployed in Mali will be reduced to 1,000 by the end of this year. Speaking in Paris, Hollande stated that “we will start withdrawing at the end of April...in July, there will be no more than 2,000 soldiers in Mali. At the end of the year, there will only be 1,000 troops.” President Hollande however did acknowledge one goal, the release of six French hostages being held in the Sahel, had still not been achieved. He further stressed that France would not pay ransoms to get the hostages freed.
- **29 March** - During a visit to Washington, Senegalese President Macky Sall indicated that his forces are ready to take on a greater role in Mali. Until now, Senegalese forces had not been indirect contact with rebel fighters. Instead, they have been moving towards the key cities of Gao and Timbuktu. With this week’s announcement by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that up to 11,200 peacekeepers could be needed in Mali, Senegal is expected to contribute 650 troops. Morocco has intensified its border security amidst fears of a possible infiltration by al-Qaeda militants. Security sources in the country have confirmed the deployment of additional troops along its border with neighboring Algeria. Officials have indicated that the military and Gendarmerie have been alerted to the prospect that hundreds of al-Qaeda fighters may flee Mali and Algeria and enter Morocco. Although Morocco has not reported an influx of al-Qaeda militants, Moroccan intelligence units did intercept and detain several alleged AQIM networks believed to have recruited Moroccans to fight in Mali and in Syria. AQIM’s current recruitment drive throughout North Africa has also sparked concerns in Morocco. In a recent video, AQIM called on Islamists throughout the region to fight in Mali. Furthermore, while Morocco does not share a border with Mali, sources have indicated that hundreds of AQIM fighters have been fleeing Mali and moving east through Algeria towards Morocco and Tunisia.
- **30 March** - Clashes in northern Mali between a Tuareg separatist group and jihadist fighters have left at least nine dead. The fighting occurred between al-Qaeda-linked militants and rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Meanwhile a suicide bomber blew himself up as he attempted to force his way through a military barricade at the western entrance to Timbuktu. One soldier was wounded in the attack.
- **31 March** - Malian troops backed by French forces clashed with Islamist fighters who infiltrated the northern city of Timbuktu. Army officials have confirmed that at least two jihadist militants have been killed while four Malian soldiers have been wounded. Fighting began when Islamist rebels opened fire on two sides of the city centre, targeting a hotel, which serves as a temporary residence for the region’s governor, as well as a Malian military base.

On the Ground Analysis:

- **21 March 2013** - A Malian soldier has died and two others have been lightly injured in the first suicide bombing to target the city of Timbuktu. Military officials have indicated that the bombing occurred at a time when the city came under assault overnight, effectively triggering clashes in which at least ten Islamist fighters were killed. The bomb exploded near the airport as a group of armed men clashed with French and Malian soldiers. Sources in the city reported sustained gunfire lasting until 3 AM (local time) on Thursday morning. This most recent incident has further cast a doubt over France’s suggestions that the Islamist resistance in Mali was close to being crushed. Timbuktu was liberated by French and Malian troops in late January after enduring a nine month rule by al-Qaeda-linked Islamists who had imposed a harsh form of Sharia law on the population. Since then, the city has remained relatively calm, unlike the northeastern city of Gao which has been hit by several suicide bombings and guerrilla attacks since the Islamist rebels were driven out.

April 2013 Monthly Forecast:

In April, the United Nations Security Council is expected to be briefed in consultations by the Secretariat and consider the options included in the 26 March 2013 report of the Secretary General on the implementation of resolution 2085 which details the current situation in Mali. A new resolution establishing a UN mission in Mali is a likely outcome.

AFISMA’s authorization expires on 20 December 2013.

Domestic News:

- **26 March 2013** - United Nations Secretary General announces that up to 11,200 troops could be needed for a peacekeeping mission in Mali but that a “parallel” military force will be necessary in order to battle the radical Islamists. According to the Secretary General, the 11,200 troops would only be enough to cover main towns “assessed to be at high risk.” He further noted that there would be a “fundamental requirement for a parallel force” in Mali and possibly neighboring countries - a clear sign that France may have to maintain a strong military involvement in the ongoing conflict. The second forces would “conduct major combat and counter-terrorism operations and provide specialist support beyond the scope of the United Nations mandate and capability.” In a report issued by the Secretary General’s office, Mr. Ban noted that “terrorist groups and tactics, the proliferation of weapons, improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordnance and landmines are expected to pose significant threats.” France wants the fifteen-member council to pass a resolution in April that would effectively set up a peacekeeping force which could be in place in July. The bulk of that force would come from the West African force, known as AFISMA, which is already in Mali. However that peacekeeping force can only be deployed when the UN secretariat decides that it is safe enough. Further noting that if the Security Council were to reject a peacekeeping force, the UN could set up an expanded political office and let AFISMA do security and peacekeeping duties outside the UN’s control. The report released by Mr. Ban, along with a separate document that was prepared by a top UN peacekeeping official, portray a dark picture of the challenges ahead in Mali. Although the militant groups have gone underground, Mr. Ban’s report has indicated that there was a “crisis of governance” marked by “endemic corruption” and a lack of state authority. While the transitional government has called for elections to be held by 31 July 2013, a report put together by UN Peacekeeping deputy chief Edmond Mulet indicates that it is “unlikely” the elections could be held on time. Mr. Mulet, who has just returned from a mission to Mali, will now focus on drafting the options for the peacekeeping force. Mr Ban’s report further supported the issues highlighted in Mr. Mulet’s report, as it states that the weak central government, coupled with no sign of reconciliation between the northern and southern halves of Mali “elections could provoke further instability or violence.” The coup, which occurred one year ago, was led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo. Although he handed over power to the current transitional government, Mr. Mulet’s report indicates that “Captain Sanogo and his entourage maintain a low profile, but remain influential figures with a firm hold on key ministries and continue to enjoy popular support.” According to Mr. Mulet, “Captain Sanogo’s continued presence will complicate meaningful reform.”
- **20 March 2013** - International charity Oxfam has warned that the humanitarian crisis in areas of northern Mali is alarming despite the region being recently recaptured from Islamist militants. According to research conducted by Oxfam, food prices in Gao have increased drastically, causing 80% of adults to reduce their food intake in order to feed their children. In turn, recent surveys in the Bourem area of Gao found that the price of basic foodstuffs had increased by up to 70% as a result of the military operation. Oxfam further noted that cereals such as sorghum, millet and corn are currently not available. A large number of small female traders had also lost their goods and cash in a fire in the Gao vegetable market during fighting that occurred in February. The result is that this has affected poorer households which would usually purchase food in smaller quantities from these traders. The research cited that this alarming food crisis was due to the military intervention which has led to road closures and which has affected trade throughout the country. Furthermore, Philippe Conradu, Oxfam’s country director in Mali, stated that “the banking system is completely disrupted and the population has very little cash available. They will find it difficult to meet their immediate needs if the situation doesn’t improve.” Water and electricity supplies in the city of Gao have also been affected by rising fuel prices, fuel shortages and conflict-related damage. Although the international community has greatly focused on the military intervention in Mali, the on-going war has in many ways overshadowed the humanitarian crisis that is only now being highlighted. France’s Development Minister stated earlier this week that donors need to pour aid into Mali over the next six months in order to rebuild the northern region. While the rapid French offensive has taken back most of the territory that was seized by militants a year ago, there is now a growing risk that locals could increasingly become disaffected with the area’s poverty and that they may welcome back al-Qaeda linked fighters. During a conference held in Lyon, France, Development Minister Pascal Canfin noted that “the average revenue per day in Mali is 1 euro. Underdevelopment and extreme poverty are a catalyst for groups that want to destabilize the region.” Mr. Canfin spoke at the first of a series of meetings that have been organized by the French government and which will focus on drawing up a developmental plan for Mali ahead of an international donor’s conference which is set to take place in Brussels in mid-May. Donors who suspended assistance following Mali’s March

2012 coup have since resumed budget support and project aid. The European Union has also unblocked 250 million euros (US \$333.77 million) in frozen development aid while Paris has restored 150 million euros in aid, including a 10 million euro emergency assistance to restore key services from water to electricity.

International Developments:

- **24 March 2013** - Al-Qaeda has announced that the group has named a replacement for Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, a key commander of its North African wing who was killed in fighting with French-led forces in northern Mali. The appointment of Djamel Okacha, a 34-year-old Algerian, who is also known as Yahia Aboul Hammam, still has to be approved by a meeting of the top AQIM leadership. According to sources, Okacha is a close aide to AQIM chief Abdelmaled Droukdel. If approved, Okacha will take charge of the AQIM's operations in both southern Algeria and throughout northern Mali. His predecessor, Abou Zeid, was credited with having significantly expanded the jihadist group's field of operation to Tunisia and Niger. He was also credited for an increase in kidnapping activities across the region. Despite not having gone to Afghanistan, as other key militants like Mokhtar Belmokhtar have, Okacha has had a meteoric rise in the group. He spent around eighteen months in prison in Algeria in the 1990's during a time when the country was mired in Islamist violence. As a member of feared extremist organizations the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salfist Group for Preaching and Combat (GPSC), which later became AQIM, he was active throughout the northern regions of Algeria. Born in the northern town of Reghaia, he was later condemned to death by a court in southern Algeria for acts of terrorism.
- **21 March 2013** - The United Nations Human Rights Council has announced that the UN will be appointing an independent expert to investigate and help improve the human rights situation in Mali. The forty-seven members of the UN's top human rights body have approved the resolution which was presented by Gabon on behalf of the African group of nations by consensus. This approval has effectively cleared the way for an expert to spend one year working to protect and promote human rights in Mali. The announcement, which so far has not specified who will be appointed to the position, also called on the Malian government "to guarantee freedom of expression and to as quickly as possible organize free and transparent elections." In turn, the resolution asks that all armies and armed groups throughout the country respect international law, urging "an immediate halt to all human rights violations and acts of violence." It also condemned all abuses carried out in the country, especially in the north by those armed groups which seized the vast territory last year. While the resolution will focus on human rights going forward, the document meanwhile made no reference to allegations put forth last week by the UN's second in command on human rights that Malian soldiers have carried out retaliation attacks against ethnic groups that have been suspected of sympathizing with the rebels. While Human Rights Watch has welcomed the resolution, advocate Philippe Dam has insisted that "the council's failure to clearly condemn serious exactions recently committed by members of the Malian army is a disservice to the Malian people." In a statement released by Mr. Dam, he further stated that "if Mali is to turn a new page, the new UN expert and UN rights monitors will have to investigate abuses by all sides and hold the Malian authorities accountable for their part. Speaking on behalf of the EU, Irish ambassador Gerard Corr also emphasized the allegations of abuses by Malian soldiers, calling before the council for the Malian government to "work firmly against impunity and to ensure that no crimes committed in Mali go unpunished." The resolution also requires UN rights chief Navi Pillay to present a report on the situation in Mali at the next session of the Human Rights Council, which is set to take place in May and June.
 - Meanwhile the United States State Department and the United Nations have added Ansar Dine, a Mali terrorist group that has close ties to al-Qaeda, to their respective lists of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Today's inclusion of the terrorist group follows the addition of the group's emir, Iyad ag Ghali, which the US and the UN added to the global terrorists list late last month. Ansar Dine, also known as Defenders of the Faith, allied with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in March 2012 in order to take control of northern Mali. The group would later aid in the administration of Sharia law in the controlled areas. AQIM's emir noted at the time that Ansar Dine would effectively become the local face of al-Qaeda while the terror groups trained terrorists to attack sites outside the region. A statement released by the US State Department noted that Ansar Dine "cooperates closely with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" and "has received support from AQIM since its inception in late 2011, and continues to maintain close ties to the group." Furthermore the State Department indicated that Ansar Dine "has received backing from AQIM in its fight against Malian and French forces, most notably in the capture of the Malian towns of Agulhok, Tessalit, Kidal, Gao and

Timbuktu between January and April 2012.” Ansar Dine “executed 82 Malian soldiers and kidnapped 30 more” during its takeover of the town of Aguelhok in March 2012. Meanwhile the United Nations indicated that Ansar Dine received significant “military support” from AQIM “in its fight against the Malian Armed Forces, notably in the capture of the towns of Aguelhok on 24 January 2012; Tessalit on 10 March 2012; Kidal on 30 March 2012, Gao on 30 March 2012 and Timbuktu on 1 April 2012.” The UN further highlighted that Ansar Dine emir Iyad Ag Ghali had “received a payment of 400,000 euros from one of the leaders of an AQIM brigade in the Sahel, the Tariq ibn Ziyad Brigade” and had “welcomed numerous AQIM fighters” into his rank and file. The UN also noted that “the ties between Ansar Dine and AQIM have grown stronger since November 2012,” citing the formation of joint offices with AQIM and MUJAO in Gao in November 2012. Also during that same month, Ansar Dine had established “an alliance” with AQIM and MUJAO, “and a common strategy was defined.” The UN report went on to state that Ansar Dine’s emir “expressed his support for AQIM’s ideology” in late November. The close ties between AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine became apparent during the initial takeover stages of northern Mali in 2012. A number of press reports from Mali indicated that at the time, the three groups had coordinated military operations, cross-trained fighters, and had formed areas of responsibilities in a number of regions that were under their control. By January 2013, the three groups had launched a coordinated offensive to take control of central Mali. Although they were later halted by the French intervention, it has been confirmed that these three terrorist groups were preparing to advance on the capital of Bamako.

- **19 March 2013** - France is hosting talks focusing on Mali’s post-war development. Malian and French officials are currently in Lyon, France where they are discussing how to ensure militants do not launch fresh attacks on civilians. These talks are being held at a time when France is beginning to prepare to pull its troops out from Mali. According to Pascal Canfin, France’s Development Minister, priorities will be given to restarting projects that will be aimed at improving the living conditions of local people in health, rural development, water and sanitation. Last week, French President Francois Hollande indicated that his government wants to withdraw an estimated 4,000 troops from Mali next month. Troops from a number of West African countries have been deploying to Mali in order to take over from the French-led mission in the run-up to elections which are due to take place in July of this year.

Special Report: Mali – One Year On

It was a year ago that Mali had experienced a coup which would effectively mark the country’s descent into chaos as Islamist militants and Tuareg rebels exploited the weaknesses of the Malian army and the political uncertainty in Bamako by taking control of the northern regions of the country. While the French-led military intervention in Mali has removed a majority of the Islamist militants from the northern regions of the country, security continues to be a major issue.

Key Dates: March 2012 - March 2013

- **January 2012** - Fears of a new Tuareg rebellion increase following attacks on northern towns which prompt a number of civilians to flee to Mauritania.
- **March 2012** - The Tuareg rebel groups of Ansar Dine, led by Iyad Ag Ghali, and the national Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), whose leaders include Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, capture a number of large towns in northern Mali. The entire regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu are seized by the end of the month.
 - **22 March** - Soldiers seize power from President Amadou Toumani Toure as a protest over the government’s ineffective handling of a campaign against the Tuareg rebels into a coup. The African Union suspends Mali. Coup leader Captain Amadou Sanogo indicated that he is ready for talks with rebels to take place however he wants to preserve Mali’s territorial integrity.
 - **30 March** - Tuareg separatist insurgents take advantage of the fluid political situation and enter the key town of Kidal after soldiers abandon their positions. Capt. Sanogo calls for external help against the rebels who gradually gain control over the northern half of the country.
- **April 2012** - Timbuktu is seized on 1 April; by the end of the month, Tuareg rebels seize control of northern Mali and declare independence. The military hands over power to a civilian interim government which is led by President Dioncounda Traore.
 - 3 April - ECOWAS imposes economic sanctions on Mali

- **6 April** - After entering Timbuktu, the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL) proclaims independence for northern Mali, which it names Azawad. It claims Gao as its capital. This declaration is rejected by the International Community and by Ansar Dine.
- **8 April** - President Toure resigns. This effectively paves the way for the soldiers who ousted him to maintain a deal to restore civilian rule and to hand power over to parliamentary speaker Dioncounda Traore. Traore is sworn in as interim President three days later. Later in April, Cheick Modibo Diarra is appointed as interim Prime Minister.
- **9 April** - Members of Mali's Arab community in Timbuktu form the Azawad National Liberation Front (FNLA). It is an armed group which aims to fill the void that was left behind by the army's retreat from the north.
- **May 2012** - The Tuareg MNL and the Islamist Ansar Dine rebel groups merge and declare the northern region of Mali an Islamic state. However the Tuaregs ditch the pact a week later. It is at this moment that Ansar Dine begins to impose Islamic law in Timbuktu. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) endorses the move.
- **June - July 2012** - Ansar Dine and its al-Qaeda ally turn to the MNL and begin to capture the main northern cities: Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. They also begin to destroy many Muslim shrines that offend their puritan views.
 - **2 June** - The Tuareg-led MNL announces that in order to maintain its secular character, it will withdraw from the merger with Ansar Dine.
 - **28 June** - Ansar Dine announces that it fully controls northern Mali. The group also begins to impose Sharia law and destroys a number of Sufi relics in Timbuktu.
 - **5 July** - A UN Security Council resolution falls short of endorsing military action in Mali, citing the need for more detail to ECOWAS plans. However it does call for sanctions against Islamist fighters in northern Mali.
- **20 August 2012** - Following threats of expulsion from ECOWAS, interim Prime Minister Diarra forms a government of national unity in an effort to transition towards democratic rule.
- **1 September 2012** - MUJAO fighters seize the strategic town of Douentza which is located 500 miles from Bamako.
- **12 October 2012** - The UN Security Council approves a resolution which paves the way for military intervention. It requests ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) to present a detailed plan of action within 45 days.
- **December 2012** - The United Nations Security Council unanimously authorizes the deployment of an African-led military force to help defeat al-Qaeda and other Islamist militants in the northern region of Mali. However the international African force is not expected to begin operations in Mali until September 2013. Ansar Dine agrees to a ceasefire with the interim Malian government.
 - **5 December** - Malian officials hold first direct talks with Ansar Dine and MNL. These talks are mediated by Burkina Faso, with the support of ECOWAS. Although a ceasefire is agreed, it is viewed with scepticism by some observers.
 - **10 December** - Prime Minister Diarra is arrested by soldiers and resigns, allegedly because of pressure from senior figures in Mali's army who oppose the ECOWAS intervention.
 - **11 December** - Former civil servant and Minister of Justice Django Cissoko is appointed as interim Prime Minister.
- **4 January 2013** - Ansar Dine indicated that it has suspended a ceasefire which was agreed with the government the previous month. It accuses Bamako of making a mockery of peace talks by preparing for war.
- **10 January 2013** - Mali appeals for urgent military aid from its former colonial master. The chairman of the AU calls on NATO to send troops to Mali as part of a joint operation with African troops. Ansar Dine captures the town of Konna in central Mali from Malian army control. The UN calls for swift deployment of an international force to Mali.
- **11 January 2013** - French President Francois Hollande announces the French military intervention aimed at halting the advancement by the rebels. French air strikes help the Malian government troops to drive the Islamist rebels out of the Islamist strongholds in Gao and Timbuktu. 800 French troops are deployed on the ground, with 2,500 in total expected to be involved in the intervention. France will receive logistical and technical support from the UK, Canada, Denmark, Belgium and Germany.
- **14 January 2013** - Islamist rebels take control of Diabaly, which is located northeast of Bamako. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announces that Nigeria will provide 600 troops; Niger, Burkina Faso,

Senegal and Togo will each send 500 troops while Benin will provide 300. Chad also announces that it will send troops to Mali.

- **24 January 2013** - Ansar Dine, which helped seize the north from Mali's government, announces its split from its al-Qaeda allies, indicating that it wants a truce.
- **26 January 2013** - Following French air strikes, French and Malian troops seize the town of Gao, one of the several major northern towns occupied by the rebels last year.
- **27 January 2013** - French and Malian troops begin to restore government control in Timbuktu. The third town, Kidal, remains under the control of the rebels.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country



Travel Summary:



Summary

MS Risk advises against all travel to the northern and eastern regions of the country - especially the desert areas north of the Oualata-Tichit-Ouadane-Zouerat line, as well as the border areas with Algeria, Mali and Morocco. We also advise you to avoid Tiris Zemmour, Adrar, Tagant and Hodh el Chargui. This is due to extremist groups and armed smugglers that are active in these areas which has resulted in high threats of terrorism as well as a heightened risk of banditry and kidnapping. We also advise against all travel to the western provinces of Dakhlet - Nouadhibou and Inchiri. This includes the road from the port of Nouadhibou to Nouakchott. We advise against all but essential travel to the rest of the country.

Terrorism

Following the French military intervention in Mali there has

been a heightened possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. Consequently we advise vigilance.

Kidnapping

There is a high risk of kidnapping throughout Mauritania and Westerners are the favoured target. In the past, hostages have been held captive for several months before being released. MS Risk advises anyone traveling to Mauritania to take particular caution in the region of Inchire (Akjoujt is the capita) as well as in the areas that border Mali and Morocco.

For companies with employees remaining in Mauritania, MS Risk advises you to arrange a trustworthy escort that is familiar with the country. The use of varied and unpredictable routes and schedules when moving from one location to another is also highly advised. Exercise a high awareness of personal security at all times and monitor the local developments.

On The Ground Events:

- **18 March 2013** - Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal will travel to Nouakchott for a two-day working visit to Mauritania at the invitation of his Mauritanian counterpart, Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf. In a statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two prime ministers will co-chair a meeting of the Algeria-Mauritania Joint Committee, which has been tasked to examine the bilateral co-operation and the prospects of developing and extending it. In addition, the statement further indicated that the meeting will also provide an opportunity for the two sides to “exchange views on the situation in the sub-region and the ongoing efforts to fight terrorism and organized crime, which is a threat to stability and security in the Sahel.” The session will be preceded by a meeting of the committee for follow-up of bilateral cooperation, to be co-chaired by Minister for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel and Mauritanian Foreign Minister Hamadi Ould Baba Ould Hamadi.
- Meanwhile, a Mauritanian official has confirmed that a military plane which was on a training mission, crashed near the desert town of Aoujeft, which is located roughly 500 km (300 miles northeast of the capital. The official indicated that there were at least two people on board the plane, including the pilot and a mechanic. So far, only one of the two has been found alive while the second has not yet been located. In July 2012, a military plane crashed on the tarmac of the airport in the capital city of Nouakchott. Eight people were killed in that accident.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country

Travel Summary:

MS Risk advises against all travel to the following parts of Niger: all areas of the country north of the city of Abalak, including the Air Massif region; the province of Agadez (including the road that links Assamakato Agadez and the city of Agadez); areas of Tahoua province north of the city of Tahoua, including the city itself; the area of Tillaberi province north of Niamey, including the road from Niamey to Gao and the road from Niamey to Menaka. We currently advise against all but essential travel to the remainder of the country, including the capital city Niamey.



Due to the French military intervention in Mali, there is a possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. We advise vigilance. There is a high threat of terrorism occurring throughout the country. Attacks could be indiscriminate and can occur in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. There is a

high threat of kidnapping from terrorist groups such as AQIM and Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). These terrorist groups have already kidnapped a number of Westerners in Niger and throughout the wider Sahel region, including in Niamey, and the northern and western regions of Niger. It is highly likely that further kidnap attacks will occur.

There is a high level of crime that exists throughout the country, especially in the capital city of Niamey. Thefts, robberies and residential break-ins can occur at any time. The areas located around the Gawaye Hotel, National Museum and Petit Marche in Niamey are particularly prone to muggings. It is advised that you not walk alone there, or cross the Kennedy Bridge on foot at any time. Bandits are thought to be operating in the border area with Nigeria, south of Zinder. MS Risk advises you to take special care and to avoid crossing the border with Nigeria during the night.

All companies that are currently operating in the north and north-west regions of the country should be aware of the increased security threats. Companies attempting road moves should coordinate them with local authorities. MS Risk does not recommend unescorted road moves east of Tahoua. There have been several military escorts

operating from Tahoua to the north and north-eastern regions of the country which companies should liaise with for increased protection.

Domestic News:

- **21 March 2013** - The drone base in Niger has provided the United States with a strategic foothold in West Africa. The newest addition to the US government's group of drone bases is located behind a razor-wire-topped wall just outside the Niger's capital city, where the US Air Force began flying a number of unarmed Predator drones last month. Over the past year, the harsh terrain located in northern and western Africa has rapidly emerged to be yet another front in the United States' long-running war against terrorist networks, a conflict that has fueled a revolution in drone warfare. Since becoming President, Barack Obama has relied heavily on a number of drone operations throughout Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. US drones also fly from formalized bases located in Italy, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Qatar, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. They are now becoming a fixture in Africa. Prior to the formation of the drone base in Niger, the US military built a major drone hub in Djibouti where it flew armed Reaper drones from Ethiopia. Until recently, the US military also conducted reconnaissance flights over East Africa from the Seychelles. However the Predator drones in Niger will provide the Pentagon with a strategic foothold in West Africa. Niger is strategic as the country shares a long border with Mali, where French and African troops are battling al-Qaeda-linked militants. However the country also borders Libya and Nigeria, two countries in the western region of the continent that are struggling to contain armed extremist movements. Like other US drone bases, the operations in Niger are shrouded in secrecy, with the White House only announcing on 22 February 2013 that it had deployed about 100 military personnel to the country on an "intelligence collection" mission. Although the Defence Department has publicly acknowledged the presence of drones in Niger, no further information has been released. The Africa Command, which oversees US military missions on the continent has also provided minimal information. However Government officials in Niger, which is a former French colony, have been slightly more forthcoming, as the country's President Issoufou Mahamadou has stated that his government invited Washington to send surveillance drones due to the increasing fears that the country may not be able to defend its borders from Islamist fighters that are based in Libya, Mali and in Nigeria. Niger's President further indicated that his country, and its neighbors, desperately require foreign help in order to track down the movements of militants across the Sahara and Sahel, an arid territorial belt that covers much of the region. What is clear about the mission, as has been confirmed by US officials, is that the Predator drones in Niger are unarmed however officials have not ruled out equipping the aircraft with Hellfire missiles in future. Currently, the drones are conducting surveillance over Mali and Niger. US officials have also indicated that the intelligence collected by the drones is shared with French and African forces, including 670 soldiers from Niger, who are fighting Islamist militants throughout Mali. Liaison forces from Chad, France and Niger are currently working alongside US Air Force personnel who are responsible for launching and landing the drones from the base in Niamey. Most of the surveillance missions are focused on tracking broad patterns of human activity however they are not aimed at hunting individuals. Although French and African troops are engaged in combat in Mali, the Obama administration has specified that it will not give the US military the same authorization. However the rules of engagement can at times be blurred as intelligence that is gathered by the Predators could in effect indirectly aid the French to fix targets for airstrikes or prompt Nigerian security forces to take action within their own territory. While the US Pentagon has declined to indicate how many Predator drones are stationed in Niger, and how long the US government intends to keep them there, there are signs that the US military wants to establish a long-term presence in West Africa. After several years of negotiations, President Obama signed an agreement with Niger, which effectively provides the judicial protection and other safeguards for US troops in the country, in January 2013. Although based in Niamey, there have been reports in Washington that the Pentagon ultimately wants to move the Predators to the city of Agadez, which is located in northern Niger. Agadez is strategically important as it is located closer to regions of southern Algeria and southern Libya, where fighters and arms traffickers that are allied with al-Qaeda are



known to take refuge. Although the US military has used Agadez since last year as a refueling stop for U-28 spy planes, the airfield in Agadez is rudimentary and requires improvements before it can host a fleet of drones. While it is currently not known how long these drones will be based in Niger, officials in the country have indicated that they cannot rely on the French and US military forces forever and must therefore find other means in order to ensure its own security. To that end, the US government has agreed to provide Niger two Cessna Grand Caravan aircraft that will be used to transport troops and conduct surveillance.



Travel Summary:



Summary

In light of the recent kidnapping and execution of several foreigners, coupled with an increase of attacks in the northern region of the country which have been blamed on Islamist militants, MS Risk advises against travelling to several regions in northern Nigeria. MS Risk advises against all travel to: the Riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States; Warri city, Kano city, Okene City. We advise against all travel to Borno State, Yobe State, Bombe State and Bauchi State. This is due to the frequent violent attacks which have been occurring over the past months. More recent attacks have increasingly focussed on public

places, including bars and restaurants. These attacks have resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries. We also advise against all travel to Kano City and Okene City, which has also seen a frequent number of high levels of violence.

We advise against all but essential travel to Kano state, Kaduna State, Jigwa State, Katsina State, Sokoto State, Kebbi State, Jos City, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas in Plateau State; Okene Region of Kogi State. These areas have witnessed an increase in violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to Mubi Town in Adamawa State and the area north of Mubi Town that borders Borno State where there has also been a rise in violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to the non-riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, Abia State, Kaduna City, Zaria City.

Companies with workers in northern Nigeria, even in areas which are not subject to specific advise against travel, will require a high level of security. In light of the recent kidnappings of Westerners, employers are advised to review their security arrangements and to ensure that compounds are protected.

There is a high threat of terrorism occurring in Nigeria. A bomb attack that occurred at a bus station in Kano city on 18 March 2013 resulted in multiple casualties. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including government, security and educational institutions, international organisations as well as public venues and areas such as restaurants, bars, markets, hotels, shopping centers, places of worship and other areas that are frequented by expatriates, foreign tourists and business travelers. Terrorist attacks have been known to occur on religious and public holidays. There have been regular attacks on churches in northern Nigeria at times of worship. The US government has published an Emergency Message for US citizens, detailing information that Boko Haram may be planning attacks in Abuja. This information has been assessed as being credible and attacks could occur at any time, including against international hotels that are frequently visited by Westerners. There is also an increased level of kidnap threat in Nigeria in which foreign nationals have typically been the targets of such kidnaps.

Kidnapping

Although recent incidents of kidnapping have mostly occurred in northern Nigeria, MS Risk advises that such kidnappings can take place anywhere in the country.

- On 16 February 2013, after storming the compound of Lebanese-owned construction firm Setraco in Bauchi state, gunmen killed a security guard and abducted a Briton, an Italian, a Greek, two Lebanese and two Syrian workers. The British construction worker is believed to have been killed along with the six other foreign nationals. This was the worst case of foreigners being kidnapped in the mostly Muslim north of Africa's most populous country since an insurgency by Islamist militants intensified two years ago.
- In December 2012, a French national was kidnapped by armed men in Katsina State in northern Nigeria, reportedly from a residential compound.
- In 2012, a Lebanese national was kidnapped in Kaduna State. His Lebanese colleague was killed during the abduction
- In January 2012, a German national was killed in Kano city. He was killed on 31 May 2012.
- In May 2011, a British national and an Italian national were kidnapped together in Kebbi State. Both hostages were killed in Sokoto on 8 March 2012.

Threats and Terrorism

Attacks by Islamist groups in northern Nigeria have become the biggest threat to stability in Africa's top oil producing country. This has been exacerbated by the fact that Western governments are currently concerned that militants may link up with groups elsewhere in the region, including al-Qaeda's North African wing, AQIM. These concerns have been further intensified by the conflict and military intervention in nearby Mali.

Boko Haram

The main terrorist threat in northern Nigeria comes from Islamist extremists who aspire to establish Islamic law throughout the country. A majority of these attacks have been claimed by Boko Haram. Although the majority of attacks have occurred in Borno State and in Yobe state, there has been a significant increase of attacks occurring in other northern states. Attacks have typically focused on Nigerian targets, including government and security institutions, police stations and places of worship. However public places have also been targeted in the past. Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened possibility of retaliatory

attacks targeting Western interests in the region, especially with the fact that Nigeria will be leading the African forces. It is therefore likely that militants from Mali may cross into Nigeria in order to carry out attacks and suicide bombings. Similarly, militants of Boko Haram may increase their attacks on Christian places of worship, as well as other sites, in protest of the intervention in Mali. France has advised its citizens to leave the northern regions of the country as well as the areas surrounding the capital of Abuja. This is due to threats relating to the military intervention in Mali. French diplomatic sources have indicated that the threat of kidnappings, coupled with Nigeria's support for France's actions in Mali, has raised the risks for French nationals.

Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa - ANSARU)

Ansaru is an Islamist terrorist organization that is based in Nigeria. Emerging in 2012, Ansaru has been motivated by an anti-Nigerian government and anti-Western agenda. Ansaru has claimed responsibility for the Setraco raid in Bauchi State and the Okene attack. The group, which in the past has kidnapped other foreigners in Nigeria, has indicated that the Setraco raid was "based on the transgression and atrocities done to the religion of Allah by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali."

Britain placed Ansaru on its official terrorist group list in November 2012, stating that the group is aligned with al-Qaeda. Ansaru is believed to be responsible for the murder of British national Christopher McManus and his Italian co-worker, Franco Lamolinara in March 2012. Ansaru have also publicly claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a French national in Katsina state on 20 December 2012. It has also claimed responsibility for the attack on a detention facility of the police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Abuja on 26 November 2012. It is believed to be a breakaway group of Boko Haram, which has killed hundreds in recent months in an attempt to carry out an Islamic state in a country that is split roughly equally between Christians and Muslims.

MEND

MEND (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) is a militant group that is seeking to assume control of Nigeria's energy resources in the Niger Delta region. A faction of the group was responsible for the 1 October 2010 attack in Abuja. This attack demonstrated the group's ability and willingness to operate away from its usual base in the southern region of the country. On 6 February 2012, MEND threatened to carry out renewed attacks on major oil and gas assets in the Niger Delta.

Maritime Security

There have been a number of armed robberies against ships at anchor in Nigerian waters and at many of the rivers and harbours in the Niger Delta area. MS Risk advises all mariners to seek professional security advice and to take the appropriate security precautions. Pirates in the region have been known to hijack oil tankers and to hold the crew members hostage on board the vessel for a period of three to seven days. More recently, pirates have taken to kidnapping hostages and taking them on land.

Domestic

Municipal level elections are set to take place in the Federal Capital Territory, which includes Abuja, on 16 March 2013. The Nigerian Government has announced restrictions to private vehicle movements from 7am until 5pm on that day. MS Risk recommends that all citizens abide by these restrictions.

Travel Advisory: Nigeria's Troubled Regions

North-eastern Nigeria: Main Security Issues - Islamist Militancy

Over the last eighteen months, Islamist militants have led an ongoing campaign which has focused on terrorizing the north-eastern region of Nigeria and which has culminated in the deaths of hundreds of people. Boko Haram, whose name translates to "Western education is forbidden," desires to establish Islamic law throughout the entire country. With Nigeria being divided into the mainly Christian south and Muslim north, the group have



in many ways benefitted from the already existing divides as it has sought to further deepen the split. Recurring security threats in this region include drive-by motorbike assassinations of security-related officials and politicians. This has become Boko Haram's modus operandi in their home city of Maiduguri. It is believed that such attacks are in revenge for the death of their leader who died in 2009 while under police custody. However while Boko Haram's activities had mainly focused on a small area of this region, the group itself has grown in confidence and in scale since 2009, and has now sought to demonstrate its capabilities along with its ability of free movement throughout other states in the region. This was evidenced by a 2011 suicide attack on the headquarters of a

police and the United Nations in the capital city of Abuja. The group has also been responsible for a number of bank robberies throughout the north-eastern region. More recently, Boko Haram has focused on southerners, mainly Christians, who are living in the north. A number of deadly attacks have been carried out in known Christian areas throughout the region, resulting in thousands of residents fleeing their homes. Early 2012 also saw the formation of a new organization known as Ansaru, which is suspected to be an offshoot of Boko Haram. While Boko Haram's modus operandi has typically been to carry out suicide attacks and bombings which have targeted security and political officials as well as Christians and southerners, Ansaru has opted to focus on the kidnapping of foreign nationals. The group has already been behind a number of kidnappings, including the recent seizure and suspected killing of seven foreign workers from a construction site located in the state of Bauchi.

North-central Nigeria: Main Security Issues - Ethno-religious clashes, some degree of kidnapping

Security threats in the north-central region of Nigeria have typically effected the states of Kaduna and Plateau which are seen to lie on the fault line between the mainly Muslim north and Christian south. Over the years, both of these states have witnessed bloody ethnic and religious clashes. While these two states are not a known Boko Haram stronghold, the group nevertheless has a strong presence throughout the region and it has been responsible for further fueling the sectarian tensions through the bombing of churches in Jos, the state capital of Plateau. Further north, Islamist militants have also targeted Kano, which is the largest city in northern Nigeria. In January 2012, nearly 200 people were killed in co-ordinated attacks on police and security headquarters. In turn, there have also been a number of high-profile kidnapping incidents in Kano.

Niger Delta: Main Security Issues - Oil Theft, Kidnapping, Piracy

Although the oil-rich southern region of Nigeria has seen a number of kidnappings for ransom, in which expatriate oil workers are especially targeted by militants, a 2009 amnesty for militants, agreed to by those behind much of the extortion there, has seen a dramatic decline in abductions. Although experts have indicated that the decrease in kidnappings may also be the result of fewer foreigners prepared to enter the lawless and under-developed region, and the fact that a number of them have bodyguards, kidnappings in the region are still

a security issue. This is due in part to the fact that former militants have been protesting that they are not receiving their monthly subs from the group, which has resulted in a number of them regrouping. In turn, there have been a number of attacks on oil facilities. Stealing of oil from pipelines, a process which is known as “bunkering,” continues to exist.

A more recent development is the security issue relating to the rise of piracy in the waters off Nigeria. This is rapidly becoming a main worry for those residents who reside near the region’s creeks, where boats are the best way to travel. Vessels and boats transiting through the region are often held up and robbed. Increasingly, armed men are taking to the seas in order to hijack vessels that are typically carrying oil. While these incidents do have some elements of the piracy attacks that are occurring in the waters off of Somalia, there are some basic and critical differences. Amongst them is the non-existence of a failed state in the Gulf of Guinea. While there are a number of troubled states surrounding the region, a sanctuary or haven where pirates can take their hijacked vessels does not exist; effectively making long periods of captivity impossible. This however was a major factor in Somali piracy, as the lawlessness in the country enabled pirates to keep the hijacked vessels near shore for a duration of months or years while they negotiated the ransoms. The successful implementation of the Somali government has in part been responsible for the sharp decline in pirate attacks and hijackings in the region. Although pirates in the Gulf of Guinea typically hold vessels for a short period of time, usually three to ten days, in which the vessel and its crew members are then released, the attacks have been known to be violent. Pirate hijackings have also resulted in cargo, typically oil, being stolen off the vessel. However crew members are increasingly being kidnapped and held for longer periods of time.

South-eastern Nigeria: Main Security Issues - Kidnapping

The state of Abia used to be known as the kidnapping capital of Nigeria in which families of businessmen and politicians were targeted. However since the military killed the man believed to be the leader of the kidnapers in December 2010, the number of incidents have fallen. In turn, anyone of strategic importance now employs a bodyguard. The states of Imo and Anambra do still have isolated cases of kidnapping however like in Abia, the situation has greatly improved.

Inter-state Travel: Main Security Issues - Banditry and Bribery

The ubiquitous police checkpoints on Nigeria’s main inter-state roads have been disbanded as the new police chief indicated that these checkpoints did not vastly improve the security. Although motorists throughout the country have welcomed the move, armed highway robberies are on the rise throughout Nigeria.

On the Ground Reporting: Maiduguri

Since 2009, the northern region of Nigeria has bared witness to a bloody insurgency formulated by Boko Haram which is on a quest to overthrow the Nigerian government and to create an Islamic state in its place. Within this



region is Maiduguri, located 900 km (560 miles) from Abuja it is just an hour’s flight from the capital city however it is vastly different from the other cities in Nigeria. Manned by heavily-armed soldiers wearing full combat gear, many of which are hiding behind dark goggles, the local troops who are stationed in this city stand guard on street corners, their positions protected by sandbags. They are on the lookout for the next suicide bomber that will hit this city which has famously become known as the Boko Haram stronghold in Nigeria. The proof of this title is seen on the streets of this cities, and the manner by which its residents live on a day to day basis. The streets are lined by deserted buildings, a number of which

have been peppered with bullet holes. Residents of Maiduguri must abide by the dusk-to-dawn curfew. Banks

close at 1300 (local time) while markets close at 1600. Many children are no longer able to attend school as many of the buildings have been burnt down. In many ways, Boko Haram has been responsible for this faceless campaign of terror which has gripped the city for the past three years. The reason, a goal and fight focused on the creation of an Islamic state in Nigeria's predominantly Muslim north.

Although the group's official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad," residents in Maiduguri have renamed them Boko Haram, which when translated from the local Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden." In its goal of transforming the northern region into an Islamic state, Boko Haram has promoted a version of Islam which forbids Muslims from taking part in any political or social activities that are associated with Western society. This includes voting in elections, wearing shirts or receiving a secular education. In its pursuit of this goal, Boko Haram has been blamed for the deaths of some 1,400 people in the central and northern regions of Nigeria since 2010.

On the Ground Events:

- **27 March 2013** - In the last week, sectarian clashes in central Nigeria have left at least twenty-three people dead in region where bitter ethnic disputes have killed thousands in recent years. Details of the attacks which occurred on March 20 and 21 have been slow to emerge from Plateau state, which falls on the dividing line between Nigeria's mostly Christian south and predominantly Muslim north. Military spokesman Lieutenant Jude Akpa has indicated that eleven members of the mainly Muslim Fulani ethnic group, known largely as nomadic herders, were killed on March 20 after crossing onto land belonging to members of a Christian tribe known as the Ataka. The following day, Fulani gunmen reportedly returned to the same area of Riyom district and carried out what Lieutenant Akpa termed "a reprisal attack." According to a report released by the International Crisis Group last year, feuds over land and political rights have killed about 4,000 people in Plateau since 2001. The area's Christian ethnic groups consider themselves indigenes and accuse Muslim herders from the north of attempting to appropriate wide sections of land. In turn, the state has been consistently led by Christian politicians, with Fulani groups claiming that they have been denied basic rights, including the ability to formally own land. Nigeria's constitution grants enhanced rights to those designated indigenes, effectively giving Christians in Plateau better access to public education and public sector employment. Nigeria's so-called "middle belt" was once pointed to as an example of peaceful co-existence amongst religiously divided communities however its reputations has changed over the past decade, mainly due to the sporadic periods of intense violence. Although a number of peace initiatives have been launched in order to pacify the state, violence has nevertheless persists. A recent flare up occurred in July 2012, when a weekend of unrest, which was blamed on Fulani gunmen, resulted in at least one hundred people dead.
- **24 March 2013** - According to the police spokesman for the western Adamawa state, Mohammed Ibrahim, the gunmen carried out four simultaneous assaults in Ganye, which is located in the Adamawa state. They opened fire on a bar, a bank, a prison and a police station. The gunmen also set free one hundred and twenty-seven prisoners. The police spokesman further noted that the men used explosives and assault rifles in the attack on the police station, during which a policeman was shot. Seven people were shot in the bar, six near the bank while the others were gunned down either outside their homes or on the streets. Troops and policemen who have been deployed to the town have recovered three unexploded bombs, a Kalashnikov rifle and some rounds of ammunition, which were left by the attackers. Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, police are suspecting Boko Haram militants to be behind it as the raids resemble previous ones, which have been claimed by the group. Currently, no arrests have been made. The town of Ganye is located some 100 km (60 miles) from the state capital of Yola. Although it is located near the border with Cameroon, it is not near the area where a French family of seven were kidnapped and taken across from Cameroon into Nigeria last month. The family – a couple, their children (all under the age of twelve) and an uncle – were kidnapped by six gunmen on three motorbikes in Sabongari, which is located 7km from the northern village of Dabanga. Sources close to the French embassy in Cameroon had indicated that the family had earlier visited Waza national park. While the exact border-crossing route taken by the kidnapers remains unknown, it is highly likely that the militants would have remained near the area and crossed over into Nigeria shortly after the kidnapping. As such, while Ganye is too far south from the general area where the family was taken, it is highly likely that the militants may have crossed the border area closer to Maiduguri, which is a

known Boko Haram stronghold. Violence carried out by Islamist insurgents throughout Northern Nigeria has been on the rise in the past weeks after a brief calm. On Saturday, three bombs exploded in the North's main city of Kano. According to Kano state police spokesman Magaji Majia, one of the bombings was a suicide attack, however the incident claimed no lives apart from the bomber. In a separate incident, a remote-controlled bomb that targeted a joint military and police checkpoint did wound a number of police officers. A separate gun attack in the city's Dakata district also killed one person on Saturday. According to Kano state police spokesman, four people have been arrested in connection with the attacks. On Monday, March 18 a bomb blast, which targeted a bus station in an area of Kano that is mostly inhabited by southern Christians, killed at least 41 people and wounded 65. The attack occurred when two suicide bombers exploded their car into a bus station in Kano, setting off a large explosion that hit five buses. Witnesses have described hearing multiple blasts and seeking wounded victims fleeing the area as authorities cordoned off the scene. The bus station that was targeted in Monday's attack primarily services passengers who are heading south to the mostly Christian regions of the country. The bus station was previously attacked in January 2012, a blast which left a number of wounded civilians. So far, authorities have not provided any information relating to who is behind this latest bombing. Furthermore there has been no claims of responsibility, however this attack is similar to the hit-and-run tactics that are favored by Boko Haram militants. With more suicide attacks and bombings occurring every week in the northern region of the country, it is becoming evident that the Nigerian government is finding it difficult to adequately manage Boko Haram and related criminal gangs who have overtaken militancy in the oil-producing south-eastern Niger Delta region as the main threat to the stability of Africa's oil producer. Furthermore, while the town of Ganye is located further south, and away from the cities of Kano and Maiduguri, which have been hit by a number of attacks over the past few months, it demonstrates the capabilities of Boko Haram and similar criminal groups in carrying out hit-and-run attacks outside of the normal regions where they are known to operate. It indicates that the militants throughout this region of Nigeria are able to freely move around to stage attacks, signifying that they may also be able to cross over the border into Cameroon in order to carry out attacks and to kidnap westerners. It is also believed that Boko Haram may have members in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

- **23 March 2013** - Two suspected members of Boko Haram have been killed after an explosive they attempted to throw as policemen at a checkpoint went off in the flashpoint city of Kano. The blast occurred just days after a suicide attack on Monday targeted a bust station in Kano, which is the most populous city in northern Nigeria. That attack killed at least forty-one people and injured sixty-five. Kano State police chief Musa Daura has confirmed that four accomplices of the victims of Saturday's blast, including two Niger nationals, have been arrested. Three policemen were injured in the attack that occurred in the Hotoro area of the city. Minutes before the blast, another explosion went off at a nearby checkpoint, however no one was injured.



- **22 March 2013** - Police have confirmed that suspected Islamist gunmen have launched a series of gun and bomb attacks in a remote town along the border with Cameroon. At least twenty-five people have been killed in the attack. According to police spokesman for the western Adamawa state, Mohammed Ibrahim, the gunmen carried out four simultaneous assaults on Ganye in the Adamawa state, opening fire on a bar, a bank, and a prisoner warder. In a separate incident, they attacked a prison. The spokesman further indicated that members of Boko Haram were the prime suspected. Violence carried out by Islamist insurgents in northern Nigeria has been on the rise in the past weeks after a brief lull. On Saturday, three bombs exploded in the north's main city of Kano. According to Kano state police spokesman Magaji Majia, one of the bombings was a suicide attack, however it did not claim any lives apart from those of the bombers. In a separate incident, a remote-controlled bomb that targeted a joint military and police checkpoint did wound a number of police officers. A separate gun attack in the city's Dakata district also killed one person on Saturday. According to Kano state police spokesman, four people have been arrested in connection with the attacks. With more suicide attacks and bombings occurring every week in the northern region of the country, it is becoming evident that the Nigerian government is incapable of dealing adequately with Boko Haram and related criminal gangs who have overtaken militancy in the oil-producing south-eastern Niger Delta region as the main threat

to the stability of Africa's top oil producer. This past Monday, a bomb blast, which targeted a bus park in an area of Kano that is mostly inhabited by southern Christians, killed at least 25 people and wounded 65.

- **19 March 2013** - An explosion that targeted a security patrol outside a bank has killed two soldiers and a policeman in the northeast city of Maiduguri. The blast followed a number of bombings that occurred in the northern city of Kano on Monday (See Below). So far there have been no claims of responsibility however Islamist militants are the prime suspects.
- **18 March 2013** - Two suicide bombers exploded their car into a bus station in Kano, Nigeria's second largest city, setting off a large explosion that hit five busses. According to police spokesman Magaji Majia, at least twenty two people have been killed while another sixty-five have been wounded. Witnesses have described hearing multiple blasts and seeing wounded victims fleeing the area as authorities cordoned off the scene. The bus station that was targeted in Monday's attack primarily services passengers who are heading south to the mostly Christian regions of the country. So far, authorities have not provided any information relating to who is behind this latest bombing. Furthermore there has been no claims of responsibility, however this attack is similar to the hit-and-run tactics that are favored by Boko Haram militants. In turn, Kano has been repeatedly targeted by the group in which its deadliest attack occurred in January 2012 in which at least 285 people were killed in coordinated bomb and gun attacks. It is believed that Boko Haram may have members in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. In its scale and ruthlessness, as Boko Haram has had a history of not hesitating to inflict mass casualties on civilians, the bus station was previously attacked in January 2012, a blast which left a number of wounded civilians. Monday's attack, which occurred around 5 PM (local time) suggests that the attackers were deliberately targeting non-Muslims and people generally from outside the northern region of the country. These have typically been the targets of choice for Boko Haram. The attacks occurred in the downtown Sabon Gari district of Kano, which is home to outsiders and which has busses from stations that are typically destined for the Christian south of Nigeria. With fierce sectional and religious differences often ending in violence throughout Nigeria, it is increasingly becoming evident that Boko Haram is attempting to capitalize on these animosities, and to further create a strain. President Goodluck Jonathan has condemned the attack, stated that his government would continue "its unrelenting war against terrorists." However the government has so far shown minimal ability to prevent the violence that has been occurring in the northern region of the country, which has been linked to Boko Haram. Update - The death toll from the suicide attack at a bus station in Kano, has risen to forty-one after police officials had initially given a toll of twenty-two. Rescue officials have indicated that twenty victims were counted at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital while an additional twenty-one bodies were reported at the Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital.

Kidnapping Reports:

- **28 March 2013** - Meanwhile the US consulate has announced that a foreigner has been kidnapped in Nigeria's largest city of Lagos. However few details have emerged. Although the nationality of the individual has not been released, a representative indicated that "the US Consulate General in Lagos received a report that an expatriate was kidnapped on Victoria Island on Saturday, March 23 at approximately 11 pm...local Nigerian law enforcement confirmed this incident." Update (28 March) - The British government and local police in Nigeria have confirmed that a Briton who was abducted last week in Lagos has been released in an incident that is believed to be a ransom kidnapping. Lagos police spokeswoman Ngozi Braide indicated that the man was released on Tuesday night while the British government has indicated that he was freed on Wednesday. The spokeswoman did not confirm whether or not a ransom payment was made. Britain confirmed the kidnap and release, indicated that "a British national was kidnapped on Victoria Island, Lagos on 23 March and subsequently released on 27 March. Although the government did not provide any further details, Britain has listed the incident as a "criminal kidnapping" rather than a "terrorist kidnapping," signifying that the motive was likely cash-related. The man was abducted in the upscale Victoria Island neighborhood of the city. Reports have indicated that the man worked for a French company, CGG, a geophysics firm that works in the oil industry. Although such incidents are relatively rare in Lagos, kidnappings occur regularly in the oil-producing Niger Delta region and other parts of the south. Islamist extremists have also carried out abductions in the country's north, where Ansaru recently claimed to have executed seven foreign hostages.
- **24 March 2013** - A journalist at a Nigerian state-owned television station, who was kidnapped along with her baby and maid last week as she left work, was released on Sunday. Olubunmi Oke, a reporter and newscaster with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was kidnapped on Thursday by four men who blocked her car as she was leaving her office in Akure, which is the capital of the southwestern state of Ondo. Mrs.

Oke's baby and maid were with her when she was kidnapped however they were later released by her abductors. According to reports, "she was set free and abandoned in a bush near Ondo town, about 30 km (19 miles) from Akure from where she boarded a lorry home." It currently remains unclear whether or not a ransom was paid before she was released. Although kidnappings are frequent throughout the oil-rich southern region of the country, it is rare in southwest Nigeria, where the journalist was kidnapped. Currently the reasons behind her abduction are unknown.

Domestic News:

- **21 March 2013** - the Nigerian president has announced that President Goodluck Jonathan will embark on a two-day official visit to Equatorial Guinea as part of his administration's efforts to boost economic and trade relations between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. The President's Office has indicated that during the visit, President Jonathan will hold talks with President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and that the two heads of state will discuss a variety of issues based on mutual interests of both countries. They include the enhancement of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, exploitation of oil and gas resources, and the enhancement of developmental cooperation between both countries. Amongst the Nigerian delegation headed to Equatorial Guinea are the Minister of Petroleum Resources Deji Osinbajo, the Minister of Trade and Investment Olusegun Aganga, the Minister of Aviation Stella Oduah, the Minister of Culture and Tourism Edem Duke and the Minister of State Nurudeen Mohammed. The visit is expected to culminate in the signing of new agreements that will strengthen economic relations and developmental cooperation amongst the two countries.

International Developments:

- **26 March 2013** - A court in South Africa has jailed Nigerian national Henry Okah to a period of twenty-four years in prison after he was found guilty of thirteen terrorism charges relating to the deadly twin bomb attacks that occurred in Abuja in 2010. Twelve people were killed in the attacks as Nigeria was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary of its independence. During the sentencing proceedings, the state argued that Mr. Okah had displayed minimal remorse during the trial and that his intentions in the bombings were to "obtain maximum casualties." According to Judge Neels Claassen at the Johannesburg court, "the accused has not accepted any responsibility for the crimes committed nor has he shown remorse." the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which in 2010 was a well-equipped armed group fighting for a greater share of the Delta oil wealth, claimed responsibility for the attack. However Mr. Okah, who has permanent residency in South Africa, has denied any involvement in the bombings and of being the leader of MEND, instead claiming that the charges against him were politically motivated. His lawyer has indicated that he plans to appeal the conviction, while the state is also considering a challenge to the sentence. The 46-year-old was also found guilty over two explosions in March 2010 in the southern Nigerian city of Warri, which is a major hub in the oil-rich Delta region. State prosecutor Shaun Abrahams indicated that the sentence included twelve years each for the attacks in Abuja and in Warri. In turn, Mr. Okah was sentenced to ten years for being a threat to South Africa, a term that will run concurrently. According to Mr. Abrahams, the prosecution, which had requested a maximum sentence of life in prison, will consider appealing the sentence. A statement released by the ruling judge indicated that it was important to impose a sentence that would prohibit South Africa from being seen as a safe haven for terrorists. In turn, a statement released by MEND stated that it has noted the sentence "with incredulity" after a "sham trial," warning that the results would not deter the militant group. Mr. Okah is believed to be the first foreign national to be tried for terrorism in South Africa. He has been in custody since his arrest in October 2010, just one day after the bombings in Abuja, Nigeria. His trial, which began in October 2010, has been marked by delays, as both the state and defence sought to strengthen its case. He did not testify during the trial, which prompted the judge to indicate that his failure to take the state meant that the evidence against him remained uncontested. Mr. Okah has a number of run-ins with the law. In September 2008, he was arrested for arms and explosives trafficking in Angola. He was later extradited to Nigeria. At the time of his arrest, Police identified him as "an international gun-runner and a major oil bunkerer in the Niger delta."



Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Senegal, MS Risk advises to avoid road travel in the Casamance region to the west of Kolda other than on the main road from Ziguinchor to Cap Skiring and the main road north of the Guinea-Bissau/Senegal border from Sao Domingos to Ziguinchor during daylight hours. If you travel on either of these two routes, you should do so only during daylight hours and monitor the local security situation before travelling. The Casamance region of south-western Senegal (between the southern border of Gambia and the northern border of Guinea-Bissau) remains affected by incidents involving armed separatist groups and banditry, particularly in the regions of Bignona Sindian. There has been an increase in clashes between the Senegalese army and suspected elements of the armed separatist group MFDC (Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance) resulting in injuries and deaths. Cars and local buses have been ambushed and their passengers robbed, sometimes violently, by armed men. There is currently an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. The United States Embassy in Senegal recently issued a travel warning to the capital city of Dakar, stating that it has received information pertaining to a possible bomb threat. MS Risk currently advises against all travel to Dakar until further notice. With the ongoing French military intervention in Mali, authorities in Senegal have increased security in the capital city as well as along the border with Mali. MS Risk advises that al-Qaeda militants may cross the border into Senegal and may target Western interests as well as foreigners.

Domestic News:

- **20 March 2013** - Karim Wade, who is the son of former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, has been given one month by state prosecutors in order to justify assets that he accumulated when he served in his father's government. A lawyer representing Mr. Wade indicated that if he fails to provide evidence, he faces jail. According to El Hadj Amadou Sall, his lawyer, Mr. Wade (44) has been accused of owning majority stakes in a bank and at least two transportation companies including a 300 billion CFA francs (US \$589 million) stake in Aviation Handling Services SA, which is a Dakar-based aviation ground support enterprise. His lawyer further stated that "these are grotesque accusations and we will show that they are not true." In Senegal, Mr. Wade was known as "superminister" due to the fact that he was simultaneously holding the portfolios of energy, infrastructure, international cooperation, and urban planning. He held these positions until 2012, when his father was defeated in the national elections. Mr. Wade also acted as financial adviser to his father who assumed office in 2000. Senegal's Justice Ministry has also indicated that Mr. Wade owns companies such as a local unit of Virgin Islands-based Dubai Port World Senegal Ltd., which runs Dakar's container terminal and the Banque Marocaine de Commerce Extérieur (BMCE). Furthermore, he has been accused of owning a bank that made deals with international partners to restructure the country's ailing energy utility, Societe National d'Electricite de Senegal (Senelec). According to the Justice Ministry, "the strategy of Karim Wade is to buy these franchises and have them managed by offshore companies...key

sectors of the economy are in the hands of off-shore companies and the investigators have established the link with Karim Wade.” In November 2012, Mr. Wade was questioned by police and banned from leaving Senegal. Later, a prosecutor for a special court set up to try crimes of illicit enrichment, accused Mr. Wade on 15 March 2013 of acquiring assets in transportation and building companies and using members of his entourage, such as his driver and secretary, as fronts. During his tenure, Senegal signed construction contracts including a 380 billion-CFA franc, 65-kilometer (40-mile) highway linking Dakar with a new airport outside the city that Mr. Wade also authorized. According to a Justice Ministry document, State prosecutors will request that Mr. Wade explain untaxed deposits including 910 million francs in Senegalese banks, and two separate deposits of US \$2.7 million each to banks in Monaco. It has also been indicated that Mr. Wade has an “impressive” fleet of cars, including a Porsche and several luxury SUV’s.

No restrictions
in this travel
advice



There currently are no travel restrictions for Sierra Leone. There is currently a low threat from terrorism. Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. MS Risk advises companies and individuals in the Ivory Coast to remain vigilant.

Domestic News:

- 27 March 2013** - The United Nations Security Council has given a one-year extension to of mandate to the ongoing mission in Sierra Leone. The United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), which is under the Executive Representative of the Secretary General (ERSG), now has up to 31 March 2014 in order to complete its ongoing transition and to fully transfer responsibilities to the UN country team. Furthermore, the office of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, will be required to keep the fifteen-member Security Council regularly informed of developments on the ground in the West African country. In turn, Mr. Ban’s office is also expected to submit a report, no later than 15 September 2013, that will provide an update on the planned completion of the mandate of UNIPSIL to the Security Council. UNIPSIL came out of the UN Peace-building Commission (PBC), which is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in countries that are emerging from conflict situations. Currently the UNIPSIL is also present in Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Liberia. Similar to Sierra Leone, the UN peace operation in neighbouring Liberia is also at an advanced stage of closing. Among others, PBC notably advises on and proposes integrated strategies for post-conflict peace-building and recovery and, where appropriate, highlights any gaps that may threaten to undermine peace and security. It was established in

2008, five years after the end of the war in Sierra Leone, with the mandate to support its transition to a peaceful and stable state. According to a statement released by the UN this week, within the next year, UNIPSIL will focus on its remaining key activities including facilitation of political dialogue, particularly related to the planned constitutional review, security sector support, and strengthening of human rights institutions and their long-term sustainability.



Unsuccessful Attacks/Robberies:

- **25 March 2013** - Shore security guard on board a berthed US-flagged general cargo ship, the **Ocean Charger**, noticed two robbers on the aft mooring stations at 0300 LT in Abidjan Port, Ivory Coast. Guard immediately informed the Duty officer who alerted the Master and the other crew members on board the vessel. On seeing the alerted crew, the robbers jumped overboard and escaped in their small boat. Port control was informed, the Master was later notified that the robbers were detained and that the stolen items had been recovered.



About MS Risk

MS Risk is a privately owned company domiciled in the Isle of Man. It is underwritten by syndicate 2525 of Lloyd's of London for special risks case management in all jurisdictions. It also acts as retained advisors to syndicates in the Lloyd's of London specialty risk insurance markets: kidnap for ransom, extortion, hijack, illegal detention, illegal war tax, malicious product tamper, terrorism, political and war risk.

MS Risk is always mindful and compliant to legislation and guidelines on the use of private security services including, but not limited to the US FCPA (1977), UK Bribery Act (2010), Canadian Bill C-48 (2007), ASX 8 Corporate Governance Principles, and the World Bank/IFC Voluntary Principles on the Use of Government and Private Security Forces. MS Risk is a signatory of the Swiss government's International Code of Conduct. It is transparent and compliant to market expectations on legal and ethical conduct in the performance of services.

MS Risk has a dedicated team of researchers, a 24/7 hotline service and a pool of trained and experienced consultants to support client needs.

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 - Interim security
 - Training
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- Crisis Response
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 - Hostile operations support to commercial interests
- Virtual Security Director service for clients lacking a full time security executive.

References are always available.

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