



Threat Environment Report West Africa

May 2021

DILIGENCE | DISCRETION | ADAPTABILITY

SF
GROUP

Threat Ratings

	Overall Threat Rating	This Month's Status	Forecast Next Month
Benin	Amber	Amber	Amber
Burkina Faso	Red	Amber	Amber
Cameroon	Amber	Amber	Amber
Equatorial Guinea	Amber	Amber	Amber
Gabon	Green	Amber	Amber
The Gambia	Green	Amber	Amber
Ghana	Amber	Amber	Amber
Guinea-Bissau	Amber	Amber	Amber
Guinea (Conakry)	Amber	Amber	Amber
Ivory Coast	Amber	Amber	Amber
Mali	Red	Amber	Amber
Niger	Red	Amber	Amber
Nigeria	Red	Amber	Amber
Togo	Green	Amber	Amber

The 'overall threat rating' is assessed by analysing all threats affecting the potential to operate in the country as a whole

GREEN	An overall permissive operating environment, although there are likely to be underlying security issues
AMBER	There are notable security challenges to consider while operating in this environment
RED	An overall unstable operating environment

'This month's status' is decided by monitoring trends in comparison to the previous reporting period

GREEN	There has been an improvement in the overall security situation over the reporting period
AMBER	The overall security situation has remained broadly unchanged over the reporting period
RED	The overall security situation has worsened over the reporting period

The 'forecast next month' is a prediction assessed by looking at indicators which could alter the short term security situation

GREEN	There are indicators that there will be an improvement in the overall security situation
AMBER	There are no indicators to a coming change in the overall security situation
RED	There are indicators and warnings that there could be degradation in the overall security situation



Benin

During the month of May, there were no material changes to Benin’s threat environment, which was characterised primarily by low-impact opportunistic crime, isolated killings, and police operations. Notably, on 26th May, two suspects were shot dead by police during an attempted robbery in the Ponsa area of Bohicon, Zou Department, with one officer sustaining minor injuries. Meanwhile, on 21st May, a joint security operation conducted by Beninese police and customs personnel in Hillacondji, Mono Department, resulted in the seizure of 325 kilogrammes of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and the arrest of two suspects.

Following the General Elections in early April, there was also a reduction in the severity and frequency of incidents of civil unrest and reactive security operations recorded over previous months, as well as a notable decrease in armed violence between farmer-herder communities in northern departments.

Targeted assaults and mob violence continued to mark the reporting period. On 01st May, three transgender women were injured after being beaten and robbed at the Sunset Bar in Cotonou, Littoral Department. The women were forced to undress before escaping to a facility operated by the Hirondelle Club Bénin, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides shelter, as well as psychological and legal support, to the country’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBT) community. Amnesty International subsequently condemned the attack, urging authorities to implement “greater measures to protect transgender people and the associations that defend them”. In a separate development, on 05th May, an alleged criminal was lynched by youths in the Ganon sector of Parakou, Borgou Department. Elsewhere, in the village of Hlassame, Couffo Department, several police officers were injured by residents while

attempting to execute an arrest warrant against a farmer accused of fraud on 18th May.

Politically, the reporting period was marked by the first Council of Ministers meeting under Benin’s newly inaugurated President, Patrice Talon. The meeting, held on 26th May, was attended by senior ministerial officials, who were instructed by President Talon of the agenda for his second five-year term. The President, addressing his ministers, underscored the ability of Council members to “qualitatively impact the lives of [their] compatriots”, adding that underdevelopment within Benin is not inevitable “because its perpetuation is primarily due to the governing elites” and their willingness to engage in political patronage.

FORECAST

There is no indication that the threat environment will change significantly over the upcoming reporting period, with incidents of low-impact criminal activity, mob violence, and isolated and localised killings likely to continue. An increase in violence among farmer-herder communities remains possible, particularly in northern departments, with incidents likely to materialise without warning, sometimes causing collateral casualties.

Status:





Burkina Faso

The recurrence of militant attacks perpetuated by militant factions linked to Al Qaeda (AQ) and the Islamic State (IS), armed clashes involving local self-defence militiamen or Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP) fighters and retaliatory attacks continue to be recorded, with civilian casualties worsening particularly along the shared border regions with Benin, Niger and Mali, that is host to a large group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and remotely-located civilian populations.

The overall threat environment in Burkina Faso remains exacerbated, despite a slight uptick in counterinsurgency operations. On 05th May, up to 23 Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) militants were killed during 'Operation Houné', a counterinsurgency operation that targeted four militant bases across Nord Region. Several motorcycles, firearms and ammunition were recovered. On 19th May, a further 13 insurgents were killed in a counteroffensive near Markoye, Sahel Region.

The start of the reporting period was marked by the 03rd May armed attack by unidentified militants on the settlement of Koguel in Foutouri, Est Region, killing up to 30 individuals and injuring 20 others. Similar to other attacks targeting civilian settlements, several accounts of the incident indicated that the militants had targeted the local community in retaliation for supporting and enlisting in the VDP.

As the VDP remains a central element of the response to militia groups and militant activity across the country, its forces – largely mobilised from the general population and local self-defence militias – are quickly becoming the most likely targets for ambushes and armed attacks. On 16th May, a group of suspected militants attacked VDP forces in Palsègué, Centre-Nord Region, killing nine

individuals, including three VDP fighters, the Village Chief and civilians.

Meanwhile, demonstrating the extended deterioration in the security situation and humanitarian environment, a further 15 individuals were killed on 18th May, following an attack by unknown gunmen targeting Adjarara in Sahel Region. The attack was likely conducted by JNIM fighters who have been more present in the peripheral areas of Tin-Akoff, Sahel Region. The emergence of JNIM factions in this area and the nature of these attacks suggest possible competition of resources, such as livestock, as a potential motive. Between 04th and 13th May, at least 11 individuals were killed, several residences looted and two others abducted during a series of raids in the area.

FORECAST

Competition for resources is likely to continue over the upcoming reporting period, with militant groups recurrently raiding local livestock markets and remote settlements. Militant groups are expected to increase the targeting of VDP positions as more self-defence groups seek to engage the initiative and halt the rapid territorial expansion of the militants.

Status:





Cameroon

The threat posed by Boko Haram activity remains elevated in the Far North Region of the country, with a continuation of cross-border militant attacks targeting civilian populations residing in close proximity to the Cameroon-Nigeria border. As in the past, household goods, livestock and other essential items remain the primary target for insurgents. During the month of May, the sporadic recording of these incidents demonstrated continuous levels of violence against civilian targets. On 17th May, a group of Boko Haram militants attacked a civilian settlement in the border town of Kerawa near Kolofata, Far-North Region, killing one resident and abducting another individual. A similar incident was recorded on 16th May, during which two civilians were killed following a militant raid targeting the town of Sanda Wadjiri, also located in the vicinity of Kolofata in Far-North Region. Meanwhile, from 16th to 18th May, a series of clashes between a Cameroon Armed Forces (FAC) contingent and insurgents were reported in Goldavi and Kouyape, Far-North Region, which resulted in the killing of up to eight Boko Haram militants.

Separately, levels of ethnically-motivated violence remain elevated in the North West and South West Region of the country, as tensions attributed to the protracted Anglophone crisis continue. Civilians remain exposed and vulnerable to recurrent clashes and attacks in the Anglophone region, as FAC operations repeatedly target localities with elevated levels of violence in search for suspected Ambazonia Military Forces (AMF) separatist fighters. On 16th May, FAC soldiers raided Tadu, North West Region, looting several residences and razing a number of others, before killing at least two civilians in the area. A similar raid by FAC soldiers was recorded on 17th May in Buh in Bui, North West Region, during which 50 residences were razed and two fatalities recorded. However, military assets themselves also remain

exposed to separatist attacks, as illustrated by the 25th May ambush in Lassin in Bui, North West Region, during which five FAC soldiers were killed by AMF fighters.

Rights activists and international aid organisations continue to condemn the use of force by FAC soldiers against the populations in Anglophone areas, as the threat environment in the region worsens. Earlier in the month, on 04th May, an individual was apprehended by military officers in Kuruku, North West Region, on suspicions of being an AMF fighter and subsequently shot dead under unclear circumstances.

FORECAST

The death of two individuals following an eruption of clashes between local residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Waza, Far North Region, during the month under review demonstrated a concerning possibility of localised tensions arising in the upcoming reporting period, which are linked to ethno-religious disputes and competition for scarce resources in the region.

Status:





Equatorial Guinea

No material changes to the overall threat environment were observed over the month under review, which saw a continuation of low-impact opportunistic criminal activity, as well as renewed security operations by national police and military personnel.

The epidemiological situation in Equatorial Guinea was marked by a minor increase in the number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases recorded. While the Ministry of Health’s relatively weak testing infrastructure and reporting capacity have limited the availability of reliable and accurate information on the outbreak, the country’s incidence rate appears to have increased since March 2021. Nevertheless, with the ongoing rollout of the government’s vaccination programme continuing to alleviate pressure on health infrastructure, the reimposition of tighter preventative health measure remains increasingly unlikely.

On 05th May, the Business Summit of the Business Confederation of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) was held in Malabo. The summit saw Simeão Angue, the Minister of Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, receive his Angolan counterpart, Domingos Vieira Lopes, to discuss bilateral ties between Angola and Equatorial Guinea. A statement issued by the two delegates highlighted the continued strengthening of cultural and commercial cooperation between their respective countries, particularly within the information technology and communications sectors.

Meanwhile, on 27th May, Kosmos Energy issued a review report detailing updates on its development projects offshore Equatorial Guinea. The Dallas-based deep-water exploration and production company noted that their Okume and Ceiba Field complexes – both located near the southern Rio Muni Basin, approximately 35km west of Mbini – continued to receive infrastructural improvements that aim to

enhance water injection and gas lift capacity and support existing operations. The report noted that the second phase of a planned electrical submersible pump (ESP) programme commenced in April. It added that Equatorial Guinea would receive employment benefits from the project, with overall well production increasing due to upgrades on the G-19 flowline.

FORECAST

There is no indication that Equatorial Guinea will experience material changes to its security environment during the upcoming reporting period. Petty crime and occasional incidents of civil unrest are anticipated to continue throughout the country, particularly in urban centres, while increased vaccinations will reduce the likelihood of tighter COVID-19 restrictions.

Status:





Gabon

The security situation in Gabon this month was primarily driven by criminal activity, including murder and kidnapping incidents and wildlife trafficking.

Notably, the abduction of children continued to represent a significant threat this month. Security forces reportedly arrested an unidentified individual in his 30s on 24th May while attempting to kidnap a new-born infant at Jeanne Ebori University Hospital in Libreville, Estuaire Province. Alerted by medical staff and patients, security forces gave chase to the suspect, who leaped from the hospital's first floor in a failed attempt to escape the scene. During interrogation, the suspect is believed to have admitted to having previously kidnaped children for human sacrifice. Furthermore, on 04th May, security forces arrested Mathilde Moussavou in Port-Gentil, Ogooue-Maritime Province, who had escaped Mouila Prison in Ngounié Province on 09th February 2021, where she had been incarcerated since October 2020 for kidnapping an infant identified as "Chris" in September that same year.

Despite assertive government and non-governmental action to protect wildlife, the trafficking of ivory remains pervasive in the country. On 14th May, security forces arrested a 54-year-old Gabonese national in Bifoun, Moyen-Ogooué Province, in possession of four ivory tusks, weighing 45kg. Pursuant to the Gabonese penal code, the suspect faces a maximum prison sentence of ten years if found guilty of wildlife crime.

Civil unrest also continued to be documented this month in Gabon. In Libreville, police were dispatched to disperse crowds on 17th May, as retired civil servants staged a demonstration in front of the Prime Minister's office to demand the payment of their pensions. No casualties were reported in the course of the police operation.

Moreover, on the epidemiological front, the Gabonese authorities took the decision to maintain restrictive measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on 14th May. The nationwide state of emergency introduced in March 2020 has also been extended for another 45 days through 28th June 2021. As part of domestic restrictive measures, authorities will continue to restrict the entry and exit to Greater Libreville, with such travel requiring special authorisation and a negative COVID-19 certificate.

FORECAST

The overall threat environment is likely to remain unchanged over the next reporting period as civil unrest grows in response to government restrictive measures aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19 at the expense of the economy, that may create a security vacuum, enabling heightened opportunistic criminal activity in the country.

Status:





The Gambia

No material changes to the threat environment were recorded over the reporting period, with the country experiencing minor levels of low-to-moderate-impact crime and continued security forces operations. There was a slight increase in the number of robberies and killings across The Gambia, particularly in Kombo East and Serrekunda; however, these incidents were largely isolated and localised in nature.

Notably, on 19th May, Senegalese soldiers clashed with residents in the settlement of Omorto, located near Faraba Banta, Kombo East Province, after they crossed into The Gambia while pursuing a truck suspected of conveying illegally-logged timber. Reports indicated that shots were fired in the village, however, no casualties or arrests were reported. Meanwhile, around 21st May, Gambian police forces conducted a security operation in the coastal and forested areas surrounding Brufut in Kombo North, Brikama Local Government Area (LGA). A total of 56 individuals were arrested on various charges, including theft, robbery and assault, among others. Superintendent Lamin Njie, Spokesperson for the Gambia Police Force, reported that most suspects were foreign nationals and were duly referred to the Department of Immigration, pending further investigations. On 18th May, nine suspected gang affiliates were arrested in Manjai Kunda, Serrekunda LGA, with police seizing a vehicle, cutlasses, and an unconfirmed quantity of narcotics.

The reporting period featured several isolated killings, dispersed throughout the countries in both rural and urban environments. During Koriteh Day (Eid Al Fitr) celebrations on 12th May, unidentified assailants fatally stabbed a man in his twenties during an attempted robbery near Westfield Park in Serrekunda. Police confirmed that at least one suspect was subsequently arrested and indicated that at least four non-fatal stabbings occurred in

Serrekunda on the same day. In a separate incident, the body of a 37-year-old woman with signs of violence was discovered by residents on 18th May in Mandinari, Kombo North.

Responding to the heightened level of criminal activity, on 26th May, Gambia's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) indicated their concern over rising violent crimes, especially in urban areas. Furthermore, the body's Chairman, Emmanuel D. Joof, criticised incidents of mob violence and other retributive acts that are commonly committed by local communities against suspected perpetrators.

FORECAST

The country's threat environment is unlikely to witness significant changes over the upcoming reporting period, marked by low-impact criminal activity, localised civil unrest and isolated violent crime. With this month's heightened levels of criminal activity, targeted security operations are likely to occur in urban centres, increasing the risk of occasional violent clashes with suspects.

Status:





Ghana

The country's threat environment remained unchanged during the month under review, with incidents of organised and violent crime such as armed robberies continuing to be recorded along with isolated incidents of mob violence.

On 09th May, a vehicle hijacking occurred in Lapaz, Accra, where two armed assailants stole a Toyota Yaris from a taxi driver before engaging police in an armed confrontation in the Kwashieman area of the city. At least one of the gunmen was wounded during the shooting, while both managed to escape after abandoning the stolen vehicle which was later recovered at Busia Junction in Odorkor. On 19th May, two criminals travelling on board a motorcycle grabbed the purse of a pedestrian in the Sakaman locality of Accra. A mob quickly assembled after the victim had alerted nearby residents of the incident, and one of the suspects was later captured and killed, while the other reportedly drowned in a nearby lagoon while attempting to flee. In Tieman, GHS 205,910 (USD 35,000) was stolen from a hotel safe on 24th May by an employee and former employee of the company. The two suspects were later arrested after being identified in CCTV footage of the theft.

Meanwhile, several security operations were conducted over the month, resulting in the seizure of hundreds of unregistered motorcycle taxis and the arrest of suspects linked to organised criminal and fraudulent activity. Over 200 motorbikes were confiscated by police in Shiashie, Accra, on 11th May, while an undisclosed number of motorcycle taxi operators were arrested for violating traffic regulations and operating without licenses. A day later, on 12th May, six Chinese nationals were detained by authorities at the Xindi Hotel, located along the Asankragua-Enchi road in Western Region, on charges of money laundering, narcotics trafficking and operating an illegal gold refinery in the area. In

Northern Region, police arrested two individuals linked to the targeted killing of a village chief in Bagliga Dakpemyili along the outskirts of Tema on 24th May. An AK-47 rifle, a pump-action shotgun, 20 rounds of ammunition and a Kevlar vest were recovered from the suspects.

Offshore Tema, armed assailants boarded the Ghanaian-flagged FV ATLANTIC PRINCESS (IMO: 8124412) and subsequently abducted the Master and four crew members on 19th May. The assailants had reportedly opened fire on the vessel prior to boarding and were suspected to have launched the operation from a nearby small 'oil tanker' acting as a mothership. The following day the Ghanaian Navy commenced a search-and-rescue (SAR) mission in pursuit of the assailants and kidnapped crew.

FORECAST

Rates of violent and organised crime are expected to remain unchanged over the upcoming reporting period, with large urban centres such as Accra remaining most at risk of this type of activity, further sustained by exacerbated economic conditions due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Heightened Naval patrols within the country's territorial waters, and to a lesser extent throughout its EEZ, are likely to be observed in response to the latest maritime kidnapping offshore Tema.

Status:





Guinea-Bissau

Illustrating Guinea-Bissau's poor road conditions and resultant frequent road traffic collisions (RTCs), the month under review was marked by a fatal RTC in Cambese, Bafatá Region. According to police, in the early hours of 23rd May, the driver of a lorry was speeding around a bend when he lost control and steered into the settlement through several residences, killing a total of 14 individuals, including himself.

The war between the government and striking elements of the civil service, which has lasted six months and shows little sign of abating, continued into May. In a tour de force, the Ministry of Finance delayed May salary payments for varying ministries, including in the education and health sectors, subject to a verification process of absences among striking civil servants. Underscoring the government's combative strategy to coerce an end to the ongoing civil unrest, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló stated that strikers would not be paid during a Television of Guinea-Bissau (TGB) interview on 25th May. While civil service strikes officially ended on 31st May, the National Union of Workers of Guinea (UNWG) has threatened to stage another round of strikes lasting 30 days from 01st June 2021. Ongoing bureaucratic hostilities between the government and the health sector, coupled with an economy in turmoil precipitating rising costs of staple goods, stands to significantly hobble the government's efforts to effectively combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and elevate the threat of potentially violent civil unrest in the near future.

Meanwhile, the Guinean League of Human Rights (LGDH) has called for the Minister of Interior, Botche Candé, to stand down, lambasting the Ministry's alleged inability to ensure security in the country. The statement came in response to security forces storming the village of Cuntuba, Bafatá Region, on

14th May, according to the LGDH, in an attempt to prevent the Islamic community to perform prayers on Eid al Fitr to mark the end of Ramadan. Clashes ensued after security forces ordered locals to immediately vacate their place of worship, causing nine injuries, including six members of the Cuntuba community and three security personnel.

Moreover, in the political sphere, following President Embaló's visit to Lisbon in October 2020, Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa traveled to Guinea-Bissau on 18th May, constituting the first visit by a Portuguese head of state to the country in 31 years.

FORECAST

The threat environment is expected to remain unchanged over the upcoming reporting period and primarily driven by incidents of civil unrest and violence targeting members of civil society as the result of political contestation between the government and the PAIGC following the return of Mr Pereira, which could serve to revitalise opposition groups. Meanwhile, nationwide strikes among the civil service moreover serve to undermine the government's vaccine strategy, thus likely further weakening the country's economy in the medium-term.

Status:





Guinea (Conakry)

The security situation in Guinea remained overall unchanged during the month under review. The reporting period was primarily marked by incidents of civil unrest, following restrictions imposed by the authorities against mass gatherings during religious events. On 04th May, clashes between demonstrators and security forces were reported in Siguiiri, Kankan Region, for the second day, with residents protesting against a ban imposed on nightly events in mosques for the last ten days of the Ramadan period. Police fired teargas to disperse the crowds, who had barricaded several roads throughout the city, triggering severe transport disruptions. In Kankan city, civilians held similar protests between 04th and 05th May against the imposed restrictions, with police again dispersing the demonstrators using teargas. No casualties were reported during the incidents. Meanwhile, on 09th May, 15 civilians were killed after an artisanal gold mine collapsed in Siguiiri Province.

Politically, on 09th May, the government indicated that it will proceed with the trials of 60 individuals, including several leaders of the opposition, who had been arrested over their alleged links to the 2020 post-election violence. On 14th May, the United States (US) government lifted a travel ban imposed on travellers arriving from Guinea over concerns of a spread of Ebola. The US Department of Homeland Security indicated that the lifting of the ban was issued as a result of an absence of Ebola cases recorded in Guinea since April 2021.

Meanwhile, Guinean officials further engaged in regional cooperation with other countries over the course of the month. On 06th May, President Alpha Conde met with Gambian Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara and Senegalese President Macky Sall at the Presidential Palace in Conakry. The leaders reportedly held discussions concerning bilateral,

regional and global affairs and their impact on their respective countries.

FORECAST

No significant changes in the threat environment are anticipated over the month of June. The upcoming reporting period will likely feature further legal proceedings related to suspects linked to post election violence following President Alpha Conde's re-election in 2020.

Status:





Ivory Coast

The security situation remained largely unchanged throughout the country. However, the border region with Burkina Faso continued to record terrorist activity. On 06th May, unidentified gunmen suspected to be members of a militant group attacked a passenger bus in Méré, near Bondoukou in Zanzan District, injuring six individuals. Following the attack, the bus sped off and managed to escape. On 03rd May, a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) was discovered in Bolé, Kafolo, Zanzan District. The elevated terrorist activity observed in the region prompted a meeting between the Defence Ministers of Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 10th May. The officials reportedly discussed mutual cooperation venues against jihadism. In Abidjan, intercommunal conflict marked the security landscape following the 19th May clashes that took place between ethnic Ivorians and ethnic Nigeriens in the Abobo area of Abidjan. An unconfirmed number of casualties were reported as a result of the incident.

The month also featured continued protests, as civilians gathered across several localities to demand improved provision of government services and utilities. On 05th May, several civil society organisations called for protests to denounce a prolonged electricity outage in the cities of Yamoussoukro, Korhogo and Abidjan. On 25th May, Bangolo Town Hall employees staged demonstrations in Bangolo, Guemon, demanding the payment of salary arrears.

The political landscape was marked by the commencement of the trial against former Prime Minister and rebel leader Guillaume Soro at the Palace of Justice in Abidjan on 19th May. Soro has been charged with plotting a military coup against Alassana Ouattara. His defence counsel objected to the allegations, suggesting that the charges are

politically motivated. The trial begins ahead of the anticipated return of former President Laurent Gbagbo from exile in June 2021. On 27th May, media reports suggested that negotiations between Gbagbo and President Ouattara had led to an agreement which will allow the former President to return to the country.

FORECAST

Over the upcoming reporting period, a heightened security posture is anticipated in the Northern region. This follows joint cooperation with Burkinabe security forces to curb militant operations in affected areas. Meanwhile, the political situation next month is likely to be shaped by the return of former President Laurent Gbagbo, as opposition groups have indicated his anticipated return from exile.

Status:





Mali

Uncertainties surrounding the ongoing political transition rose following the 24th May detainment of Transitional President Bah Ndaw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane and Defence Minister Souleymane Doucoure in Kati, Koulikoro region, following a cabinet reshuffle that replaced two military officers, who were part of the August 2020 coup d'état, from their positions within the Defence Ministry.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) alongside the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), condemned the forced detention of the three leaders appealing for their unconditional release. Notably, no violence or eruption of public unrest linked to the incident was recorded. Later on 26th May, reports were received that Colonel Assimi Goïta, leader of the military junta that led the 2020 coup d'état and the head of the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), had assumed the position of Interim President following an alleged forced resignation of President Ndaw and Prime Minister Ouane. At the same time, following an extraordinary summit on 30th May, ECOWAS moved to suspend Mali from the regional bloc until the General Elections are held.

Despite the shift from a civilian-led political transition over an 18-month period, Colonel Goïta reiterated that the General Elections scheduled for February 2022 will proceed as planned. Notably, the opposition, under the Members of the 5th June Movement – Rally of the Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP), supported the move by the military junta, citing similar allegations of exclusion from the cabinet reshuffle and various ministerial positions.

Recalling that former President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita (IBK) was accused by the opposition of failing to respond to the expanding insurgency, prevalence of ethnic-violence and worsening economic situation in

the country, the reporting period, as in previous months, continued to record a similar deteriorated threat environment.

The majority of attacks recorded during the month under review targeted military positions. On 23rd May, militants on board three vehicles and several motorcycles attacked Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) positions in Alatona, Segou Region, killing two soldiers before fleeing the area. While another three soldiers were killed and five others injured following a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) attack on a FAMA convoy in Hombouri, Mopti region. The application of IEDs during attacks was notable, and further resulted in civilian casualties. On 19th May, 16 individuals were killed and several others were injured after a passenger bus struck a roadside IED between I-n-Tillit and Gao in Gao region.

FORECAST

Political developments are expected to gain momentum with an increase in pressure for the re-establishment of a civilian-led transitional regime. The security environment in the upcoming reporting period is likely to remain unchanged despite members of the JNIM continuing to expand control across territories in the south and central regions of the country.

Status:





Niger

Militant groups continued their armed campaigns in May, launching a number of fatal attacks against security forces and civilians in Niger with the objective of terrorising the local population and undermining counter-insurgency efforts led by the government.

At the start of the month on 01st May, suspected Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) militants reportedly ambushed a Niger Armed Forces (FAN) patrol between Eknewane and Intazeyene in Tahoua Region, killing 16 National Guard personnel, injuring another six and abducting one. The assailants also seized two military vehicles and destroyed one other. On 02nd May, the government announced that FAN personnel had neutralised 24 Dawsahak militants after they had purportedly attempted to escape detention in Western Niger. The suspects are understood to have planned to attack the market town of Banibangou, Tillaberi Region, however, the operation was repelled by FAN soldiers who arrested 26 militants on 28th April, following a skirmish, which led to one militant fatality. According to military sources, the FAN killed 24 of the prisoners on 30th April at approximately 0400hrs local time, who had allegedly attempted to escape before being transferred to a nearby military base in Chinegodar. While unsubstantiated, the prisoners may have rather been subjected to extrajudicial killings, however no evidence has been produced to support these claims at the time of writing. Overnight on 04th May, furthermore, suspected ISWAP militants attacked an army position in the village of Intoussan, Northwest of Banibangou, killing at least 27 FAN soldiers, wounding approximately ten others, and burning two ACMAT Bastion armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and seizing one pickup truck equipped with a W-85 heavy machine gun. The attackers reportedly orchestrated two coordinated attacks on the village,

resulting in intense firefights with security forces. An unspecified number of FAN personnel have since remained unaccounted for. Moreover, unidentified assailants aboard motorcycles attacked Fantio, Tillaberi Region, on 12th May, killing at least five civilians and wounding two others, while on 22nd May, militants ambushed a security position along the RN1 between Maine-Soroa and Diffa, Diffa Region, killing one gendarme and kidnapping another. Militant operations continued until the end of the month, with suspected Boko Haram militants launching a cross-border attack on Diffa, on 28th May, resulting in armed clashes with FAN personnel that caused at least eight deaths, including four security personnel and four civilians. At least 13 individuals were injured and at least six of the assailants were killed.

FORECAST

Attacks by militant groups including Boko Haram, ISGS, JNIM and ISWAP, are anticipated to continue unabatedly in the Southern and Western regions of the country over the upcoming reporting period, leading to further casualties among civilians and security forces. Terrorist activity coupled with political unrest in the aftermath of the 2021 General Elections are predicted to further accentuate tensions in the country.

Status:





Nigeria

A continuation of armed attacks against police officers and installations as well as intercommunal clashes across the Southeastern region of the country marked a further deterioration in the overall threat environment during the month under review. Up to 25 security officers were killed during the reporting period, with the reported increased involvement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) members during such occurrences posing a notable security concern.

Meanwhile, ethnically-motivated reprisal attacks linked to violence between pastoralists, farmers and armed militias operating particularly in Benue State remain exacerbated. On 22nd May, up to 100 fatalities were reported following simultaneous overnight armed attacks and looting of properties across four Council Wards in Katsina Ala, Benue State, carried out by militiamen aligned to the late Terwase Akwaza ('Gana'). Furthermore, as in many previous cases, a heavy-handed response by military forces in the region is likely to be observed in the short-term.

Separately, despite a moderate reduction in terrorism-related activity recorded in Northeastern region of the country during the month of May, the reported death of the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, on 19th May, represented a significant development in the Northeastern region. Numerous fatalities, including Shekau, were reported following extensive armed clashes between Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) militants within the Boko Haram stronghold of Sambisa Forest in Borno State. However, it is stressed that to date, no clear confirmation of his death has been received from either militant group. Internal clashes between ISWAP and Boko Haram factions have been largely linked to leadership disputes and strained resources in the region.

Though it remains unclear whether the Boko Haram faction will be dissolved – should the death of Abubakar Shekau be confirmed – the threat environment is likely to worsen over the short-term, as power dynamics and leadership changes enforced by the more robust ISWAP group are anticipated. Additionally, security concerns remain heightened due to the continuous operational expansion of ISWAP outside of the Northern areas of Borno and Yobe State.

Toward the end of the reporting period, the 30th May mass kidnapping of up to 200 students from Islamiyya School in Tegina, Nigeri State, again raised criticisms over local authorities continued use of monetary-based response policies that are increasingly linked to motivations for kidnappings-for-ransom. The incident marks the fifth such incident in 2021 thus far targeting an education institution.

FORECAST

The threat environment in the Northeastern region is expected to deteriorate over the coming month. Meanwhile, kidnappings are expected to remain a common feature in the country's overall threat profile over the upcoming reporting period, with bandit groups continuing to exploit a debilitated security infrastructure for financial gain.

Status:





Togo

The reporting period was marked by a series of government security forces operations targeting illegal firearms across the country. The operations were conducted in Dalave, Maritime Region (08th May), Blitta, Centrale Region (04th May), and Kamina, Plateaux Region (18th May), thereby demonstrating the widespread proliferation of unregistered firearms in the countryside. During these three separate operations, security forces reportedly seized a total of 16 hunting rifles, a pistol and various firearms accessories, while arresting at least 89 suspected criminals. In addition, 54 motorcycles, two vehicles, various types of crude weapons and an assortment of military equipment and items were also seized from the arrested suspects. Notably, during the 04th May operation in Blitta, security forces also seized 23 unspecified traps, suggesting combined with the six hunting rifles that were also confiscated in the area that the arrested suspects may have been part of a local poaching syndicate, although no specific information corroborating this claim has been received thus far.

In Lome, security forces operations targeted both criminal elements and political groups and leaders. On 04th May, security forces arrested ten suspected criminals during a search operation in Adjidogome, Maritime Region, seizing electronics and other items believed to have been stolen from the suspects. Meanwhile, on 17th May, Paul Missiagbeto, Special Advisor to opposition leader Agbéyomé Kodjo, was arrested on unclear charges at his residence – believed to be located in an unconfirmed location in Lome – and a gathering of teachers at a hotel in Kegue was dispersed by security forces under unclear circumstances. Several teachers were reportedly arrested or assaulted during the incident, resulting in an unconfirmed number of casualties.

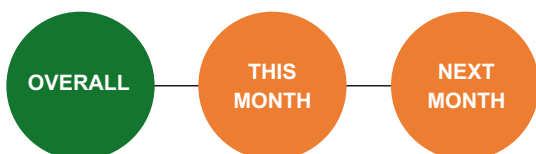
On 06th May, an individual was robbed by three

assailants in Baguida, Maritime Region. The assailants, one of whom was carrying a firearm, stopped the victim's vehicle, robbed her at gunpoint and subsequently escaped. In Nyekonakope, Maritime Region, the body of a security guard showing signs of violence was discovered on 21st May, which is assessed to have most likely been related to an unreported attempted robbery in the area.

FORECAST

The overall threat environment is expected to remain unchanged over the upcoming reporting period. The fact that several teachers were arrested and assaulted during the dispersal of their meeting in Kegue may lead to a near-term resurgence of strikes and civil unrest centred around teachers' unions that were observed earlier this year.

Status:



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