

SUB-SAHARAN RISK HOTSPOT OUTLOOK 2016

Natznet Tesfay evaluates future threats that lie ahead for Africa

Nigeria

Highly destructive and disruptive pipeline attacks have resumed in the Niger Delta even as the decline in oil price continues to reduce falling Government revenue. The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation was forced to shut refineries at Port Harcourt and Kaduna on 17 January, which produce 5.4 million of the 6.8 million litres of petrol the country processes per day. This followed breaches to the Bonny–Okrika pipeline to Port Harcourt and the major Escravos–Lagos route to Kaduna, attacked by militants on 15 January. Power minister Babatunde Fashola said the closures meant the country was losing \$2.4 million (US) per day in lost gas supply and electricity charges. On 28 January, a key pipeline used by the Nigerian subsidiary of Italian oil company Eni was attacked in Bayelsa.

Pipeline attacks have occurred frequently and regularly since Muhammadu Buhari won the Presidential election in March 2015, but have been mostly low-impact because they were usually carried out by indigenous militant groups in Delta State campaigning for pipeline surveillance contracts. The contracts, previously held by Ijaw former generals from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), were not renewed under Buhari, and infrastructure security was placed with the Joint Task Force and the paramilitary Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. Those measures did not provoke any significant reaction from the former beneficiaries, but the attacks leading to refinery shutdowns occurred the day after the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) issued an arrest warrant for Government Ekpemupolo (also known as Tompolo) in mid-January, widely acknowledged as the most influential former MEND commander.

The lack of reaction from former MEND generals both to the election defeat of former President and fellow Ijaw Goodluck Jonathan, and the loss of pipeline surveillance contracts, indicates they have little interest in returning to the levels of insurgency seen just before



©Getty Images

Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Oil pipelines that were destroyed by dynamite

the 2009 amnesty unless severely provoked. However, the former generals see a reason to react, as the Government is pursuing its most high-profile members, generating fears that a successful prosecution of Tompolo would be the first of many.

Generals can no longer command the loyalty of thousands of former fighters who previously made MEND such a formidable force, in part because so few amnesty programme benefits have filtered down. The Government has made a further attempt to detach these soldiers with the incentive of a renewed and more focused amnesty programme in which they will directly receive benefits. On 10 January, Niger Delta Amnesty Programme special adviser Paul Boroh confirmed the programme would be tailored to facilitate the phasing out of 10,000 former militants, with an emphasis on providing funds

and equipment to start businesses. He also said stipends would be paid directly instead of through 'camp commandants', who allegedly retained large percentages for their own use.

Whatever the previous differences among ex-militants – including taking different sides in an extremely violent Governorship election in Bayelsa in December 2015/January 2016 – former leaders are co-operating again. Further, Tompolo and other generals still have smaller, formidable, and well-paid forces at their disposal, and have the knowledge to strike at critical infrastructure. The Government is highly unlikely to back down in its pursuit of such an iconic leader whose downfall would be a prize in the anti-corruption drive. Tompolo's goal is to show how costly that strategy will be in such financially straitened times and to force authorities into some sort of compromise.

Mozambique

In September 2015, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) resumed its armed campaign against the ruling Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and more recently threatened to seize control of six central and Northern provinces (Manica, Nampula, Niassa, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia) in March. In March 2013, RENAMO rescinded the 1992 peace deal – which ended its 15-year civil war with FRELIMO – resuming small-scale attacks mostly on armed convoys in Sofala.

Since the start of 2016, following the collapse of talks in October 2015, violence has escalated as the Government has intensified its military response to RENAMO, which has retaliated with a spate of attacks particularly between Gorongosa and Caia. Increasing military activity is likely around the Northern section of the border between Zambezia and Sofala provinces and in Gorongosa National Park as security forces sweep through the forest clearing it of RENAMO militants. IHS sources report the security forces have been laying anti-personnel mines along the Western borders of the park to limit RENAMO movement.

RENAMO is unlikely to sabotage the oil and gas infrastructure given alleged vested interests

of some of its leaders. Still, amid low commodity prices, the insurgency will further harm investor confidence and delay key projects.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, almost 3,500 Mozambicans have fled the violence in central

Mozambique into neighbouring Malawi, with numbers likely to rise in the six-month outlook. More broadly, risks of politically motivated protests in major cities will increase if a weak currency and strained Government finances raise cost of transport and staples such as bread.



Tensions between RENAMO and FRELIMO are likely to continue

Democratic Republic of Congo

On 28 January, the Government and Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) announced that bills would be introduced to parliament in March to review the electoral roll – a process that, according to a leaked CENI document, would take 16 months. This would delay the Presidential election of 27 November, allowing President Joseph Kabila to remain in office.

Pre-planned memorial marches for 16 February became a focal point for demonstrations, with the new Front Citoyen 2016 movement – which has ties to the political opposition – and local clergy from the influential Catholic Church providing support. Kinshasa was disrupted by a general strike called by the G7 opposition coalition, while radio station RFI was reportedly jammed causing disruption of messenger services like WhatsApp.

Any perceived attempts to postpone polls will trigger further protests, particularly in March when the review bills are introduced to parliament. Large demonstrations are most

likely in the major urban areas of Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Goma and Bukavu and Mbuji Mayi. The G7 coalition is also likely

to call for further strikes, which could gain traction beyond Kinshasa if heavy-handed tactics on activists continue.



President Joseph Kabila is considered to be engineering an increased stay in office

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