Executive Summary

Coming shortly after the November AQIM-led attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, a similarly executed and deadly assault by AQIM on two hotels in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso along with the kidnapping of an Australian couple along the latter’s border with Mali, raised concerns among West African countries of a possible militant attack against high-profile interests on their soil. In this context, security forces in Senegal carried out large-scale arrest raids, bringing in over 900 people for questioning under the pretext of preventing the “terrorist threat”, although most of these individuals were arrested on petty charges. Security forces also increased their presence throughout the country, while the government decreed that hotels must also improve their security measures. While not directly related to these heightened concerns, in another worrying development, an AQIM militant escaped from death row in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and managed to flee through Senegal, before being arrested in Guinea after crossing over from the Guinea-Bissau border. Meanwhile, although no attacks were recorded against civilians or in major cities in Mali, militants claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the country against French and MINUSMA forces, while AQIM published footage of a Swiss hostage in their custody.

AQIM was not the only militant group carrying out operations in the continent; Boko Haram maintained its increased pace of attacks in the Extreme North Region of Cameroon, alongside several attacks in Nigeria with a particularly spectacular one at the end of the month near Maiduguri. At the same time, Nigeria faced a spate of attacks in the Niger Delta against oil installations, including foreign-owned ones. Meanwhile, several notable attacks occurred in Somalia, including against a popular hotel and restaurant in Mogadishu, but also against a KDF base in El-Adde, and Turkish interests in the country. Across the border in Kenya, security operations searching for militants in the country led to clashes, arrests, and the confiscation of weaponry. In a different form of organized violence Burundi continued to face instability, mainly in the capital, emanating from the conflict between armed opposition groups, including FOREBU, and the government. Meanwhile, the AU decided against deploying peacekeepers to the country without consent from the government.

Regarding political instability, the Nigerien defense minister was quoted as saying that four of those arrested in a December 17 alleged coup attempt admitted to their intentions to carry out a coup, while tensions continued to mount ahead of the February 21 elections due in part to Opposition leader Hama Amadou’s continued detention. Meanwhile, in a relatively positive development, the wave of demonstrations in Oromia, Ethiopia decreased amid a harsh security crackdown, as well as the cancellation of the Master Plan. In Tanzania, rerun elections were announced for March 20 in Zanzibar, and are likely to increase political tensions, especially considering calls to boycott the polls. At the same time, security forces in Uganda continued to crack down on opposition members and supporters amid the ongoing campaign season for the February 18 elections. Finally, in South Africa, the university demonstrations that have been a theme in the country over the past few months, continued in January, with protesters calling for the annulment of registration fees, while forcing universities to suspend activities on a number of occasions.
The following list contains countries in the region with notable developments from the past month. Please choose your country of interest by clicking on its name below.

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EXTREME RISK

CAR

- Results of first round of presidential elections released, whilst second round postponed, legislative elections invalidated.
- We continue to advise against all travel to CAR at this time given extreme security risks and volatility resulting from militia activity and sectarian violence. If travel is unavoidable, it is advised to remain within the confines of the Bangui’s Centre Ville.

Results of first round of presidential elections announced, while second round postponed, legislative elections annulled, yet despite minor tensions peaceful atmosphere prevails

- On January 7, the provisional results of the December 30 presidential elections were released by the National Electoral Authority (ANE), according to which former Prime Minister (PM) Anicet Dologuele led the field with approximately 23 percent of the votes, followed by ex-PM Faustin Touadera with 19 percent. Whilst at least 15 presidential candidates voiced allegations of electoral misconduct on January 5, many later recognized the counting and expressed their support for one of the two aforementioned candidates. However, former PM Martin Ziguele, who came fourth, called for a recount on January 11. The results were confirmed by the Constitutional Court on January 25, whilst simultaneously annulling the legislative elections due to alleged vote irregularities. Lastly, the ANE announced on January 27 that the second round of elections, which was slated for January 31, was postponed due to organizational problems. Both the presidential runoff and the new legislative elections are now scheduled to take place on February 14.

- Despite early misgivings by a number of candidates, and Ziguele’s dissatisfaction, the validation of the voting and the release of results were notable for their peaceful transpiring, continuing a trend established by the elections themselves. That said, the potential for an escalation in tensions persists. In particular, the postponement of the second round of the presidential election may lead to a resurgence of skepticism regarding the legitimacy of the first round, especially in light of the annulment of the legislative election, which took place concurrently. Furthermore, should the loser of the second round allege electoral misconduct, other candidates may utilize the complaint as a platform upon which to renew their objections. Finally, whilst the backing of Dologuele by divisive former leader Francois Bozize has not translated into additional tensions thus far, it nevertheless continues to form a possible catalyst for additional friction in the near future.
EXTREME RISK

Somalia

- Notable attacks recorded in El-Adde and Mogadishu, several Turkish interests targeted.
- **Electoral model agreed upon** by all federal states but Puntland.
- We advise against all travel to Somalia at this time with the exception of the Puntland and Somaliland regions. Travel within these regions should be restricted to cities and be for essential purposes only, while avoiding travel to outlying regions.

Al-Shabaab strikes KDF in El-Adde, siege locales, target Turkish interests in Mogadishu

On January 15, **Al-Shabaab launched a large-scale offensive** against a Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) base in El-Adde, Gedo Region. The group seized military vehicles and large amounts of weapons, claiming to have killed over 100 Kenyans. In response, **KDF conducted repeated airstrikes** against the militants, and **withdrew from several localities**, which were quickly reconquered by al-Shabaab. The militants also conducted ambushes against retreating Kenyan forces. Separately, on January 21, **targets in Mogadishu’s Lido Beach** were sieged, with clashes leading to **approximately 20-25 deaths**. Besides other frequent smaller-scale attacks, the particular targeting of Turkish nationals and interests was recorded on **January 1, January 4** and **January 6**. In parallel, **Turkey announced the building of a base** to train the Somali army. The El-Adde and Lido Beach attacks are strong evidence that, despite recent splits and the ongoing counterinsurgency efforts by Somali and African troops, al-Shabaab can execute well-planned attacks against strategic, fortified locales. Furthermore, the swift reconquering of vacated towns, as well as the mounting of ambushes against retreating KDF troops underscores the heightened militant presence and activity in the Gedo and Lower Juba regions. The group enters February emboldened following these successes, and may thus increase audacious operations in the capital and other prominent targets nationwide.

Agreement reached regarding electoral model, establishing two houses of parliament

Seats for the upper house are to be divided between the six federal states and those for the lower house to be allocated according to the 4.5 clan system. This model had been opposed by Jubaland and Puntland, and both states accused the international community of coercing them into acceptance. While Jubaland yielded, Puntland walked out of the negotiations and threatened that, should interference in Somali affairs continue, Puntland would “chart its own future.” In separate developments, the Hiran and Middle Shabelle conference on state formation **commenced in Jowhar on January 12**, while **Khatumo separatist forces clashed with Somaliland troops**. The electoral deal is notable in that it balances state and clan influences in the selection of the new government, thus constituting a step toward more pluralistic elections than reliance solely on the 4.5 clan system. Government officials and the international community are attempting to convince Puntland to accept the deal, yet the semi-autonomous region may opt instead to reduce cooperation with Mogadishu and even take actions to reassert and further its autonomy over the coming months.

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EXTREME RISK
South Sudan

- Formation of unity government deadlocked amid strengthened rejection of 28 states.
- Potential reopening of borders with Sudan evidences improvement in ties.
- Those traveling to South Sudan should restrict essential travel to Juba, while maintaining heightened vigilance and adhering to stringent security protocols, given high levels of crime and insecurity.

SPLA-IO reentrenches opposition to 28 states, deadlocking formation of unity government

On January 7, the government, the rebels and former detainees agreed on the distribution of 30 ministerial bodies as part of the formation of the transitional government. This positive step, however, was not followed by significant progress, with the spokesperson for the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement - In Opposition (SPLA-IO) announcing that Machar would not travel to Juba, and thus the transitional government would not be formed, before “outstanding issues have been resolved.” In particular, this came amid a reentrenchment of the rebels’ opposition to the redivision of the country’s former ten states into 28. In this context, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission’s (JMEC) previously-set deadline of January 22 for the formation of the transitional government was not respected. Lastly, on January 31 the Council of Ministers of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the regional body that brokered the August peace agreements, called the 28 states “inconsistent” with the deal, and called for an interruption to their implementation. Overall, the SPLM-IO seems to have reversed its previous position that the formation of the 28 states would not undermine the peace agreement, and the rebels are now presenting a stronger stance against the move, which will be significantly bolstered following IGAD’s statement, yet nevertheless is unlikely to lead to a reversal of the move. As a consequence, we continue to assess that disputes over the redivision may lead to a failure of the peace deal, and that a potential formation of the transitional government is not forthcoming given the many hurdles that remain. Amid this background, violence continued to be recorded among other sectors of South Sudan. Over 37 people were killed in clashes between rival clans on December 26-27 in Tonj North County of Warrap State. Separately, government forces and various armed groups clashes in Jonglei, Central and Western Equatoria states. Combined with additional, smaller incidents, these underscore the persistent insecurity throughout the country.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir calls for reopening of borders for first time since partition

A week before Khartoum, after initially rejecting the possibility, announced it was willing to discuss a reduction to the approximate 25 USD per oil barrel transportation fees that the country receives from South Sudan, after the latter threatened to stop exports amid low oil prices globally. Both developments are highly notable and underscore a strengthening of ties between the sides, yet tensions remain over outstanding issues such as control over the disputed Abyei Area, and thus the actual extent of improved relations remains to be seen.
Burundi

- African Union (AU) Summit decides against deploying peacekeepers without Burundi’s consent as Nkurunziza government rejects internationally-mediated dialogue efforts.
- Violence persists, mainly in capital, amid signs of potentially growing ethnic dimension.
- Travel to Burundi should be restricted to essential purposes only given the volatile security situation while avoiding all travel to outlying areas and those in the capital prone to opposition unrest, including the Cibitoke, Jabe, Kanyosha, Musaga, Mutakura, Ngagara and Nyakabiga neighborhoods.

Government continues to reject dialogue as AU pulls back on plan to deploy peacekeepers

On January 5, the Burundian government reportedly announced that it would not participate in mediated talks with the opposition which had been slated for January 6 and 16, claiming that there was no consensus regarding dates. However, on January 18, the National Commission for the Inter-Burundian Dialogue (CNDI), reportedly launched political talks, whilst on January 21, a UN Security Council (UNSC) delegation arrived in Burundi to discuss the ongoing violence in the country. Despite these overtures by the government, the CNDI talks were boycotted by the opposition, likely as a result of the organization’s ties to the government, and little was achieved during the UNSC visit. Lastly, at the close of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa on January 31, an AU official announced that the proposed deployment of 5,000 troops would be deferred until permission was granted by the Burundian government. Given the hardline stance demonstrated with regard to the AU-mediated dialogue efforts and deployment of peacekeepers, we assess that the Burundian government remains opposed to compromises that could foster a political solution to the ongoing unrest. Moreover, the AU decision to essentially cede to government demands that foreign troops not be deployed on its territory could trigger renewed violence by an opposition camp that is frustrated by the passivity of the AU, stalled dialogue efforts, and the overall lack of political avenues towards a negotiated end to the conflict.

UN HCHR warns of increasing ethnic character of violence, increasing overall volatility

The aforementioned stonewalling of dialogue by the government takes place against a backdrop of an uptick in attacks by opposition activists and the continuation of security operations, primarily in Bujumbura’s opposition strongholds. The month was also marked by several incidents which could underscore a growing ethnic component to the conflict. In particular, the killing of two defectors from the police and army on January 13 may be indicative of violence due to ethnic and political divides within the security forces, particularly given that one of the victims was alleged to be a member of the Republican Forces of Burundi (FOREBU) rebel group. This growing ethnic character of the violence, as well as the overall volatility of Burundi, was highlighted in a statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) on January 15. Whilst we assess that the violence remains primarily political, ethnic violence and military divides pose a significant destabilizing factor in the conflict.
Democratc Front coalition formed by seven political parties, yet political environment remains largely unchanged

- The month of January saw the birth of another opposition coalition, when, on January 4, seven political parties formed the “Democratic Front” (FD). The group reportedly pledged to work with the Opposition Dynamic (DO) and the Citizen’s Front 2016 coalitions to uphold constitutional order, oppose a third term by incumbent President Joseph Kabila, and demand adherence to the current electoral calendar. Additionally, the G7, a group of seven political parties which was removed the coalition government in September 2015 after calling on Kabila to step down after his second term, joined the Citizens Front 2016 on January 11.

- The continued banding together by opposition parties may allow them to pose a more coherent and coordinated challenge to President Kabila, and could potentially be bolstered by the inclusion of popular figures such as former Katanga Governor Moise Katumbi. However, the ongoing lack of assertive activity by the various platforms means that they have yet to directly impact the Congolese political sphere. In a similar vein to the formation of Citizens Front 2016 in December, in the absence of trigger events such as severe crackdowns by security forces or alterations to the electoral calendar, we assess the formation of the FD coalition, in and of itself, will not significantly alter the political status quo. Furthermore, the Congolese opposition camp has typically suffered from infighting and factionalism, which may emerge over the coming months over questions of leadership and strategy. This may be further exacerbated by the fact that a number of parties belong to more than a single coalition.

Clashes between rebel groups, FARDC reflects persistent insecurity in DRC’s eastern regions

A number of rebel attacks and Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) operations took place over the month, primarily in eastern DRC’s North and South Kivu Provinces. For example, clashes between the FARDC and Mai-Mai Nyatura militiamen took place on January 2 and 5 in Kalehe Territory of South Kivu, an attack by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on the FARDC was recorded in Oipra, North Kivu on January 11, and four members of the Ituri Patriotic Resistance Front (FRPI) were killed in an attack by the FARDC on January 18 in the Irumu Territory of Ituri Province. These attacks underscore the resilient nature of militia groups operating DRC’s outlying eastern regions, despite ongoing counterinsurgency operations. We continue to assess that rebel groups will remain a notable threat to these areas for the foreseeable future.
**HIGH RISK**

**Mali**

- Ansar Dine, MLF claim responsibility for multiple attacks, as AQIM publishes footage of Swiss national abducted in northern Mali, while foreign minister asks MINUSMA to provide exit strategy, change modus operandi to deal with ‘terrorist’ activities.
- Governors named for two newly formed northern regions of Taoudenit, Menaka.
- **Travel to Bamako may continue at this time while adhering to stringent security precautions regarding criminal activity and potential militancy.**

**Threat of militancy persists throughout Mali**

- Over the past month, several attacks by Islamist militants were recorded throughout Mali. During overnight hours of January 7-8, a **Swiss woman was abducted from her residence in Timbuktu.** On January 26, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb’s (AQIM) Sahara Emirate, a brigade operating in the Sahel, published a footage claiming the kidnapping. In addition, **Ansar Dine published a claim of responsibility** for targeting a French military patrol vehicle on January 15, and the January 19 attack against a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) military convoy, both near Kidal, killing at least ten people. Moreover, the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) also claimed the attacks on a security checkpoint in the Mopti Region, which left three policemen killed on January 19-20, and on Koni Gendarme, without specifying the number of casualties.

- Multiple Islamist groups operating in Mali continue to pose a significant security threat to both international troops and foreign nationals operating in the country, while MINUSMA forces increasingly face criticism for their perceived inability to restore stability. In this context, the FM’s call for MINUSMA for an exit strategy is likely aimed at demonstrating the government’s readiness to assume control over security matters. At the same time, the request for a change in modus operandi indicates that the Malian government desires this exit strategy to be an extended process, during which MINUSMA will more aggressively address the militant threat. Overall, given the inability for the government to adequately secure the restive north and central regions of the country, we assess that the elevated threat of militancy will persist throughout the country over the coming months.

**Governors named for two newly formed northern regions of Taoudenit, Menaka**

A Council of Ministers communique from January 19 indicate that governors were named for the new administrative regions of Taoudenit, situated in the north-west, and Menaka, situated in the north, both created in 2012. Given the longstanding history of marginalization, nominating local leaders, as well as the implementation of the creation of new administrative regions, seems to hint at improvements in governance in northern regions and the expectation for this to continue over the coming year. Furthermore, an improvement in the administration over northern populations would likely bring about a general increase in stability in its volatile regions.

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Nigeria

- Series of oil facility bombings follow an arrest warrant against chief ex-militant leader.
- Direct confrontations with troops decrease, yet Boko Haram militancy remains a threat.
- Travel to Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt may continue while maintaining heightened vigilance and following stringent security protocols regarding criminal and security threats.

Bombings of oil installations reinforce volatility of Niger Delta Region, Buhari’s reforms
Commencing during the overnight hours of January 14-15, a series of explosions targeted oil installations, including state and foreign owned, in the Warri South Local Government Area (LGA) of Delta State. Subsequently, during the night hours of January 16, a security operations was initiated in the area, while Nigerian military officials pledged to hold local and traditional leaders responsible for any further violence. The bombings on January 14 began several hours after the Federal High Court in Lagos issued a warrant for the arrest of Government Ekpemupolo (also known as Tompolo), a former prominent Niger Delta militant commander, due to charges of theft and money. Tompolo distanced himself from the bombings, which took place in an area considered as his stronghold, yet failed to report to the court. On January 28, he was cited as stating that he will appear before the court “at the appropriate time”. In order to disincentivize militant activity in the financially indispensable Niger Delta, since 2009 the Nigerian federal government offered a widespread amnesty program, including direct payments to ex-militant fighters and large scale security contracts to ex-militant leaders, chief among them Tompolo. Since assuming office in May 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari expressed intentions to downscale these arrangements. While the amnesty program, initially slated to conclude in December, has been extended at this time, Buhari’s extensive anti-corruption campaign scrutinized many of the defense contracts awarded to ex-militants, as exemplified by the legal proceedings against Tompolo. These dynamics should not be understood to override the structural factors facilitating insecurity in the region, including perceptions of social marginalization, tensions between local communities and external firms, proliferations of arms and the arduous terrain. Instead, the recent attacks serve to highlight the volatility of the currently largely dormant threat of organized militancy in the Niger Delta Region, and the capacity of political reforms and legal proceedings to act as triggers.

Boko Haram suicide bombings continue, as military labors to rebuild after lengthy conflict
Boko Haram militancy persisted in the northeast of Nigeria, exemplifying the current dynamics of the conflict. Suicide attacks were retained as the predominant modus operandi, hitting targets in Borno, Yobe and northern Adamawa states, with direct confrontations with security forces growing increasingly scarce. Nevertheless, militancy is unlikely to be fully uprooted from the area over the coming months, as government forces still struggle to introduce the necessary infrastructure to fill the several years-long security vacuum in the area, including regional military cooperation and resettling internally displaced persons.
Ceasefire violations continue as talks between Sudan People’s Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N), government fail. Despite this, two Darfuri rebel groups agree to continue informal talks with government.

Travel to Khartoum can continue at this time while practicing security precautions regarding the threat of criminality.

Despite one month ceasefire extension, violations continue as talks between government, Sudan People’s Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N) fail

On December 31 President Omar al-Bashir extended the unilateral ceasefire in Blue Nile State, South Kordofan and Darfur in an attempt to persuade rebel groups to participate in the national dialogue. Despite this, several bouts of violence have been reported, including alleged aerial assaults by the Sudanese air force on the Jardan and Alshima villages of Blue Nile State, and in Central Darfur on January 9 and January 15-16 respectively. Clashes between government soldiers and Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdul Wahid (SLM-AW) rebels in Central Darfur were also reported on January 15-16. Alongside the violence, informal talks between the Sudanese government and SPLM-N rebels took place in Germany on January 22-23. The talks, which were expected to focus on the ceasefire, humanitarian access, and how to bring the SPLM-N into the national dialogue concluded without a solution. Following the failure, the SPLM-N accused the government of having no intention of working to achieve peace or democratic reforms through the national dialogue, and claimed that its goal is to preserve itself. In contrast to the failure of informal talks with the SPLM-N, the January 23-25 informal talks between the government and two Darfuri rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement- Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), concluded in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, with an agreement between the parties to continue informal discussions.

The continuation of ceasefire violations not only underscores the volatile security situation in Blue Nile, West Kordofan, and Darfur, but is indicative of the longstanding distrust amongst several of the parties involved in talks, and is further underscored by the accusations made by the SPLM-N. Moreover, while the SLM-MM and JEM have agreed to continue informal talks with the government, we assess that several challenges to a comprehensive dialogue remain, particularly given that other Darfuri rebel groups have refused to participate in talks with the government. With this in mind, as the volatile security situation continues throughout the country’s southern regions, we assess that additional clashes and violations of the ceasefire will continue to be recorded in February, which will further hinder the progression of discussions between the government and multitude of rebel groups operating in Sudan.
Angola

- Minister of Foreign Affairs assures security threat did not materialize after US Embassy, British FCO issue warning.
- Authorities continue to change financial policies with recent extreme hike in fuel prices.
- Travel to Luanda can continue at this time while adhering to basic security precautions

**US Embassy, British FCO warn of potential security threat in Luanda based on authorities’ information**

On January 8, the US Embassy in Luanda issued a security message, advising its citizens to avoid three locales in the capital, namely Belas Shopping Mall in Talatona area, Ulengo Commercial Center in Viana area and the central Hotal Baia. The message, which is slated to remain in place until February 8, does not provide specific reasoning for the warning. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also changed its travel advice for Angola, citing the US Embassy notice, and advising travelers to “remain vigilant in these areas”. The Angolan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georges Chikoti, reportedly stated in a radio interview on January 18 that Angolan authorities transferred information to the US Embassy concerning these specific locales in early December 2015, and that the threat did not materialize and thus is no longer relevant. This security message remains notable since it is the first time such a warning has been issued for US citizens in Luanda identifying specific locales. Despite the lack of additional information regarding the reasons behind the warning, Chikoti’s claim that the threat has passed leads us to assess that Angolan authorities received concrete information concerning a possible attack in a specific time period.

**Government raises fuel prices by high percentage, indicative of worsening financial situation**

A South African bank operating in Angola announced on January 21 that the use of credit cards linked to Angolan accounts abroad will be limited to approximately 500 USD a month. The bank explained the measure by noting concerns with the availability of foreign currency in the country. Reports indicate that oil exports make up to 95 percent of foreign currency inflows to Angola, whereas food, manufactured good and construction materials are often imported. Together, these dynamics lead to devaluation of the kwanza. As Angola continues to battle a difficult financial situation, on January 1 the state-owned oil company announced a cut to fuel subsidies, leading to a sharp increase of 39 and 80 percent in petrol and diesel prices, respectively. Given the continued lows in the global price of oil and subsequent trade imbalances, we assess that additional measures may be announced in the coming months, and extraction of funds from the country may be hindered.
Dozens killed, including several foreign nationals, in Ouagadougou attack
On January 15-16, a joint Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Mourabitoun assault on two hotels in Ouagadougou resulted in the death of at least 27 people. Further reports indicate that, on January 15, two people were killed as 20 militants carried out an attack near the Malian border. Also on January 16, an Australian couple was kidnapped near Mali’s border. Sources citing the militant group Ansar Dine indicate that the kidnapping was conducted by the AQIM-affiliate “Emirate of the Sahara”. Despite the fact that such events, including a high-profile one, all took place in such a short time span, overall such incidents are rare, with the Ouagadougou attack being unprecedented. Nevertheless, they serve to underscore the existing militant threat in the country, which is mostly in areas near the Malian and Nigerien borders. That said, we do not anticipate a notable shift in the security situation in Ouagadougou. While additional attacks may be recorded, these will likely be in the outlying regions bordering Mali, still not being particularly frequent, while attacks in the capital remain less likely they still cannot be ruled out at this point in time.

New government sworn in, composed almost entirely of new-comers
On January 7, former economist for the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), Paul Kaba Thieba, was appointed as the country’s Prime Minister. On January 13, a new cabinet was announced, with only five of its 30 ministers being from ousted President Compaore’s government. The appointment of newcomers is likely an attempt by President Kabore to distance his administration from the old regime, to garner greater support and legitimacy.

Former RSP members attack ammunition depot
The former Presidential Security Regiment (RSP) members’ raid on an ammunition depot in Yimdi, on January 22, underscores the threat posed by the well-trained, and currently unemployed personnel. The next day, 15 ex-RSP members were arrested, and one killed in clashes with security forces 2 km from Yimdi. While the attack may have been an attempt to reinforce the group’s capabilities, it is also possible that the loss of employment has forced some former RSP members to resort to criminal activities. That said, at this time, there is no indication that such acts will emerge as a trend in the country.
Notable uptick of Boko Haram attacks, clashes result in persistent rampant insecurity

Throughout January, Cameroon’s Extreme North Region experienced multiple attacks staged by the Islamist militant sect Boko Haram. In particular, a high number of fatalities were recorded in suicide attacks in Kolofata and Bodo, on January 13 and 25 respectively. Additional raids, abductions and clashes with armed forces reportedly resulted in dozens of militants killed in multiple locals throughout the region, situated in close proximity to the Nigerian border. Against this backdrop, sources on January 27 indicated that the regional governor has banned the activity of markets in all towns situated close to the Nigerian border until further notice.

The attacks and clashes continue to highlight Boko Haram’s persistent operational capabilities and resilience despite ongoing large scale counterinsurgency operations throughout the restive region. Measured in number of attacks, over the past month the Extreme North represented one of the most active regions for Boko Haram, on par with Nigeria’s northeast and surpassing the Diffa Region of Niger and Lac Region of Chad. Places of public gatherings, including mosques and markets, act as soft targets and continue to represent focal points for attacks. In addition, over recent months, the use of multiple suicide bombers in coordinated attacks became increasingly common, in an effort to maximize the death toll and intimidation effect of such attacks. Notwithstanding the aforementioned security measures, we assess that additional attacks are highly likely to be recorded in the region during the month of February.

Clashes between armed youth, security forces lead to local unrest, arrests in Yaounde

On January 7, a large group of residents of the Briqueterie district launched a punitive expedition into Mokolo market, following the death of their peer as a result of alleged police brutality. During the march, looting and clashes with police forces were recorded, resulting in one person killed and dozens injured. In addition, approximately 500 youth were allegedly detained by police in subsequent security raids. Although clashes involving such a large number of armed local youth are not common in Yaounde, the rapid escalation of events demonstrates the velocity in which confrontations between local residents and police can deteriorate into unruly clashes.
MEDIUM RISK

Ethiopia

- Wave of demonstrations in Oromia decrease amid harsh security crackdown, announced cancellation of Master Plan, while localized unrest reported in other locales.
- Travel to Addis Ababa may continue at this time while adhering to standard security precautions and avoiding the vicinity of all large gatherings and demonstrations given elevated likelihood for unrest at such events.

Harsh response, cancellation of Master Plan significantly reduce scope of Oromia protests

- On January 13, the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO), a member of the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition, announced that the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan would be stopped, and that non-consensual issues would not be implemented. However, the implications of the statement have been questioned by parts of the opposition, which claim that this is a deceptive tactic to calm the protests. Demonstrations continued to be recorded before and after this announcement, albeit on a smaller scale than during the peak of unrest in December; however, Ethiopian security forces continued the harsh crackdown of protests, disruptions to communication systems and the arrests of a large number of people, including leaders of the opposition and journalists. The latter action was criticized by the US Department of State (DoS), which voiced concern over “the continued stifling of independent voices in Ethiopia”, yet refrained from denouncing the excessive use of force against civilians. Activists claimed that over 140 people were killed in Oromia, while unconfirmed estimates surpass 160 dead, with hundreds of individuals allegedly missing and thousands arrested. The continuation of the protests in Oromia even after the alleged cancellation of the Master Plan strengthens our assessment that the demonstrations reflect longstanding grievances of perceived marginalization by ethnic Oromos. The scale achieved by the protests forced authorities to review their plans, yet we assess that the government will eventually move ahead with plans to expand Addis Ababa, likely in smaller steps and under another name so as to dissociate this from the recent unrest.

- Meanwhile, sources highly critical of the government alleged that two separate attacks by government operatives left over 19 ethnic Amharas and Qemants dead in Gondar, Amhara Region, in an attempt to stir inter-communal conflicts. The same sources claimed on January 25 that security forces conduct mass arrests in Konso Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNPNNPR) after locals demanded the establishment of a zonal administration in their town. This came two days after the US Embassy warned of violence between locals and police forces in the South Omo Zone of the SNNPR. It remains unclear whether the latter two incidents are connected. Nevertheless, it remains possible that the protests in Oromia are motivating residents of other regions to voice their grievances. As criticism is traditionally suppressed in Ethiopia, a harsh response of unrest in any new locale is increasingly likely in order to prevent a spread of demonstrations and thus an overextension of security forces, which could affect their capabilities.
Guinea

- Opposition records notable changes as third largest party joins ruling coalition, while exiled second-in-command of second largest party returns to country.

- Travel to Conakry may continue at this time while adhering to stringent security precautions regarding heightened criminal activity and political unrest.

Developments within opposition as third largest party join ruling coalition, exiled second in command of second largest party returns to country

- On January 2, Sidya Toure, the leader of the Union of Republican Forces (UFR), Guinea’s third largest party, was appointed as the High Representative of the Head of State. Since December 5, Toure has allegedly indicated his intention to join President Alpha Conde’s coalition. The leader of the main opposition Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), Cellou Dalein Diallo, contested the appointment of Toure, who was his former ally before their relationship was marred with numerous disputes in recent months. Separately, on January 24 the vice-president of the UFDG, Bah Oury, returned to Conakry from exile in France and was welcomed by UFDG members, including Diallo. This followed the presidential pardon of 171 political prisoners in December, which included Oury. On the day of his return, Oury moderately criticized Diallo’s leadership on live radio, and scuffles broke out between his security personnel and Diallo’s bodyguards. President Conde was quoted on January 28 as saying that his intention was to reconcile Guineans and the decision was not motivated by political calculations. A day before, a large delegation of the UFR had visited Oury at his Conakry residence. Lastly, disgruntled youth members of ruling Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) blocked the entrance to the party’s weekly meeting at their national headquarters in Conakry on January 9. The protesters claimed that only four of the 33 nominees to the new government were “original” RPG members, and the majority of others were political opportunists.

- The co-option of the UFR showcases the agile political maneuvering on behalf of the president in order to fragmentize the opposition and ultimately strengthen his rule. Meanwhile, while Conde explained the presidential pardon as a move to promote reconciliation, we assess that the move concerning Oury is a bid to destabilize the largest, and frequently problematic, UFDG party. The criticism, the scuffles between the bodyguards of Diallo and Oury as well as the meeting with the co-opted UFR further highlight this trend. As demonstrated by the events at the RPG meeting, these political schemes come at a certain price as they increase dissatisfaction amid certain elements within the ruling party. That said, we continue to assess that Conde’s prominence both within the RPG and in Guinean politics in general is likely to remain unharmed. In sum, Conde has relatively succeeded in weakening the opposition on different fronts, strengthening his rule and endangering the position of Diallo, his harshest opponent.
President Ouattara re-appoints Duncan as his Prime Minister, reshuffles other positions

On January 6, PM Duncan handed in the resignation of his government to Ouattara, who thanked him and stated that he would form a new government in the coming days while adding that his top priorities were the acceleration of employment programs and the improvement of governance. The resignation is in line with the traditional formation of a new government following presidential elections. Duncan was reappointed as Prime Minister on January 12. Some changes were made to the cabinet’s roster, such as new appointment for the Justice and Foreign Affairs portfolio, as well as new Deputy Ministers for the Defense and Finance posts. That said, the Defense and Finance portfolios will continue to be held by Ouattara and Duncan respectively. Overall, there are five former ministers that will not partake in the new government and nine new figures among the 36 appointees. The new Foreign Minister is a member of the Rally for the Republicans and the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PDCI), which are part of the ruling Houphouetiste Rally for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) coalition, highlighting the political maneuvering of Ouattara in securing his rule. The smooth resignation and formation of the new government continues to highlight the political stability in the country surrounding the October 2015 elections despite concerns from Ivory Coast’s previous bouts of political violence as well as the withdrawal and boycotting of the elections by some of the opposition. Furthermore, the retention of the most important portfolios by Ouattara and Duncan is likely to assist the maintaining of institutional stability during the term of the new government. This is likely due in large part to Ouattara’s satisfaction with the performance of his previous government and his aim at continuing the positive trend of economic growth and political stability in the country.

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Security forces conduct several operations in search of militants suspected of planning attacks, yet overall threat persists.

Travel to Nairobi and Mombasa may continue at this time while adhering to stringent security protocols due to high levels of criminality.

Security operations yield arrests, seizure of weaponry, as head of local NGO detained for allegedly supporting militant operations

- Over the past month security force carried out several operations targeting militants throughout the country, including those in Malindi on January 20, Mombasa on January 4, and near Baure on January 2, some of which led to clashes with the suspected militants. Others ended with the confiscation of weaponry such as AK47 rifles and grenades. Several arrests were also reported, including that of eight suspected al-Shabaab militants on January 5 in Mandera County and the January 19 arrest of the director of a local non-governmental organization (NGO), suspected of funding a militant cell in Mandera. Similarly to December, security alerts warning of the potential for militant activity were issued by authorities. The country’s troops operating in neighboring Somalia also suffered a harsh defeat on January 15, when al-Shabaab militants launched an offensive on the military base, housing Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) located in El-Adde in Somalia’s Geddo Region, in which at least 50 soldiers were killed.

- The aforementioned security alerts and operations underscore constant apprehension amongst Kenyan authorities over the militant threat in the country, as well as a proactive approach by security forces in responding to it. Concerns were likely elevated following the attack on the KDF base in El-Adde, which has reigned calls by the Kenyan opposition for the withdrawal of troops from Somalia. President Kenyatta, however, has once again ruled out this possibility. Regarding the threat in Kenya itself, while the abovementioned counter-militancy campaigns appear to have been successful in rooting out some militant cells, it remains to be seen what their overall implications will be in the near term, particularly given that those arrested likely constituted a small share of al-Shabaab sympathizers in the country, and that the group maintains the capabilities to conduct cross-border operations. With this in mind, while general alertness and security operations are likely to continue in February, we assess the militant threat remains heightened, and additional incursions and attacks, particularly targeting security forces in the northeastern and coastal regions, are likely to be recorded.

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**Liberia**

- World Health Organization (WHO) declares Liberia Ebola-free on January 14.
- **Travel to Monrovia may continue at this time while adhering to stringent security precautions regarding criminal activity, as well as heightened health precautions and proper hygiene due to the remaining threat of Ebola infection**

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Liberia declared Ebola-free following 42-day period without new cases

- The WHO made the announcement on January 14, while cautioning as to the risk of the re-emergence of the disease due to the persistence of the virus in a proportion of the survivors. Liberia first received this status in May 2015, before new cases emerged in June. The WHO again declared Liberia an Ebola-free country on September 3, following the required 42 days with no cases, which is twice the maximum incubatory period for the Ebola virus. That said, on November 20, three new cases of the disease emerged, including one death, forcing officials to restart the 42-day countdown.

- While its Ebola-free status represents a notable achievement for Liberian authorities as well as local and international health professionals, the previously-witnessed re-emergence of the virus highlights the potential for additional cases to emerge within the 90-day period of heightened surveillance, which Liberia is currently in the beginning of. Thus, we assess that Ebola will remain a health issue in Liberia for the coming months. Nevertheless, these past relapses are also likely to prompt an increase in precautionary measures and vigilance taken by health authorities in order to prevent another re-emergence of the disease. However, the improvements in containing of the disease, especially should the eradication be final, could signal the beginning of a recovery for the struggling Liberian economy.

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Mauritania

- AQIM militant escapes from Nouakchott’s central prison, arrested in Guinea.
- Travel to Nouakchott may continue at this time while adhering to standard security precautions regarding the potential for criminal activity.

Fugitive AQIM militant, accomplice captured in Guinea’s Boke on January 19

- On December 31, 2015, Cheikh Ould Saleck, who was on death row in Nouakchott’s central prison for involvement in an al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) plot to assassinate Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz in 2011 escaped from Nouakchott’s central prison. Unconfirmed reports indicate that Saleck had assistance from the prison’s personnel and other detainees allegedly affiliated with Islamist militants. Guinean security forces reportedly captured Saleck in the surroundings of Guinea’s Boke Region on January 19, after he and his accomplice crossed the Guinea-Bissau border. Unconfirmed reports indicate that prior to his attempt to reach Guinea, Saleck spent approximately two weeks in Senegal, and that local authorities were aware of his presence, yet refused to arrest him. Saleck was reportedly transferred to Conakry and then transferred back to Nouakchott.

- Saleck’s escape route, involving at least four countries, showcases the porosity of the borders in the region, as well as the ability of Islamist militants to capitalize on this vulnerability in order to cross into neighboring countries. This ability to cross the borders was likely further facilitated by the extensive network of illicit trafficking routes in West Africa, as well as the ability of militants to establish ties with local criminal syndicates, which are usually involved in such illegal activities. Whereas the fact that the infamous militant managed to escape from prison, coupled with the allegations regarding the assistance by the prison’s personnel, stresses significant flaws of the Mauritanian security apparatus, his eventual capture highlights successful cooperation between Mauritanian, Guinean and potentially Guinea-Bissauan security forces. Meanwhile, although the allegations of Senegalese authorities being complacent in the matter cannot be corroborated at this time, we assess that if this was the case, the decision not to act was more likely taken by a local lower-level official than at the national government level. Nevertheless, such a decision even on the local level highlights the complexity of challenges posed to regional governments in addressing the threat from Islamist militancy.

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Dhlakama re-asserts planned seizure of provinces, claims Zuma, Church agree to mediate.

Mozambican refugees report atrocities by authorities amid ongoing clashes with Renamo.

Travel to Maputo may continue under necessary security protocols due to the persistent treat of kidnapping and high level of criminal activity.

Renamo leader resumes attempts to maneuver opposition, government to negotiations
On January 11, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama claimed that both South African President Jacob Zuma and the Catholic Church had accepted his request to mediate negotiations with the Frelimo-ruled government. While neither Zuma nor the Church have since publicly confirmed their alleged consent to his offer, we assess that Dhlakama’s contention alone reflects an attempt to pressure President Filipe Nyusi into a new round of talks that, by virtue of being mediated by a third party, may force the government into making concessions to the rebels. The Renamo leader also made claims on January 14, stating that following his planned March takeover of six northern and central provinces, he would appoint non Renamo officials, including Frelimo figures, to administrative posts. It is our assessment that these remarks represent a twofold strategy which while maintaining Renamo’s military deterrence, especially amid the government’s ongoing campaign to dismantle Renamo strongholds, keeps open a diplomatic backdoor to negotiations.

Mozambican refugees in Malawi suggest atrocities, violence reaches Renamo leadership
A UN report from January 15 suggests that increased clashes between Renamo guerrillas and authorities in Tete Province has resulted in a rise in the number of Mozambicans in Malawian refugees camps. Moreover, refugees have specifically cited punitive violence by security forces as a main stimulus of their flight. A January 26 report indicates that government troops, accusing locals of harboring guerrillas, razed homes, committed extrajudicial killings and perpetrated other atrocities in Tete Province. In addition, unconfirmed reports from January 31 allege that, following a raid on a Renamo position in Tete’s Moatize district, thirty-six members of the government’s Rapid Intervention Forces were killed by the rebels. Given similar accounts of displacement from the region last month, we assess that security forces have implemented a policy aimed at associating support for Renamo with punitive consequences. With this in mind, and given that the January 15 report cited approximately 3,000 Mozambican refugees currently in Malawian camps, we expect that these figures will grow due to continued clashes and atrocities in Tete as well as other provinces. On January 20, Renamo’s Secretary General (SG) was targeted by unknown assailants in Beira, marking a notable escalation from a cycle of violence and abductions targeting low-level officials from either side. Given the alleged assassination attempt against Dhlakama in September of 2015, we assess that the attack on Renamo’s SG marks a potential for future attacks against the movement’s political leadership.

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Opposition leader Hama Amadou remains in detention despite Constitutional Court’s validation of his candidacy for presidential elections slated for February 21.

Alleged coup attempt, subsequent arrests likely reflects regime’s consolidation of power rather than serious military threat to political stability.

Travel to Niamey may continue at this time, while maintaining heightened vigilance and adhering to stringent security precautions given the threat of militancy and crime.

Political tensions mount ahead of elections as presidential candidate Amadou denied provisional release, opposition parties form alliance against President Issoufou

On January 9, Niger’s Constitutional Court validated the candidacy of imprisoned opposition leader Hama Amadou, along with another 14 candidates, for the presidential elections slated for February 21. Earlier, Amadou’s appeal for provisional release was rejected on January 9. Leader of the opposition Moden Fa Lumana (MFL) party, Amadou has been detained on baby-trafficking charges since returning to Niger on November 14. Sources from January 27 indicate that 17 opposition parties formed an alliance entitled COPA 2016 to back a single candidate in the second round of elections. Signatories include presidential candidates Amadou, former Prime Minister Seini Oumarou, ex-President Mahamane Ousmane, as well as a former minister in the Issoufou government, Amadou Boubacar Cisse. Meanwhile, on January 5, the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) approved the voter list for the upcoming elections, fulfilling a key opposition demand. While the ongoing detention of Amadou and other opposition activists, as well as the crackdown on perceived Boko Haram sympathizers in the Diffa regions, has increased tensions ahead of elections, we assess that large-scale unrest remains unlikely given the OIF’s voter list approval and decision by opposition parties not to follow through on its threatened boycott of the polls.

Separately, 12 soldiers and one civilian were reportedly arrested due to charges relating to the alleged coup attempt on December 17. According to a January 13 statement attributed to Defense Minister Mahamadou Karidjo, four of those arrested have allegedly admitted to plotting the coup d’état and requested clemency from the state. While dissident military elements pose an underlying threat to political stability in historically coup-prone Niger, the threat of a successful military coup remains low at this time. This is largely attributable to Issoufou’s democratic legitimacy, his international support as part of counterinsurgency operations against jihadist militants, as well as his support base within the military. Moreover, we continue to assess that the arrest of alleged coup plotters is more likely a means for Issoufou to consolidate power, curb dissident voices and neutralize perceived opponents within the military establishment ahead of presidential elections.
MEDIUM RISK

Senegal

- Mass arrests, bolstered security as fears mount concerning Islamist militant threat.
- Travel to Dakar may continue at this time while adhering to heightened security precautions regarding crime.

Mounting fears concerning militant threat prompts mass arrests, bolstered security measures

- Following the January 15 attack on a hotel and a restaurant frequented by Westerners in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which was claimed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) other nations in West Africa, including Senegal, grew increasingly anxious concerning the risk posed by Islamists operating in the region. Reports on January 22 citing Interior Minister Abdoulaye Daouda Diallo indicate that Senegalese security forces would increase their patrols in order to mitigate possible attacks. Moreover, authorities reportedly ordered hotels across the country to improve security or face closure. Meanwhile, on January 22-24, under the scope of an operation aimed at preventing the “terrorist threat”, over 900 people were arrested in Dakar and Thies for various reasons, from possession of narcotics and knives, lacking identification documents, and vagrancy, among others.

- While the Ouagadougou attack certainly raised the level of angst in Senegal, such fear over Islamist militancy have been growing in recent months, with authorities voicing concern over possible radicalization in the country, with President Macky Sall even supporting a ban on the Muslim face veil during a speech in November 2015. Also in November security forces arrested seven people, including four imams on allegations of being tied to militancy in the region. Such concerns were only heightened in the wake of the attack in Bamako on November 20, and exacerbated by the one in Ouagadougou, an unprecedented occurrence for Burkina Faso. Overall, despite the lack of precedent, we assess that there does remain a potential for a militant attack to take place in Senegal, including Dakar, over the coming months, although we do not assess that such incidents will be regular or that the country will become a hotspot for militancy. The risk is underscored by surveys indicating that over 10% of the country supports the Islamic State, as well as general social conditions in the country that are often conducive to the development of local cells of active supporters of militant groups. The threat is also highlighted by a general open threat from AQIM to target countries supporting operations against them, namely the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which Senegal was a part of. Notwithstanding the potential of an attack in the foreseeable future by Islamist militants, we assess that the arrest of 900 people was conducted beyond its declared objective, so as to tackle elevated criminality levels while enjoying the greater freedom of action provided by the pretext of tackling the threat of “terrorism.”

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Student protests continue in Pretoria, Johannesburg throughout January

Localized, yet persisting student unrest continued throughout the month of January. Earlier during the month, protestors called for the annulment of registration fees and an end of outsourcing arrangements practiced by universities. Nevertheless, even as multiple universities reached agreements addressing student demands, protests did not halt completely. For example, on January 27, dozens of students and workers protested peacefully at Witwatersrand University (Wits) in Johannesburg against a recent decision to hire private security guards instead of insourcing workers. A similar cause was advocated by protestors in the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Pretoria on the same day, in a demonstration that devolved into unrest as police fired rubber bullets and used stun grenades to disperse violent clashes between protestors and a group of South African Students Congress (SASCO) members. Following these events, the universities announced the suspension of activities until further notice. Events over the past month further demonstrated the volatility of the student body in South Africa, and the growing perception that pushes for policy change are best made through mobilization, and often time unruly protests. Given the entrenchment of this understanding, protests are likely to continue, despite efforts by the universities to accommodate student demands.

DA mobilizes tens of thousands in Johannesburg, as municipal elections approach

The opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) party mobilized more than 20,000 of its supporters in a march in Johannesburg’s city center on January 27, in protest of the economic policies of President Jacob Zuma. The large scale march took place as the South African political arena gears towards pivotal municipal elections, slated to take place nationwide from May to August 2016. On the same day as the event in Johannesburg, Julius Malema, leader of the leftist opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), reportedly called on opposition parties to unite with him against the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party in the municipal elections. At least some early analyses suggest that support for the ANC may fall under 50 percent in the Nelson Mandela Bay, Tshwane, and Johannesburg Metropolitans in the upcoming local elections, the first such polls since the EFF’s 2013 foundation. In such a scenario, a coalition, or at least an ad-hoc cooperation between opposition parties may prove instrumental to unseat the ANC municipal rule. However, given the long standing divides between the two largest opposition parties, sustainable alliances are unlikely. Regardless, given the contested nature of the elections, tensions, mobilization, and related unrest are all likely to increase over the coming months.
Security force crackdown on opposition continues as campaign season for February 18 general elections draws to an end

Over the past month, instances of crackdown against opposition members and their supporters, which have been witnessed for the duration of the electoral campaign season, continued to take place. The stifling of the opposition is highlighted by the use of live fire, tear gas and arrests by security forces at several rallies conducted by The Democratic Alliance (TDA) and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). Acts of intimidation have also occurred, the most recent of which took place against TDA and FDC supporters in the Sembabule District on January 25, when the opposition supporters claimed to have been physically abused by security forces. Following these accusations, the TDA candidate Amama Mbabazi postponed his rally in the locale. Additionally, several raids were conducted by security forces, such as a January 16 one at a local printing house where the FDC manifesto was being produced. Moreover, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has allegedly begun preparing for the possibility of violence in the election's aftermath. Lastly, underscoring the tense political environment in the country, the US Department of State (DoS) issued an alert warning American citizens to exercise caution ahead of the February 18 general elections and local elections between February 24 and March 10.

The violent crackdown on opposition rallies underscores the continued attempt by security forces to disrupt or prevent political gatherings by opposition parties running against incumbent President Yoweri Museveni and the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party in the upcoming elections. As tensions increase ahead of the February 18 polls, the potential for localized confrontations between supporters of opposing parties will be elevated. Moreover, in light of the persistent heavy-handed approach towards the opposition, we assess that the potential for additional acts of crackdown and intimidation in the lead up to the vote remains heightened. Lastly, any uncertainty regarding the elections’ legitimacy ahead of, during and in their wake, will further elevate the potential for unrest in February.
LOW RISK

Equatorial Guinea

- Fuel shortages allegedly cause disruptions in Malabo, Bata, government denies.
- Registration of votes carried out ahead of November 2016 presidential elections, as opposition organizes large-scale protest.
- Travel to Bata and Malabo can continue while adhering to basic security precautions against crime.

Fuel shortages allegedly cause disruptions in Bata, Malabo

Sources critical of the government maintained that, starting in late December and throughout January, fuel shortages were recorded in Bata and Malabo. These reports indicated that, due to the shortage, Malabo faced large queues for gas, resulting in traffic disruptions. Nevertheless, upon contact, local sources affirmed to have no knowledge of such shortages, and the country’s Director General of Energy refuted their existence, instead affirming that a delay on supply ships led to some disruptions in Bata. Although Equatorial Guinea is an oil producing country, its lack of refining capacity make it depend on external sources for petrol. Furthermore, its oil industry is largely controlled by the family of the country’s president, and there are allegations of corruption and nepotism interfering with the sector’s efficiency. This situation may exacerbate the potential for additional supply disruptions, possibly resulting in further shortages being recorded during February and beyond.

Electoral census conducted, as opposition criticizes process in Bata

Reports indicate that from January 15-30, the government conducted the electoral registration ahead of the November 2016 elections. Three opposition parties reportedly issued a joint statement questioning the reliability of the process and criticizing its lack of transparency. Additionally, an opposition rally reportedly gathered approximately a thousand people in Bata, on January 17, demanding the country to undergo a democratization process. Lastly, reports claim there are discussions of anticipating the vote to June, yet the reasons for doing so remains undisclosed. In the 2009 presidential elections, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who has been in power since 1979, received more than 95 percent of the votes, and his Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) won 99 out of 100 seat in the National Assembly. Furthermore, Equatorial Guinea has repeatedly been ranked as one of the least democratic nations in the world, and harsh security measures are often taken against dissident voices in the country. In this context, despite the protests by the opposition, we assess that significant changes to the country’s political situation are unlikely.

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Violence in rural areas highlights threat posed by intercommunal disputes.

Show of force by unions results in fruitful outcome despite calling off nationwide strike.

Travel to Accra may continue while maintaining vigilance and following general security protocols particularly in evening and night hours.

Inter-clan clashes in Northern Region, violence between Fulanis, locals in Ashanti Region

- On January 22, suspected Fulani herdsmen halted a bus in the Ashanti Region, and robbed passengers of their belongings, while a policeman was fatally wounded during the incident. Several days later in the same area, suspected Fulani herdsmen killed a local driver. Following the second incident, local youths conducted retribution attacks against local Fulanis, with at least one being killed. Separately, in Ghana’s Northern Region, violence erupted and lasted for three days in unclear circumstances between the Jamong and Jafog clans. At least three people were killed in the violence, 35 houses were torched and dozens of locals sought refuge in neighboring Togo.

- Although the aforementioned events are unrelated, they each are indicative of the trend of violent intercommunal disputes in Ghana’s outlying areas, and the challenges for authorities to mitigate them. While these disputes tend to surround chieftaincy issues or access to resources, they may also erupt following random events, such as a violent robbery or even more personal circumstances. Furthermore, such incidents often trigger tit-for-tat retaliatory attacks, and complicate the task of reconciling between the communities. All in all, intercommunal disputes are likely to continue to constitute a source of instability in Ghana’s rural areas for the foreseeable future.

Fruitful results achieved following show of force by unions, despite cancellation of strike

On January 20, Ghana’s most prominent union, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU) staged a well-attended joint demonstration in Accra. While a nationwide strike was initially planned for January 21-22, TUC’s leadership decided to call it off stating that it would harm negotiations. In line with this, on January 28, TUC’s leadership reached a deal with the Ghanaian government on January 28 regarding the recent increase in electricity tariffs. The agreement will come into effect on February 1. The two parties agreed to continue negotiations on the tariffs on water and on the controversial Energy Sector Levy Act, which prompted a rise of 27 percent in the price of petroleum products. These developments highlight two main trends, the first is the bona fide of both organized labor and authorities in solving or at least partially mitigating workers’ grievances. Secondly, these showcase the persisting tensions in the country arising from the high cost of living. In this regard, while these tensions have been partially relaxed as a result of the agreement, at least with the organized labor, we continue to assess that these will continue to foment discontent among segments of Ghanaian society in the near term.
Guinea-Bissau

- Tensions within ruling PAIGC party develop into national political crisis
- Travel to Guinea-Bissau may continue while maintaining vigilance and following general security protocols particularly in evening and night hours.

Tensions within ruling PAIGC party develop into national political crisis
On January 14, the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) National Jurisdiction Council (CNJ) decided to expel 14 members of parliament (MPs) from the party, who had abstained in the December 23 voting on the government’s executive agenda. An additional MP was previously expelled from the party in November 2015 for insubordination. A new voting session had been postponed to January 18, and the PAIGC had reportedly intended to replace the 15 dissident MPs by new representatives of the party in order to avoid the fall of Prime Minister (PM) Carlos Correia and his cabinet upon the second rejection of the agenda. Unconfirmed reports indicated that President Jose Mario Vaz offered military protection to the 15 dissident MPs, who, on January 18, appeared in the National Assembly (NA) claiming their mandate. The President of the NA decided to adjourn the meeting, however, allegedly due to the lack of “security conditions” to conduct it, given reported unrest in the house. Nevertheless, the 15 expelled MPs, together with the opposition Party for Social Renewal (PRS), together comprising 55 out of 102 MPs, initiated an impromptu session in which they elected a new leadership to the NA and rejected the government’s executive agenda, consequently sending a demand to Vaz to dismiss Correia and his cabinet. The meeting was reportedly considered an “institutional coup” by the PAIGC and four minor parties. Following two more unsuccessful sessions and as both factions failed to recognize their opponent’s narratives, the legislative activities remained paralyzed from January 21 to January 28. The African Union (AU), United Nations (UN) as well as other stakeholders have expressed concern over the political situation in the country and condemned actions that would threaten peace and stability in the country. In this context, reports indicate that President Vaz met with representatives from different parties and civil society groups, allegedly in order to find a conciliatory solution for the crisis. Lastly, Bissau’s regional court backed the PAIGC decision to expel the 15 dissidents, while safeguarding the party’s mandates. Then, on January 28 an NA meeting occurred and approved the government agenda upon increased security forces deployment and without the PRS presence, which allegedly claimed that the meeting was illegal. President Vaz further criticized the NA meeting since he was still conducting the consultations to identify the way out for the crisis. All in all, the political tensions, which until December had been limited to the PAIGC, have expanded to Guinean-Bissauan larger political theatre, undermining the current government and challenging the political stability of the country and its democratic system. Nevertheless, given the judicial intervention as well as national and international stakeholders’ pressure, there remains a potential for a negotiated solution to be reached despite the power struggles in parliament.

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Two new cases of Ebola reported despite previous ‘Ebola Free’ declaration

Despite the World Health Organization (WHO) announcement that Sierra Leone has been declared “Ebola Free” on November 7, the country witnessed two new cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in January. The first case was identified in the country’s northern Tonkolili District on January 15, just a day after the WHO declared the end of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. On January 16, the Sierra Leonean government reportedly announced the quarantine of more than a hundred people, who were primary and secondary contacts of the victim, 28 of which whom considered of “high risk”. Subsequently, on January 20, one of the quarantined people was diagnosed with the EVD. Furthermore, reports indicate that, as a preventive measure, health authorities launched an Ebola vaccination campaign directed to those people with a higher risk of contracting the disease after the identification of the aforementioned cases. In this context, despite the efforts of governmental authorities, WHO and health professionals in containing the disease, and given emerging research that indicates the contamination threat may persist even after the 21-day incubation period, there remains a potential for additional cases to be reported over the coming month. Nevertheless, a new major outbreak of the virus is unlikely to occur in West Africa over the coming year as the relevant authorities have been demonstrating efficiency in controlling the spread of the virus and dealing with new cases.
Zanzibar rerun elections slated for March 20 following negotiations to end political stalemate, likely to see tensions manifest in unrest.

Travel to Dar es Salaam and Dodoma can continue at this time while adhering to general security precautions with regards to risks associated with criminality, low-level militancy and political unrest.

Zanzibar rerun elections likely to see political tensions rise, unrest in lead up to March 20

On January 23, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) announced that the re-run elections on the semi-autonomous archipelago will be held on March 20, following the ZEC’s annulment of the original vote on October 28. Following the announcement, the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) held a series of meetings on January 27 and 28, and during the latter the party announced its decision to boycott the Zanzibar re-run elections, calling on supporters to join the boycott. The aforementioned announcements follow a series of negotiations to end the political stalemate surrounding the annulment of the Zanzibari presidential vote. Despite the assistance of local and international mediators, including former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, several public statements, including on January 3 by the Second Vice-President of Zanzibar, Seif Ali Iddi, allegedly indicated that the political impasse was unlikely to be solved through negotiations. This was later confirmed by the former Zanzibari presidential candidate and leader of the opposition CUF, Seif Sharif Hamad on January 12. Meanwhile incumbent President Ali Mohammed Shein called on Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) supporters to vote en masse in the upcoming polls. Prior to this, sources quote Hamad as stating that a re-run is not a solution to the stalemate, and that such a decision would lead to violence. On January 22 the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) released a security message warning citizens of the risk from increased political tensions. Following the annulment, localized explosions were reported on October 30 at Stone Town’s Darajani market and on October 31 in Stone Town. In 2000, a similar situation occurred in Zanzibar, which included both the cancellation of the vote and boycott of the rerun by the opposition. In the months following this, nine bombing attacks targeted local bars, wealthy tourist resorts, and offices of political parties. In 2005 the CUF refused to recognize the election of the CCM president, citing vote rigging, and in response to this boycotted the Zanzibar House of Representatives.

The CUF’s decision to boycott the Zanzibar rerun elections, will not only challenge the legitimacy of the vote, but increase already elevated tensions in the country, and the archipelago more specifically. Despite the negotiation period remaining relatively calm, Hamad’s statement indicates the potential for unrest and violence in the wake of the CUF’s decision and in the lead up to the polls. This potential is further evidenced by both localized explosions and unrest following the October 28 annulment as well as the response by the opposition and its supporters during previous political stalemates.
Government amends constitution, announces presidential elections on August 11
President Edgar Lungu signed the amended constitution on January 5, setting presidential elections for August 11. Among others, they allow for the use of a running mate during elections and sets the threshold for a presidential candidate to be considered the winner at 50 percent plus one. Lungu was elected president in January 2015, for the remainder of Michael Sata’s term following his death. Lungu was able to achieve an extremely narrow win as he received 48.3 percent of the votes and United Party for National Development (UPND) candidate Hakainde Hichilema received 46.6 percent. As part of the changes to the constitution, a second ballot will be held should none of the runners secure at least 50 percent of the vote. While the amended constitution includes other changes, the noteworthy of all is the decision to set a voting threshold for the presidential elections. In this context, we assess that this change is related to Lungu’s will to avoid another narrow gap, by increasing the chances for a second ballot. In such a case, only the two candidates with the highest scores will run, a move that increases Lungu’s chances to be reelected. In another elections-related development, on January 21, Miles Sampa, a Patriotic Front (PF) Member of Parliament (MP) resigned and announced the establishment of the Democratic Front (DF) party. We assess that this likely indicative of plans to run in the upcoming elections, and possibly attract PF supporters to his new party.

Power company seeks new tariff hike following President Lungu’s annulment of recent increase
As Zambia continues to struggle with its extreme electricity shortage, it has requested an additional power supply of 300 megawatts on January 14, from its neighbor South Africa. This development came amid daily load-shedding exercises throughout the country in recent months and prior to a recent power outage in the capital on January 16. In this context, reports from January 12 indicate that the country’s grid firm made a new proposition for a domestic tariff hike, allegedly lower than the previous one, which was cancelled by Lungu in December. While Zambia and South Africa have a standard agreement to share surplus energy with one another, Zambia’s request highlights the severity of its power shortage, further underscored by the recurring power outages in Lusaka and the entire country. As such, and in spite of Lungu’s reported annulment of the previous tariff increase, we assess that authorities will be bound to approve a certain electricity price increase in order to prevent a worsening of the power situation.
Civil servants threaten public action after government’s failure to pay salaries, bonuses.

Travel to Harare and Bulawayo can continue while adhering to basic security precautions against common criminality. As a general security precaution avoid large gatherings given potential for politically motivated unrest.

**Government fails to pay civil servants’ wages, bonuses as unions threaten to demonstrate**

Following the government’s failure to pay December salaries and yearly bonuses to civil servants, the Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (RTUZ) reportedly announced its intention to hold a ‘shut down protest march’ in Harare’s Central Business District (CBD) on February 26, should authorities fail to address their demands by February 15. These include the payment of full annual bonuses to all civil servants, an annulment of the recently announced 7.5 percent deduction from pension funds, as well as an end to alleged harassments of employees and union leaders. This development follows the forceful dispersal of a January 4 march regarding these issues in Harare’s CBD. According to reports, several protesters were arrested during the demonstration, which was organized by the RTUZ with the support of the Zimbabwe Activist Alliance (ZAA) and Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) and attended by their members. While the government did not specify the reasons behind the delaying of wages and bonus payments, we assess that it is likely a result of the ongoing financial deterioration and thus points to the severity of the situation. Should the government fail to transfer the arrears by February 15, we assess that the planned march is likely to take place and possibly be answered with similar harsh measures, as witnessed on January 4. In this context, we also assess that civil servants may threaten to escalate their actions by announcing a strike in all public sectors, in order to force the government to solve the issue.

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## Notable Dates for February 2016

### Angola

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Liberation Movement Day</td>
<td>The day commemorates the anniversary of the Baixa de Cassanje revolt of 1961, in which plant workers stood against their Portuguese employers, considered to have triggered the Angolan War of Independence. The day is usually marked with commemorative events throughout the country. Given that the day is a public holiday, government offices, banks and private businesses are slated to be closed.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 8-9</td>
<td>Carnival</td>
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The Carnival is a Christian festivity, traditionally celebrated with local street parades and musical events throughout the country, as well as large scale festivities in the capital Luanda. Given that the day is a public holiday, government offices, banks and private businesses are slated to be closed.

### Burundi

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Unity Day</td>
<td>This day celebrates the holding of a referendum on the Charter of National Unity in 1991, which abolished ethnic discrimination in an effort to reconcile the warring Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups, and gave a mandate to the government to write a new constitution. Given the day’s status as a public holiday, government offices, banks, and private businesses are likely to be closed.</td>
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Cameroon – **Back to portion**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Youth Day</td>
<td>The occasion marks the country’s young people and is celebrated with youth parades, exhibitions and sport activities. The date is celebrated as a public holiday, and thus it is advised to allot for disruptions to business continuity from closures of government offices and many businesses. Allot extra time for travel delays due to likely youth parades.</td>
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Cape Verde

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Carnival</td>
<td>The Christian commemorations of Carnival and Ash Wednesday are marked as public holidays in Cape Verde. Carnival celebrations typically include street parades throughout the country. Disruptions to business continuity are likely since both dates are marked as public holidays. Maintain heightened vigilance in the presence of crowds during large festivities due to the threat of criminal activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 18</td>
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CAR – **Back to portion**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 14</td>
<td>Legislative elections and second round of Presidential elections</td>
<td>Whilst the elections of December 30 transpired peacefully, and the initial results were announced without incident, there nevertheless exists the potential for unrest, given CARs persistent instability and deep sectarian divides. Therefore, avoid travel in the vicinity of political rallies and polling stations, and allot for travel disruptions on February 14.</td>
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Comoros

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Presidential and gubernatorial elections</td>
<td>Despite the country’s history of political instability and existing disputes over the system of presidential candidacies</td>
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</table>
rotating among its islands, we assess that elections are likely to transpire peacefully, yet localized scuffles between supporters of opposing parties remain possible. For this reason, maintain vigilance in the vicinity of campaigning events and polling stations, and allot for travel disruptions on February 21.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Gambia</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong> │ <strong>Short Summary</strong>       │ <strong>Assessment and Recommendation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 18 │ Independence Day      │ The country gained independence from British colonial rule on February 18, 1965. During this day, numerous parades are held in the capital Banjul. Disruptions to business continuity are likely given that this day is marked as a public holiday. Maintain heightened vigilance in the presence of crowds during large festivities due to the threat of criminal activity.</td>
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<td><strong>Date</strong> │ <strong>Short Summary</strong>       │ <strong>Assessment and Recommendation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11 │ Armed Forces Day   │ Celebrated as a public holiday, and thus it is advised to allot for disruptions to business continuity from closures of government offices and many businesses. Allot extra time for travel due to likely military parades.</td>
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<th>Mauritius</th>
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<td><strong>Date</strong> │ <strong>Short Summary</strong>       │ <strong>Assessment and Recommendation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1 │ Abolition Day   │ Marks the abolition of slavery in the Island on 1835. Celebrated as a public holiday, with the main forms of commemoration including wreath-laying and reciting prayers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 8 │ Chinese New Year │ Celebrated as a public holiday, also known as Chinese Spring Festival. Island-wide celebrations, with the main events centered in Chinatown in Port Louis.</td>
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### Mozambique – Back to portion

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<tr>
<td>February 3</td>
<td>Heroes Day</td>
<td>A public holiday commemorating soldiers who have died in the War of Independence, and celebrating the country’s veterans. Celebrations include wreath-laying ceremonies, military parades and speeches by political figures, including a presidential address.</td>
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### Sao Tome & Principe

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<tr>
<td>February 3</td>
<td>Martyrs’ Day</td>
<td>Marked as a public holiday, the occasion commemorates the soldiers who died fighting for the country’s independence from Portugal, taking place in 1975. The occasion is often marked with public vigils, commencing from Sao Tome’s Cathedral, and public ceremonies at the National Museum.</td>
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### Uganda – Back to portion

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<tr>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>Archbishop Janani Luwum Memorial</td>
<td>Archbishop Janani Luwum Memorial is celebrated as a public holiday on February 16 in honor of the former Church of Uganda bishop who was killed during President Idi Amin’s rule in 1977. Although details surrounding this year’s commemorative events have yet to be released, past celebrations typically include prayer and wreath laying ceremonies at Luwum’s gravesite in Mucwini, in the Kitgum District. Take necessary precautions to mitigate disruptions to business continuity given the expected closure of government offices and other local businesses on February 16 due to the public holiday.</td>
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