

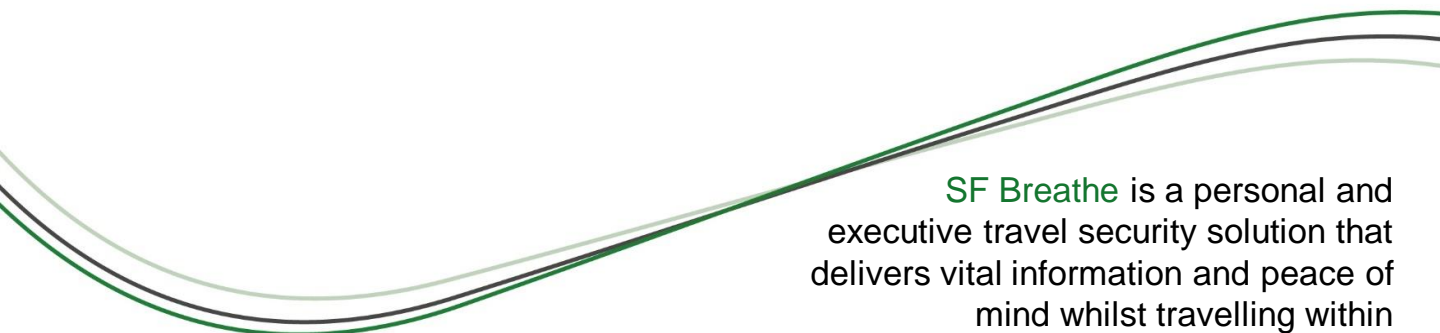
# Threat Environment Report West Africa



April 2022

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**SF Breathe** is a personal and executive travel security solution that delivers vital information and peace of mind whilst travelling within challenging environments.

The SF Group Threat Environment Report is published every month and provides an overview of significant recent changes to the risk environment in our operational regions, and a guide to emerging or upcoming issues with the potential to affect operations in the future. The Report builds on our weekly country Situational Reports, and, where relevant, provides regional context for developments affecting more than one country.

The Report covers Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nigeria every month. It also provides a summary of recent changes in the threat environment in other countries which are significant enough to justify a change in our current or forecast risk rating. It looks additionally at developments in other countries which have significant potential implications for operations, but do not justify a formal change in the risk rating.

If you have any queries regarding this Report or its content, please contact us at [info.services@sf-group.co](mailto:info.services@sf-group.co)

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# Threat Ratings



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

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# Threat Rating Key

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

# Burkina Faso



On 06<sup>th</sup> April, after a six-month trial military prosecutors found former President Blaise Compaoré guilty in absentia, alongside 13 others, and sentenced him life-imprisonment for the assassination of his predecessor, Thomas Sankara, on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1987. While the ruling marked a significant step for Burkina Faso, the overall political environment in present day is tense as the military junta, the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration (MPSR), remains in power and has yet to begin a transitional process to facilitate a return to civilian rule. The junta spokesperson, Lionel Bilgo, stated that it had no intention to shorten the three-year political transition to civilian rule as demanded by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Burkina Faso, alongside Mali and Guinea, were suspended from the regional bloc following respective *coup d'état* and enforcement of military rule.

Separately, the overall security situation during the month of April remained elevated as security-related activity was predominantly focused across the shared border areas in the Regions of Nord, Centre-Nord and Sahel. A notable uptick in the involvement of Volunteers for the Defense of the

Homeland (VDP) fighters in supporting government security operations was observed, suggesting an improvement in training and counterinsurgent capabilities. Although, successive armed attacks or clashes and counterinsurgent operations recorded in these areas resulted in relatively high casualties. On 11<sup>th</sup> April, up to 27 militants were killed during armed clashes with Armed Forces of Burkina Faso (FABF) soldiers and VDP fighters in Silia in Loroum, Nord Region. A similar incident occurred south of Loroum on 13<sup>th</sup> April: 35 militants were killed in Sima, near Séguénéga, Nord Region.

Despite these tangible improvements in VDP support to the FABF by VDP, the threat of armed attacks and ambushes remain likely, and highlights the continuing layered security challenges across the country posed by non-State militias, protracted inter-ethnic tensions and various insurgent factions. Underlining this, a further five FABF soldiers and four civilians were killed in an armed attack targeting Gaskindé, Sahel Region, on 24<sup>th</sup> April, and another six security force personnel were killed on the same day in neighbouring Pobe Mengao.

## Forecast

The growing displaced communities across the Regions of the Sahel and Nord remain vulnerable to the armed groups in search of essential resources and stockpiling in the upcoming reporting period. Meanwhile, the upcoming rainy season is anticipated to cause changes in the spatial terrain and general landscapes with increased density of vegetation and coverage interfering with ground and air security force operations especially during reconnaissance missions.

### Overall Status



### This Month's Status



### Next Month's Status





# Ghana



While the country's overall threat environment remained largely unchanged during the reporting period, several incidents of violent and armed crime recorded during the month were of note. Shootings accounted for the single-largest share of recorded incidents, most of which involved armed robberies. Violence stemming from organised crime continues to remain a serious source for concern, particularly within and along the periphery of larger urban centres and isolated stretches of road in the northern regions.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April, four gunmen barricaded the Walewale-Nalerigu road with logs, in the vicinity of Gaagbini, North East Region, robbing cash and valuables from occupants on board a passenger bus and pick-up truck. Nearby police responding to the incident confronted the suspects, shooting dead one gunman and injuring three others, who fled the scene. Earlier, on 13<sup>th</sup> April, three assailants targeted the Yakwa filling station in Akropong, Eastern Region, in a robbery incident. A nearby police officer responded, killing one suspect while the other two fled. In Tema, on 25<sup>th</sup> April, a car dealer was shot and killed during an armed robbery by three unidentified assailants riding a motorcycle near Bamfo Hotel, Community

22, Tema, Greater Accra Region.

In Teleku Bokazo, Western Region on 01<sup>st</sup> April a group of youths stormed a court following the arrest of 40 of their peers from a nearby mining site, owned and operated by Adamus Resources Ltd. Security forces at the scene shot and killed one of the youths; several others were injured. The following day, unidentified gunmen raided the mine, which is on the outskirts of the town, shooting and injuring a security guard in what appears to have been a suspected retaliatory attack.

Ethnic violence against Fulani communities was also seen, with three villages having been attacked by unidentified gunmen on 17<sup>th</sup> April, near Zakoli, Yendi Municipality, Northern Region. At least eight civilians were killed and four other injured; several residences set on fire and cattle stolen. Police later arrested one suspect linked to the attack.

## Forecast

Although the country's threat environment is anticipated to remain unchanged over the upcoming reporting period, incidents of violent and armed crime are likely to continue in the medium-term, with organised criminal groups facing limited pressure from an under-resourced security apparatus, particularly in more remote regions in the north.

Overall Status



This Month's Status



Next Month's Status



# Mali



Increasing signs of stability amid the ongoing political transition were detected during the month under review. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April the military junta announced that it would facilitate 24-month political transition process before holding general elections. This is contrary to the demand made at the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in the previous month for a maximum 16-month transition. However, the National Transitional Council (CNT) stated that they would no longer engage in mediation talks with ECOWAS,, and would begin transitional processes, including the establishment of an Independent Committee for the implementation of the recommendations from the National Conference of the Re-foundation, under interim President Assimi Goita. The committee will be composed of up to 15 members.

Mali remains suspended from the regional bloc, with a number of sanctions enforced including trade embargos and closed borders, also supported by France, the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), due to a delay in presidential elections in the country. Further concerns of continued anti-French rhetoric, a narrowed political space and restricted

involvement of international observers were underlined by the definitive suspension of French-based broadcasters RFI and France 24. The move, initially temporary from 17<sup>th</sup> March, was prompted after the junta accused the broadcasters of false allegations of rights abuses by the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa).

In continuation, the presence of mercenaries from Russian-based Wagner Group in the country has highlighted allegations of human rights abuses in the country. Conflicting reports emerged on 19th April that a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) targeted a joint convoy of FAMa and Wagner employees travelling through a local market in Hombori, Mopti region, killing at least one Wagner mercenary. Subsequent reporting indicated that members of the Group opened fire in retaliation, killing up to 18 individuals, and injured 15 others. While details of incident remain scant, statements from the Group and FAMa officials contradict the claim that the casualties were civilians. Some 611 individuals in the area were also arrested.

## Forecast

Public concerns about Wagner Group activity in Mali is expected to dominate the upcoming reporting period, with humanitarian groups calling for increased transparency about their operations. Meanwhile, international pressure from ECOWAS and similar blocs may push the military junta to further isolate themselves and seek autonomy in facilitating the transition.

### Overall Status



### This Month's Status



### Next Month's Status



# Niger



The reporting period saw a significant deterioration in the security situation in Agadez Region. Armed attacks by militant groups, primarily targeting security forces positions, represented the most significant threat to the region. On 07<sup>th</sup> April, armed assailants attacked a Niger Armed Forces (FAN) convoy in Bilma, killing two soldiers and injuring four others. Four FAN soldiers manning a mining site in Djado Plateau were shot dead on 14<sup>th</sup> April. The recent escalation of attacks against security forces personnel in the area demonstrates the militants' continuing threat to state authority, and intent to maintain the 'ungoverned spaces' in which they dominate.

While highlighting the threat posed from militancy along the major roads in Agadez Region, unknown gunmen riding on three trucks attacked a passenger bus in Tchirozerine. However, local reports indicated that a FAN patrol responded, killing four militants and injuring two others.

The increasing incidents of violent and armed crime in Agadez is attributed to several factors, including poor economic conditions resulting from restrictions intended to address the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, widespread unemployment, and the proliferation of small arms

and light weapons (SALW), most of which are smuggled from neighbouring countries. On 11<sup>th</sup> April, FAN intercepted and seized two trucks in Djado, Agadez Region, which were transporting a large cache of weapons and ammunition including AK-47 rifles from Libya.

Meanwhile, regional forces carried out coordinated counter-terrorism operations along Niger's border areas. According to government sources, FAN and Armed Forces of Burkina Faso (FABF) carried out the third phase of Operation *TAANLI*, killing at least 100 militants and arresting 40 others between 02<sup>nd</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> April. The increased frequency of joint operations by these forces reduced the number of armed attacks in the area in April compared to the previous reporting period.

Additionally, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) - comprising soldiers from Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon - repulsed a suspected Islamic States West Africa Province (ISWAP)/Boko Haram attack in Borgogorou, Tillaberi Region, killing at least 25 militants. In a separate operation, the MNJTF soldiers killed 30 Boko Haram militants in Kaji Jiwa in Diffa Region, near the border with Nigeria. The soldiers recovered 15 AK-47 rifles and ammunition during the incident.

## Forecast

The shared border areas with Burkina Faso and Nigeria will remain exposed to armed attacks by militant groups including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and ISWAP/Boko Haram. Meanwhile, regional forces are anticipated to intensify their counter-terrorism operations along the country's border areas over the upcoming reporting period.

## Overall Status



## This Month's Status



## Next Month's Status





# Nigeria



Several large-scale security operations took place during the month of April, with the most significant one involving Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) personnel from Nigeria, Cameroon and the Republic of Niger in a week-long counterinsurgent operation of note concluded on 17<sup>th</sup> April, in the Lake Chad region. The MNJTF reportedly killed approximately 100 Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)/Boko Haram fighters, including at least ten high-ranking commanders were killed; 18 MNJTF personnel were injured in four separate roadside improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. Meanwhile, an MNJTF air strike on 14<sup>th</sup> April, targeting the area of Tunbun Rago, Borno State, killed a further 70 insurgent fighters

Elsewhere, attacks on multiple villages in Kanam Local Government Area (LGA), Plateau State, again drew attention to escalating levels of banditry. On 10<sup>th</sup> April, unidentified gunmen attacked in these areas, killing at least 142 residents, abducting 70 others, mostly women, and burning down several houses. The farmer-to-herder attacks continue to be motivated by conditions linked to ethnic/tribal tensions, resource scarcity, and demographic and climate change in

the area. As the population continues to increase in Nigeria, land is proving to be inadequate in most regions, exacerbating the impact of desertification in some regions and rainfall shortages. However, ethnic differences and protracted land disputes are a main contributor to violence and remain a concern towards security across the larger northwestern and central regions.

Finally, gunmen linked to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist group continue to target security force personnel and police stations, especially in the States of Imo and Anambra State. The deteriorating threat profile in this region remains a major concern, especially in the run-up to the 2023 General Elections. On 03<sup>rd</sup> April, a Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) patrol was attacked in the Igbo Ukwu / Uga in Anambra State, by unidentified gunmen who shot and killed two officers and injured another. Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April, three armed attacks on security force personnel occurred in Anambra State, including the killing of four police officers after an attack on a police station in Atani, Ogbaru LGA on 13<sup>th</sup> April.

## Forecast

Armed violence is expected to escalate in the southeastern region as police officers' attention will be mainly focused on political developments, rallies and voting processes ahead of the 2023 General Elections. Secondly, with the beginning of the rainy season in the northwestern region, an increase in banditry is anticipated owing to the destruction of homes and an increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are looking to survive and fend for themselves.

### Overall Status



### This Month's Status



### Next Month's Status



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**INFORMATION & ANALYSIS TEAM**

Email: [info.services@sf-group.co](mailto:info.services@sf-group.co)

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