

CONFLICT BRIEFING NOTES

CONFLICT BRIEFING NO. 17, October 2014

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** All reports are based on anonymous NSRP sources.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Several attacks and counter attacks by JAS insurgents and Nigerian troops with growing casualties were recorded in the North East. These attacks and the abduction of about 90 young women and men in separate attacks in Madagali and Mafa LGAs of Borno state occurred despite the acclaimed cease fire agreement between the insurgents and the federal government.

Operatives of the Special Task Force in Plateau State were among over 40 persons killed during multiple attacks on a number of villages in Riyom LGA. The unidentified gunmen are said to have burnt about 70 houses during the rampage leaving survivors speculating whether Fulani herdsmen or JAS insurgents are responsible for the attacks.

Kano State enjoyed relative peace during the month. The Niger Delta region experienced high incidence in organised crime aggravated by proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

On the political scene, there are rising tensions across the regions as more aspirants make public declarations of their interests in the 2015 elections. In Plateau, Governor Jang's choice of a successor from his ethnic group in apparent disregard of 'zoning' considerations is generating tension amongst the elites. In Kaduna State, the political atmosphere has remained tense particularly within the ruling PDP as another candidate emerges to challenge Governor Mukhtar Yero's re-election bid.

The demise of a long serving member of the Emirate Council in Kano state created an opportunity for the reshuffling of Emir Lamido Sanusi's cabinet resulting in elevation of Late Emir Ado Bayero's sons. This move is part of the reconciliatory initiatives, including a meeting with the President undertaken by the Emir to stabilise the Kano polity.

Context Analysis/Conflict Profile

Political

The struggle for control of political machinery in Borno state between the former and incumbent Governor has turned against the former, as his defection to the PDP has not yielded the expected outcome. Former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff had earlier defected to the PDP along with several political elites in the state whom he had promised automatic tickets on the platform of his new party. The tide seems to have turned against the former Governor when at the PDP headquarters in Abuja recently, the party's National Chairman referred to him as 'domineering' stating categorically that his promise of automatic tickets to his loyalists will not be honoured.

This development is perhaps the beginning of the end of Sheriff's political career having left his traditional party APC to a party which seems unwilling to accommodate him. His plight may not be unconnected to recent allegations of JAS sponsorship leveled against the former Governor. Speculations are that the party would wish to do away with him to save its image.

The governorship and senatorial contest in Plateau state is attracting immense public interest. This has been attributed to Governor Jang's alleged plan to contest for the Plateau North Senatorial seat whilst retaining the governorship position for one of his kinsmen. Senator Pwajok who hails from the same village as Governor Jang is said to have received the endorsement of Senate President David Mark at the recent launch of a N100million youth empowerment programme in the state. It is widely believed that the Senate President's public endorsement is with the full knowledge of Governor Jang who was away in Israel at the time.

In Kaduna, the political scene is heating up as more aspirants declare their interest to contest for the governorship position. Hon. Muhammad Ali, minority leader of the Kaduna State House of Representatives recently led a 12 member team of APC legislators in a press conference endorsing General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) as the party's candidate for the 2015 presidential election. The declaration of support to Buhari is likely to put more pressure on the PDP, which considered the state its stronghold, thereby leading to a closely fought presidential election as in 2011.

Similarly, Governor Mukhtar Yero of Kaduna State has declared his interest in the 2015 governorship election on the platform of the PDP, dispelling long-circulated rumours that he is no longer interested in the governorship race. It is expected that elites from the southern zone will challenge the Governor's ambition of obtaining the PDP ticket at the party's primaries. Meanwhile, the Governor has continued to reconstitute the appointed public office holders as a strategy towards gaining political advantage for the 2015 elections. Seven permanent secretaries were appointed to create a sense of inclusion amongst members of relevant communities in the state.

Mid October saw a heightening of tension at the Kaduna State House of Assembly following an attempt by some members of the House to impeach the Speaker, Hon. Usman Tahir. The House has since set up a committee to investigate alleged government involvement in the incidence. This development may further inflame the polity if Governor Mukhtar Yero is found to be behind the impeachment attempt.

In Kano, the Emirate Council lost one of its senior and longest serving members, Alhaji Tijjani Hashim, the *Galadiman Kano* this month. His death which created a vacuum in the council was received by the emirate and the Kano populace with deep sorrow. This is the second death recorded amongst key members of the Emirate since the appointment of Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II, the first being that of the District Head of Minjibir, the *Danamar* of Kano.

In response to the recent demise, Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II has reshuffled his cabinet elevating the sons of Late Emir Ado Bayero and appointing several others to positions within the council. It would be recalled that a significant section of the Kano populace had expected the eldest son of the Late Emir to succeed his father. The emergence of Mallam Sanusi Lamido in his stead had resulted in an eruption of violence and heightened tensions within the Emirate Council. The recent cabinet reshuffle however, has improved previously strained relationships between the late Emir Ado Bayero's family and the current Emir.

Emir Muhammadu Sanusi's comradely gestures reached the heights with what many have termed a reconciliation meeting with President Goodluck Jonathan. After almost a year of hostilities between the two leaders stemming from the Emir's previous activities as CBN Governor, Emir Sanusi was reported to have paid a private visit to President Johnathan in the company of his senior council officials. Reports from the meeting suggest that the Emir assured President Jonathan of a warm reception in Kano during his upcoming campaign tour. This gesture of friendship may not go down well with the opposition who were instrumental to the Emir's ascension to the throne. The implications of this turn of events may have significant impact on the political dynamics of Kano state.

In an unrelated event, General Muhammadu Buhari has declared his presidential ambition at the Eagle Square in Abuja. Reports have it that several hundreds of supporters gathered at Kano from where they travelled to Abuja to attend the ceremony. Governor Kwankwaso of Kano and his supporters are said to have been discomfited by the General's followership and resorted to trading words via the media. The Governor's frustration was further heightened by his inability to obtain clearance to utilise the same venue for declaration of his presidential ambition.

The FCT authority's refusal to grant Governor Kwankwaso clearance may not be unconnected to his sour relationship with President Goodluck Jonathan. This development has further strained the bitter relationship between the PDP and APC in Kano state.

In Bayelsa, the resignation of First Lady Patience Jonathan from the Bayelsa State Civil Service is an indication that the relationship between the first lady and Governor Henry Seriake Dickson is deteriorating rapidly. It may be recalled that Governor Dickson had amidst widespread criticism, appointed Patience Jonathan to the position of Permanent Secretary 2 months after he was sworn into office in 2012. The first lady is said to have expressed her preference for another Governorship candidate (Special Assistant to the President on Domestic Matters, Mr. Waripamowei Dudafa) in opposition to Governor Dickson's re-election bid and resigned her position to enable her promote his candidature.

The battle over who succeeds Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan intensified as Governor Uduaghan appeared to have thrown his support behind his long-time associate and retired Permanent Secretary Tony Obuh. However, a long-time friend of President Jonathan and a serving Senator – Hon. Emmanuel Aguariavwodo is also contesting the Governorship seat and is purported to enjoy the support of the Urhobo ethnic group. Popular opinion suggests that the Governorship seat will go to whoever clinches the PDP ticket as evidenced by the landslide victory of the PDP in the the LGA elections.

In Rivers State, the political tension is fast approaching confrontational stage. Chief Nyesom Wike resigned his position as Minister of State for Education to contest the Rivers State governorship election. He has received the blessing of the First Lady and organized well attended political rallies since returning to the state to challenge Amaechi's APC hold on power and return the state to the PDP fold. Governor Amaechi's subsequent commemoration rally has been described by many as a show of might and a taunt at the president's camp. The rally which was attended by over 75,000 people sends a strong message of popularity and sets the stage for stiff inter party competition come 2015.

Social

Sheikh Zakzaky leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria has alleged the discovery of a sinister plan to incite violence in Kaduna state. The Shi'ite leader claimed to have discovered a plan by the Nigerian military to infiltrate the movement. The leader alleged there is a plot to blame the sect for the killing of some soldiers and use this as the basis for the official clampdown on the sect. It may be recalled that the cleric had recently petitioned the United Nations Human Rights Commission over the alleged killing of his three sons and other members of the Shi'ite movement by the Nigerian Military. Sheikh Zakzaky has vowed to continue his quest for justice for his late sons and fallen members of the sect.

The Plateau State Special Task Force has placed residents of the state on red alert following the arrest of over 80 strangers suspected to have been contracted to perpetuate evil in the state. Majority of the suspects who were arrested in Rikkos area of Jos North, are said to be nationals of Niger Republic and are presently being interrogated to ascertain their mission in the state.

Unknown gunmen have attacked some villages in Riyom LGA killing 12 people. Two Special Task Force operatives were among those killed. To forestall further attacks, youths from neighbouring villages have resorted to conducting physical checks on all strangers found in the area. Members of the Red Cross are said to have been subjected to intense search recently even though the communities are well aware of their work in the vicinity.

Similarly, 27 people were killed and about 70 houses burnt during another attack in Rachit village in Riyom LGA. The incident was the second attack on the village within a two week period. The identity of the attackers has continued to perplex residents who are unsure whether the attacks were carried out by Fulani herdsmen or members of JAS.

There was pandemonium in the Jos University Teaching Hospital when about eight gunmen shot at one of the security guards at the hospital gate. The security guard is said to have insisted on conducting a thorough search of the attackers' vehicle before allowing them entry into the premises. Apparently irked by his insistence, the attackers began shooting, killing the guard in the process. The real mission of the attackers remains unknown to the hospital authorities. However, there were no major threats to security during the Eid-el-Kabir festival.

Kano experienced relative peace and security in October despite intensification of competition for party tickets by various political office aspirants. Activities resumed in educational institutions in the state. The Federal College of Education which had witnessed multiple bomb explosions last month was also re-opened. Although academic activities have resumed fully, parents lecturers and students are cautious due to fears of possible further JAS attacks.

The Niger Delta recorded several incidents of violence arising from the activities of groups involved in organised crime. There were reports of kidnapping and attacks on passenger boats and oil barges in Nembe, Brass, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Ogbia LGAs in Bayelsa State. The sea pirates (reported to be between the ages of 18 and 25) were armed with AK 47, AK74 and G3 rifles as well as Rocket Propelled Grenades. This clear case of failure to tame the flow of illicit weapons by security agencies portends grave dangers for the upcoming elections.

Kidnap of high profile individuals remains a major security threat in Bayelsa and Rivers State, though armed robbery attacks and violence by cults and gangs were also reported.

Economic

The delay in payment of Plateau state Civil Servants' salaries continues to attract attention in the state. School teachers in Jos South LGA took to the streets late October to protest the seven months salary arrears being owed them. The new directive that Civil Servants must present themselves for biometric capturing (for enrolment on an electronic payment system) as a prerequisite for payment of their salaries, is raising tensions as the workers claim the biometrics capturing exercise is agonizingly slow.

The Kano economy received a boost from rising demand linked to the Eid-el-Kabir Sallah celebrations. In Kaduna, Governor Mukhtar Yero has commissioned completed road projects contracted previously under late Governor Patrick Yakowa's administration in 2012. Amongst them are the 6.8 Kilometres Likoro-Magada roads which now link Kudan and Soba LGAs and the 3.6 Kilometres BUKS-Yankarfe Road in Sabon Gari. Governor Yero used the opportunity of the commissioning ceremony to refute recent allegations that he had abandoned projects initiated by his predecessor.

In the Niger Delta, there is the perception that governments have abandoned projects as resources are amassed for political campaigns. Suspension of project execution is also linked to the fall in oil prices which is expected to take a toll on revenues to the Niger Delta states.

The National Context

Cameroun secures release of hostages amidst plans for joint efforts against JAS

Cameroun has successfully negotiated the release of 27 people after months of captivity in the hands of JAS insurgents. The hostages who were kidnapped in two separate incidents in Cameroon's far north include 10 Chinese workers and the wife of Cameroon's deputy prime minister, Amadou Ali. Reports allege that no ransom was paid to secure the release of the captives.

Many Nigerians contrast Cameroun's success in securing the release of kidnapped persons, including the family of seven French nationals, with the failure of Nigerian authorities to secure release of captives. There are also concerns among the Nigerian public that the Chadian and Cameroonian military authorities have been more proactive and effective in tackling JAS than Nigerian security agencies. For instance, the Cameroonian military killed 107 insurgents after JAS stepped up attacks on communities in the Nigeria-Cameroonian border after the declaration of cease fire.

During the period, there were indications that the governments of Chad, Benin, Cameroon and Niger have agreed to partner with Nigeria to checkmate JAS. This is evidenced by the convocation of an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Lake Chad Basin. The summit is a follow-up on the Paris Summit convened by President Hollande to promote collaboration in tackling terrorism and violent extremism in the region. The Summit resolved to establish joint anti-terrorism patrols and a system of sharing intelligence to support operations against JAS and other cross-border criminals.

Human Rights Watch publishes report on JAS atrocities

Human Rights Watch published a report on atrocities perpetrated by suspected JAS militants. The study, which is based on interviews with over 46 witnesses and victims of JAS abductions in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, is entitled *Those Terrible Weeks in Their Camp: Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in North-east Nigeria*. The main finding of the study is that abducted women and girls endured forced marriage, forced labour, conversion, rape and other physical and psychological abuses in captivity. Over 500 women and girls are said to have been abducted since 2009.

The report also shows that the Nigerian government has failed to adequately protect women and girls from a myriad of abuses. Government has also failed to provide effective support, medical care and justice for survivors of JAS attacks. For instance, women, girls and children who were trapped in Bama are reportedly still trekking into Maiduguri on a daily basis as they escape the JAS controlled town.

Federal Government/JAS Cease Fire: A Failed Attempt

The recent announcement of a purported cease fire agreement between the Federal Government and JAS was greeted with mixed feelings across Nigeria. Many have opined that international pressure coupled with President Goodluck Jonathan's re-election bid may have played a significant role in the latest efforts at halting activities of the insurgents. However, on the same day the Federal Government announced the alleged cease fire agreement, JAS insurgents were busy launching offensives in Abadam, a border town with Niger in the Northern fringes of Borno.

Reports have it that many residents were beheaded and properties destroyed in Abadam LGA and surrounding communities, despite the fact that the Headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and barracks are also located in the town. Residents who fled to Maiduguri claim that dozens of villages in the LGA are now under the firm grip of JAS.

The insurgents are also reported to have abducted 60 young women and girls in a fresh attack on Waga Mongoro District of Madagali LGA of Adamawa State. Additionally, the caretaker chairman of Mafa Local Government Area of Borno State. Shettima Maina told journalists in Maiduguri recently that at least 17 people

were killed by the gunmen who abducted about 30 young men and women.

Similarly, the commercial town of Mubi in Adamawa state and border towns were thrown into a state of panic as several residents were attacked by rampaging JAS insurgents who also engaged Nigerian troops in a deadly shoot out. Many of the soldiers and residents were reported to have fled to neighbouring LGAs and Cameroun. The insurgents are said to have hoisted their flag in the town after overrunning the Police Barracks and the prison and freeing prisoners.

Update on hostilities in Military circles

There were reports that tensions continue to mount in the military as high ranking military officers accuse and seek to discipline junior officers over alleged sabotage. During the period, scores of soldiers were arrested and arraigned before a court martial. 12 soldiers were sentenced to death and 16 are still standing trial. However, it is evident that not only junior officers are culpable. For instance, a NSRP source claimed that a Colonel who was commanding a team of three Armored Personnel Carriers, (APCs) with the capability to fire up to a minimum range of 1.5kilometres had deliberately set fire to the APCs between Gulak and Madagali rather than firing at the insurgents, before fleeing with his team of soldiers into the bush.

Implications for Programming in Select States (Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta)

JAS' hold on to captured territories despite government agreed ceasefire

While JAS continues to hold the 25 towns in the three northeast states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa (including but not limited to Damboa, Buni Yadi, Madagali, Gwoza, Gujba, Gulak, Bama, Gulani, Shuwa, Marte, Kukawa, Michika, Dikwa, Bularafa, Bazza, Gamboru Ngalia, and Buni Gari) territories previously seized and communities continue to live in fear, narratives of atrocities committed by JAS emerge, and may affect the tense dynamics between citizens and the state in the region. In a statement titled "State of Captured Towns" which was made available to journalists in Maiduguri in early October, the Director of Catholic Social Communication of Maiduguri Diocese, Rev. Gideon Obasogie, noted that 185 churches in the diocese have been burned down over the past two months after the capture of 11 towns in Borno and Adamawa by JAS. In addition to this report on damages to infrastructure in the Northeast region, a recent Human Rights Watch report notes the human capital that has been targeted by JAS, with special attention on women and girls. The report, released in October 2014, notes that women are forced to marry, convert and endure physical and psychological abuse, forced labor and rape in captivity.

The report documents more than 500 women and girls targeted since 2009, and that these atrocities indicate a lack of effort by the Nigerian government to protect women and girls from these forms of violence. The atrocities noted in these reports are coupled with a number of additional episodes of violence in the area, such as reports of victims in an overnight raid in the town of Ngamdu in Kada LGA, and also heavy-handed tactics by the Nigerian Army's seventh Division in Borno that has also led to heavy civilian casualties. Therefore, despite the Nigerian government's attempts at establishing a ceasefire in late October with JAS, information detailing the physical and human toll that the insurgency has played in the region over the last few months and years may impact programmes that are working in close collaboration with the Federal or state government initiatives. The frustration of the population with the lack of safety and security provided by government forces has severely damaged the trust between citizens and the state, and although the ceasefire was designed to alleviate the threat of JAS and restore safety and security, it is yet to do so. Hence, programmes working on civil-military cooperation or those supporting government initiatives for humanitarian assistance and economic stabilization in the northeast should be aware that evidence of atrocities committed by JAS and the frustration at the lack of safety and security provided by the government may negatively impact the buy-in at the community level for any initiative that includes government partners.

Declarations for the 2015 election in Kano State may be correlated to the overall decline in incidents of political violence

While last month witnessed the shooting of students and lecturers as well as the bombing of the Federal College of Education in Kano, there was anticipation that the fear and lack of perception of safety and security in the state would continue into this month. However, the Federal College of Education was re-opened in October, and Kano state did not experience additional incidences of violence. This was significant as October witnessed the increase of political activities, including the declaration of General Muhammadu Buhari for the presidency and the intended declaration of Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso. The reason for the improvement in the security environment in the state is yet unknown. However, the improved state of security may portend minimal election-related violence in the run up to the 2015 elections. The current relative calm presents requisite enabling environment for successful development programming.

Candidates' declarations for the 2015 election raise tensions in Plateau and Kaduna while communal violence continues at the LGA level in Plateau State

The political situation in the state is raising more interest and tensions are increasing as more contestants announce their candidacy and attempt to secure their party's nomination in the 2015 election. However, the pending issue of zoning the Governorship position as well as the possible use of state resources to finance campaign expense has the potential to drive conflict in Plateau State. Likewise, the Governor's support for a member of his ethnic group as his successor (while he proceeds to contest for the Senatorial District candidacy for Plateau North) has the potential to also drive tensions if perceived unfair by other contestants and/or the population. In addition to on-going political struggles in Plateau State, communal violence was noted in several villages in Riyom LGA. A total of four villages experienced attacks in Bachit district (Luwa, Dim, Sharubutu, and Kyen) as well as tension in Jol village in Riyom LG - the latter incident resulting in searches of all non-community members including humanitarian workers. The continued community and LGA-based violence may pose significant challenges to programmes operating in Plateau state, including additional security searches increasing travel time which may delay programme implementation.

Like that of Kano and Plateau, political contestation in Kaduna State has become increasingly more competitive with candidates formally declaring their interest for the Governorship. Given the importance of Kaduna State to the electoral success of PDP in both the presidential and governorship elections, the public declaration by the legislatures in the state has the potential to illicit violent reactions. For programmes operating in the Middle Belt States of Plateau and Kaduna, it is important to consider the unresolved and outstanding electoral issues that have the potential to escalate tensions to violence in the region. Programming in all sectors should consider contingency plans for potential escalation of violence in the Middle Belt states that may inhibit implementation of programmes in the run up to the 2015 elections.

Interference in political processes at LGA and State level indicates lack of confidence in the electoral process in the Niger Delta

Polarization between APC and PDP in Rivers State is becoming more visible amongst candidates as the general election draws near. The suspected presidential support for Nyesome Wike (former Minister of State Education) for the PDP Governorship ticket has continued to heighten tensions in Rivers state. Also alleged electoral manipulations, rigging and violence at the recently concluded LGA council elections in Delta state indicate a lack of confidence in the electoral process in the state and signals further manipulations at the 2015 polls.

Opportunistic and Grievance-based Crime on upsurge in the Niger Delta poses increased risk to safety and security of programmes and programme staff

Bayelsa State has witnessed an increase in maritime crime in the month of October. There have been several reported and unreported incidents of kidnappings as well as attacks on passenger boats and oil barges by sea pirates amongst them young people hired to commit specific crimes. This was noted in a number of locations such as Nembe, Brass, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Ogbia LGAs. This recent upsurge in pay-for-hire criminals poses significant risks to programme staff and programme implementation locations in Bayelsa State as well as other locations in the Niger Delta. It may also pose a significant challenge during the electoral period, as crime driven by pay-for-hire individuals may be manipulated to trigger or instigate violence during this period. This dynamic follows last month where similar crimes were also noted, indicating that programmes should prepare contingency plans for staff and programme implementation throughout the Niger Delta to secure safety of their staff.

Recommendations

- Governance programming in the Middle Belt have the potential to mitigate tensions to encourage non-violent contestations. It is recommended that Plateau and Kaduna state programmes should consider the impact that the formal declaration of candidates may have at the community and LGA level over the next few months. Contingency plans should be put in place in preparation for potential violence that may emerge as a result of the candidates that declare formally over the next few weeks.
- Increased violence through pay-for-hire individuals, particularly youth, may negatively impact programming in the Niger Delta. Programmes operating in all sectors including governance and peacebuilding should work with state initiatives to address youth unemployment over the next few months to mitigate the potential co-optation of idle young people towards initiatives of violence in the region.