



Horizon West Africa – Mali 150 Metres Route de Koulikoro Sotuba ACI Route 3EME Pont, Bamako
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DATE: 31 March 2021
MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS

35

Boko Haram Activity

○ **Highlight of week 1 & 2**

- The number of incidents recorded during the first two weeks was 194 and the most recorded incidents were kidnappings, killings, and terrorist activities.

22

Banditry Activity

- COVID-19 cases dropped significantly in the first two weeks with at 4,878 new cases and deaths were at 101.

45

Civil Unrest

- COVID-19 vaccines arrive the country.
- Peaceful demonstrations were common in the the first two weeks with 29 incidents recorded.
- Kidnappings were recorded in all the six-geopolitical zones in the weeks with most incidents recorded in the North West region.
- Military operations recorded in the North West region and the killing of a top bandit commander.

37

Kidnapping Activity

○ **Highlight of the week 3 & 4**

- The number of incidents increased in the last weeks of the month with 220 incidents.
- COVID-19 numbers in the last two weeks further reduced to 1,688 new cases.
- Tension over the wearing of hijab leading to religious dispute between Christians and Muslims.
- Boko Haram insurgents orchestrated attacks and took over a community in North East region.
- Election violence recorded during Bye Election in SE region.
- Two IED incidents were recorded in the North West and South East regions.
- President Buhari leaves the country on medical leave.

52

Killings

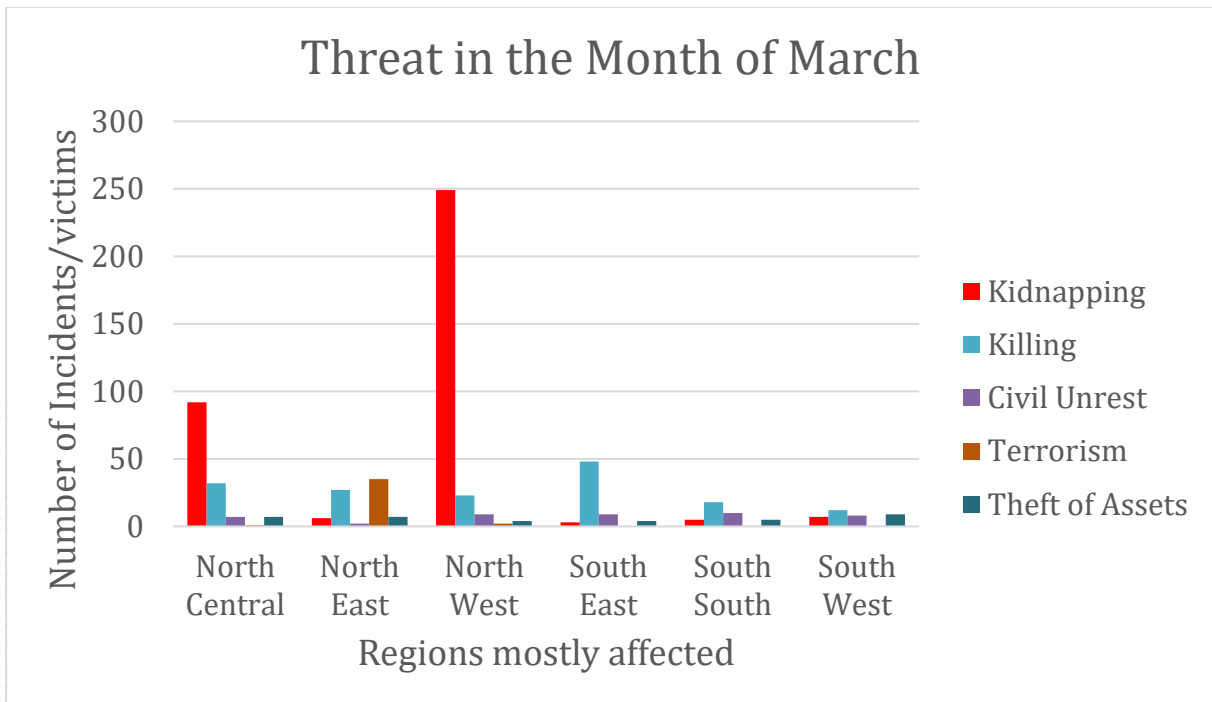
10

Military Operation

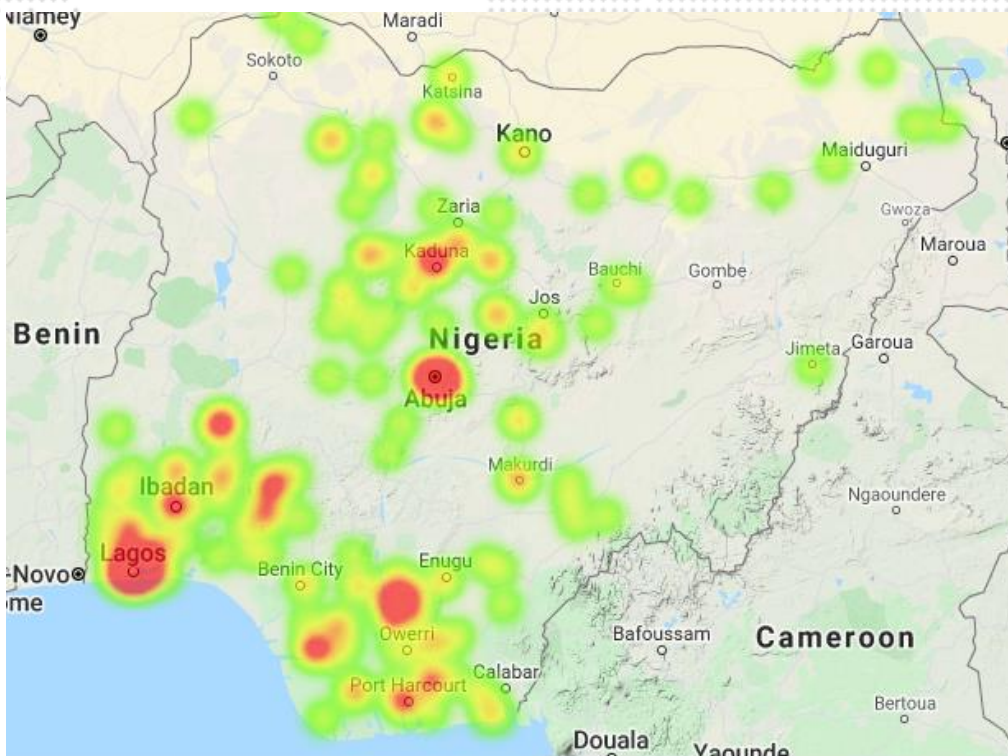
29

Theft of Asset

MAPS AND CHARTS



Heat Map for Nigeria - March 2021



Analysis



The reporting month is assessed as High due to increase of kidnappings in the reporting month. Religious tension was prevalent in the Southwest region as other incidents such as police killings, kidnappings, civil unrest, and armed clashes took centre stage in all the six geopolitical zones.

Students remained the target of armed groups not only in the North West but also in the South South and South West regions. The data on the number of students kidnapped in the month remains undisclosed as the number of students kidnapped in the SS is uncorroborated.

The North Central region recorded kidnappings and armed attacks the whole month. An estimated 81 individuals were kidnapped from various incidents between 2 and 25 March with Niger State, remaining the most volatile. Highways recorded the most incidents as most of the victims were kidnapped along a highway close to the volatile Rafi LGA. Schools which have become the new goldmine for armed groups, have been shut down in most LGAs in the state reducing the number of students kidnappings during the reporting month. Amidst these incidents was the food blockade by Miyetti Allah an association in charge of herders who prevented food from exiting through Niger State into Kwara State to protest the eviction of Fulani herdsmen from the SW region. They eventually allowed the food trucks to cross the border into Jebba on 5 March after the Federal Government reportedly agreed to pay a sum of money as compensation. Also, during the early part of the month, a meeting was held by Bandit commanders in Shiroro LGA. Although the reason and content of the meeting remained undisclosed, the outcome of the meeting could however be linked to an attack on a military base in Mariga LGA. In the attack, one soldier was killed but the major fatalities were the 20 vigilantes who fought back the bandits. Notably, in the last reporting month, bandits reportedly demanded the withdrawal of vigilantes as part of the deal to release kidnapped students. This suggests that the vigilantes who have been active in protecting communities in the state, have been more effective at tackling the security situation better than the military. Although underreporting remains an issue, Abuja FCT also recorded many cases mostly occurring at residential areas. Armed men are known to infiltrate these areas late in the evening or early morning and can move five to ten persons without impediment except when vigilante groups are alerted as recorded on 25 March when vigilantes repelled an attack on a Fulani settlement in Kekeshi village.

Plateau state recorded two high profile kidnappings in which the aviation quarters were targeted in Heipang, Barkin Ladi LGA and two persons related to a staff of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency were kidnapped while another incident involved a relative of the Minister of Women Affairs. Although the state is known to record a high number of herdsmen related incidents, kidnappings are also known to occur rather rarely.



In Benue State, armed attacks were increased with one of the victims being the number one citizen of the state, Governor Samuel Ortom. He was attacked by armed herdsmen whilst returning from his farmland in Gboko about noon. The attack was successfully repelled by his escort forces. Although reports of highway attacks are not commonly recorded in that axis, two possibilities can be concluded from the attack. The first being it was a targeted attempt on the governor which was also insinuated by Governor Wike of Rivers State while the second is that it was a random attack showing a new threat trend for the axis. The state remains the most affected of Fulani herdsmen attacks who have reportedly taken over communities identified as Christian settlements and resettling within.

Terrorist activities intensified during the month with 35 incidents recorded in Borno and Yobe states. Security forces were a major target in the month as attacks intensified against military camps. Boko Haram after attacking Maiduguri in the last reporting month, sought after its first target in the month which is the thriving town of Dikwa housing a UN hub. The insurgents before attacking reportedly used children as informants who pointed them to the hub before it was incinerated trapping 27 humanitarian workers underground. They workers were eventually rescued. Several villagers fled the area and other reports indicated that even soldiers fled as the onslaught was too intense for their fire power. The next day, a military base in Marte was attacked and six soldiers were killed by the terrorists while several others are declared missing. On 6 March, Askira Uba LGA was attacked, and three persons were killed including one soldier while a petrol laden tanker was stolen. There is a high possibility that was the target of the attack which would allow the terrorists fuel their vehicles and generators.

The next major attack location was Damasak in Mobbar LGA. Damasak is close to the Nigerian border and shares border with Yobe State. it was liberated from the stronghold of Boko Haram in 2017 and over 3,000 persons have returned after the military successfully evacuated the terrorists. During the month however, terrorists made four attempts to take over the town by first attacking the super military camp within. They used the typical strategy of massive number of fighters plus weaponry and attacked on all sides with VBIED, gun trucks, and grenades. Several soldiers were killed, and fatalities remain undisclosed. Eyewitness claimed soldiers did not engage the terrorists which made it easier to overtake the town. Several persons have left the town and moved to Maiduguri as soldiers continued to engage the terrorists during the week. No specific information on the current situation in the area as UN workers have also moved out of the area to safety. The continuous attempted conquest of Damasak is a cause of concern as this shows a major deterioration in the general security situation in the state even at locations having super camps, stretching the already overwhelmed military further than its capacity. Unfortunately, a soldier who was abducted during the attack was reported killed by the terrorists on 20 March.



Notably, there has been a systemic attack on facilities by the terrorists and they seem to have regained fire power against the security forces by focusing on one location at a time attacking not just once but several times.

After two months of power failure in Maiduguri followed by several attempts at repairing the electric towers which was marred by several attacks from terrorists, electricity was restored to the jubilation of residents on 24 March. The excitement was however short-lived as terrorists blew up another electric tower using IEDs on 27 March.

As a preventive measure against the kidnapping of school children in the NE, the Federal Ministry of Education announced that it has begun the relocation of pupils from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states to other states which is part of the Safe Schools Initiative by government.

Kaduna and Zamfara states were the states with most incidents in the North West region during the month.

Another group of students were kidnapped from their hostels in Igabi LGA, Kaduna State. A video emerged showing how the armed groups dressed in military fatigues tortured them while they pleaded for their lives. The group threatened to continue the torture till ransom was paid for their release. The reaction from the public was immediately combative against the government and they held protests to demand their release on 22 March. Interestingly, the incident happened after soldiers recorded a successful raid on an armed group killing a wanted bandit commander, Rufai Maikaji, alongside his fighters around the fringes of Malul Forest in Igabi LGA of Kaduna State. The deceased was confirmed to be responsible for the banditry, killing, kidnapping in Giwa, Igabi & parts of Chikun LGA along the Kaduna-Birnin Gwari Highway. This makes it a possibility that the subsequent attacks in the state were reprisals over the killing of a major actor in the area. All schools in Kajuru LGA have been closed by the governor, Nasiru El Rufai till further notice as a precaution against kidnappings. Also, the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) staff quarters was attacked by armed men around midnight on 6 March and kidnapped twelve persons including an infant. The assailants who gained entry to the quarters via the perimeter fence between the airport runway and the quarters targeted the houses belonging to a staff of Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) and a staff of the Nigeria Meteorological Agency (NIMET). Although this might be a random proximity crime by the assailants, it can however not be ruled out that they were specific targets. Soldiers however rescued nine out of the kidnapped persons a week later.

Zamfara State was also rife with kidnapping incidents as over 70 women and children were kidnapped by bandits who infiltrated a village in Maru LGA.

The South East region continued to record violence against police officers. Abia and, Anambra states recorded the most incidents. Armed men in numbers of 30 and above, attack police checkpoints, kill officers and steal their weapons. The perpetrators remain unknown.



In a similar incident however, 50 gunmen identified as fighters of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) attacked soldiers at Ariaria Junction checkpoint, along the Enugu-Port Harcourt Highway. The soldiers who had received timely intelligence, repelled the attack killing 16 of the assailants. The number of armed crimes in the SE has grown exponentially in the reporting month with the major actors being the fighters of the ESN who are generally anti-government have been accused of being the cause of the recent insecurity in the region. Apart from violent attacks against policemen, the state has also recorded an upsurge in armed herdsmen attacks which are majorly underreported. Information was however gathered that residents of Anyaku community held a protest over kidnappings and killings of locals by armed herdsmen along the Adani-Kogi highway in the state. To corroborate this, at least 18 persons were killed in an attack by armed herdsmen on many communities in Enugu State on 29 March.

In other news, Enugu State House of Assembly stopped the plans to vote the life pension bill for former governors, their deputies, and spouses following public criticism over the inconsiderate packages. The bill sought to appropriate at least 900 per cent of a governor's annual salary as his monetary entitlements every year, after leaving office. The wife of the governor would also have N12 million as annual medical allowances provided, she was married to the governor while in office.

The South West region recorded incidents of kidnappings, killings, and religious tension during the month. The state in focus was Kwara State which has been one of the calmest states in the country. This seemed to change in the reporting month commencing with a clash between commercial bus drivers and officials. It eventually escalated to religious tension over the use of hijabs in secondary schools termed as "Christian schools". This issue which had been developing since February over the wearing of hijabs by Muslim students, as 10 grant-aided secondary schools were closed by the State Government for disallowing the use of hijabs were reopened. The concerned schools refused to allow hijab wearing students into their premises and the state government had to deploy task force to enforce the order. After much chaos, calm has been restored but this remains an underlying issue in the state.

Also, kidnappings were common in the region as Kwara, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti and Oyo all recorded cases.

A sign of the ethnic tension recorded in the last reporting month between the Fulani and Yoruba in the region was shown when on 19 March, the Arewa Youth Assembly through its spokesman, Mohammed Salihu Danlami gave a 72-hour ultimatum to Sunday Igboho to withdraw all Yoruba tribesmen in the North, or they will be forcefully evicted. There has been a plan in place to create a Yoruba nation which was declared by Sunday. This is amidst the attacks perpetuated by Fulani herdsmen in the SW states.



Like the SE region, the South South region also recorded an increase in police killings in the earlier part of the month with cases recorded in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta states. The assailants also targeted the rifles of the officers after killing police officers who were attacked mostly at remote checkpoints.

Another Catholic priest was kidnapped on his way to his base in Ukwani from Warri. This is the sixth priest kidnapped since November 2020. The route between Warri and other local governments in Delta State is a hideout for armed herdsmen who attack unsuspecting motorists at all times of the day. No further reports on his whereabouts as at time of writing this report.

Two kidnappings were recorded in Cross River State involving the state chairman of the NLC who was kidnapped from his residence on the outskirts of Calabar and a chieftain of the APC who was kidnapped from his farm in Ifiang village, Bakassi LGA. This is the second time both victims have been kidnapped. The first was previously kidnapped in 2019 while the second was kidnapped in 2015.

In Bayelsa State, a pipeline owned by Agip Oil was vandalised by armed men which caused a fire in Ebematoru community. There is tension over the recommencement of hostilities by militants in the SS due to recent threats that has been linked to the way in which the government is responding to insecurity in the country.

Number of fatalities on road traffic accidents continued to decline in the month with 45 individuals were killed in 21 incidents mostly recorded in the Southwest region.

Civil unrest increased in the month as 45 incidents were recorded across the country. Protests over insecurity surged in the month as more locals demanded a solution to the growing security concerns in their community. Armed herdsmen in their multitudes seem to deter locals from engaging in day-to-day activities by wielding weapons and inciting violence. Unpaid salaries were also the reason for most protests in the reporting month while clashes between police officers and IMN protesters were common in Abuja FCT.

More fires were recorded at market spaces despite the decline in fire incidents with 19 reported during the month. The number of fire incidents affecting residential areas surged in the Southwest region while.

In other news, President Muhammadu Buhari travelled on medical leave on 29 March to the United Kingdom. His travel for health check-up was greatly criticised by the citizen. His travel coincides with the indefinite strike planned by governors which is supposed to commence 1 April over non-payment of salaries.

Threat Chart for March

- ◆ **Low (1)** - Incident did not occur in the reporting period. Nevertheless, will to conduct attacks and opportunity to target project assets and/or personnel remains a threat.
- ◆ **Medium (2)** – Incident occurred but minimal. Nevertheless, will to conduct attacks and opportunity to target project assets and/or personnel remains a threat.
- ◆ **High (3)** – Incident occurred at increased proportion and active with demonstrated will to conduct attacks that would target project assets and/or personnel.

| Threats for the Month | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|---------|
| Region | Kidnapping | Terrorism | Theft of Assets | Civil Unrest | Killing |
| North Central | Medium | Low | Medium | High | Medium |
| North East | Medium | High | High | Low | Medium |
| North West | High | Low | Medium | Medium | High |
| South East | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| South West | Medium | Low | High | Medium | Medium |
| South South | Medium | Low | High | Medium | Medium |



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