National Overview

Nigeria’s Council of State this week formally rejected calls from President Goodluck Jonathan to delay the February 14 elections, stating they will go ahead as planned in just over a week’s times. The failed move offers a rare insight into how vulnerable Jonathan seems to believe his presidency is, as all signals point to a historically close fight between the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) leader and his main opposition, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Party (APC). Despite this confirmation from the Council of State and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there are still concerns that the INEC will fail to distribute Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) to all those eligible to vote before the February 8 deadline. It is also understood that voting will not be conducted in Boko Haram controlled areas of the north-east, a decision which may result in further controversy over the coming weeks as it poses a significant threat to the credibility of the polls. Political tensions continued to rise throughout the country, particularly in the South-South, with an increase in politically motivated violence being reported. Unrest also continued throughout the north-east as Nigerian and Chadian forces battled the Boko Haram insurgency. Although the Nigerian military managed to repel a second attack on the Borno State capital of Maiduguri, and Chadian forces reclaimed another town from the militants, Boko Haram responded by launching further attacks on villages across the border in Cameroon, as well as carrying out three suicide bombings throughout the north-east. As the elections approach a further increase in Boko Haram incidents is expected, as the group attempts to inflame tensions, reclaim lost territory, and overshadow the democratic process. There is also likely to be further violence stemming from the new ground and air offensives being launched by Chadian troops, particularly as the African Union moves closer to finalizing plans for the creation of a 7500 strong multinational force to combat the insurgency.
South-West Zone

Political clashes were reported across the South-West Zone this week, as the February 14 election draws closer. A number of cases of violence have been reported between APC supporters and supporters of the Labour Party (LP) in Oyo Town, and one person is believed to have been killed in fighting which broke out following an APC campaign in Shitta, Surulere, Lagos State on Wednesday. Further politically motivated violence is to be expected in the coming weeks as the last day for campaigning, February 12, fast approaches. An Israeli national and his Nigerian driver were kidnapped at Eleko Junction in the early hours of February 5 while traveling to Lagos Airport from Lekki. It is understood that the personnel were traveling without a security escort; a practice which is strongly advised against for any expatriate workers. In local developments, suspected cult members reportedly killed one person in the Ijoka area of Ondo Town on Monday. Security has been increased in strategic locations of the town as a result, to forestall possible reprisal attacks from other groups in the community.

Niger Delta activist and the national convenor of the Niger Delta Self-Determination Movement (NDSDM), Annkio Briggs, vowed this week that the people of the Niger Delta have resolved to resume militant operations in the Delta in 2015, whether President Jonathan is re-elected or not. Further politically motivated violence should be expected throughout the South-South in the coming weeks. On February 2 gunmen kidnapped four Nigerian employees from the oil company Agip, in Southern Ijaw, while the workers were traveling on a boat from Amassomma to Ogoimbi. The workers have been taken to an undisclosed location in the creeks and their whereabouts currently remains unknown. Although the number of kidnappings in the Delta has fallen in recent years, there is still a high risk of attack by criminal gangs seeking financial compensation, particularly ahead of the elections, as politicians are known to fund campaigns with money acquired through criminal networks. In a separate incident, on February 4 gunmen also hijacked a crude tanker off the Nigerian coast near the terminal of Qua Iboe, killing the vessel's Greek deputy commander and taking three hostages who have not yet been recovered.

South-East Zone

Protests broke out on February 5 in Awka, Anambra State, as youths demonstrated against the nomination of multiple candidates by the PDP for National Assembly elections in the state. Although there were no reports of violence during the demonstrations, protesters have threatened to take the law into their own hands if the relevant agencies and INEC fail to correct the anomaly. There were no significant incidents reported throughout the rest of the zone, although tensions are expected to rise further as the elections draw closer and there is a risk of violence throughout the south-east.

Tensions normally run high in the South-South Zone in the run-up to elections, and there has been a noticeable increase in violent activities in recent weeks. The politically charged Rivers State saw a coordinated bombing of five different High Courts - Port Harcourt, Degema, Isiokpo, Omoku and Ahoada - on February 2. It is not known who is responsible for the incidents, however the attacks are believed to be part of the recent spate of violence which began in the state in early January when APC supporters were shot on their way to attend the APC president flag-off in Port Harcourt.
The North-Central Zone remained largely quiet this week, with the only major violent incident being further clashes between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State. Over 100 Fulani herdsmen are reported to have stormed five villages in Logo LGA on January 31, killing nine people and displacing hundreds more. In political developments, the Governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose, has been accused of buying PVC’s belonging to APC members. Similar accusations from all political parties are likely to continue in the coming weeks, and while there have been no politically motivated outbreaks of violence in the zone during the reporting period, it is advised to stay aware of local developments.

A peaceful protest was conducted in Abuja on February 5, calling on the INEC not to bow to the pressure mounted on them by President Jonathan and the PDP to postpone the upcoming election. The demonstration began at the Unity Fountain before moving to the Aso Rock Presidential Villa gate and onto Eagle Square. While the protesters threatened to resist any attempt by the government to postpone the elections, the latest confirmation from the INEC that elections will go ahead as planned next week should negate any further risk of violence from the group. However, this does not rule out the possibility of further protests in the capital over the coming weeks, all having the potential to turn violent.

While there were no new significant terrorism incidents reported in the north-west this week, the fear of further attacks remains high and rising political tensions means there is a continuing risk of violence. Eight APC supporters are believed to have died after violence broke out between them and PDP supporters in Kaduna State. The APC suspended their party tour of Kaduna Central following the incident, amid claims that the attackers were hired by the PDP to attack the governor’s convoy. There are also reports that a number of young men were arrested in Tambuwal LGA of Sokoto State, and accused of illegally buying PVC’s. Following 2011’s post-election violence and the violence witnessed during Jonathan’s visit to Katsina two weeks ago, APC and PDP representatives in Katsina State have now signed a peace accord pledging to ensure a peaceful election in the state, although the validity of this agreement remains to be seen.

Boko Haram continued their campaign of terror in the north-east this week as Nigerian and Chadian forces launched new assaults on the insurgents, further raising the levels of violence throughout the zone. The Nigerian army again repelled a Boko Haram assault on the strategic north-eastern city of Maiduguri on February 1, following a similar attempted takeover by the group last week. The militants attacked four major entry points to the city - Ngom, Dalwa, Molai and Jawuri - in the early hours of Sunday, just after the first morning prayers. Most of the fighting was concentrated in the Dalwa area, about 20km from Maiduguri, where 50 insurgents are reported to have been killed by the army and local vigilante groups. A second wave of militants, armed with assault rifles and explosives, are reported to have tried to approach Maiduguri in the late afternoon, but were intercepted by soldiers at Tungushe, 10km from Maiduguri. A further 22 Boko Haram fighters and ten civilians are believed to have died in fighting in the city, although exact figures are hard to confirm. Several weapons, arms and ammunition including two armored vehicles, two artillery guns, as well as 17 Hilux vehicles were also recaptured from the militants. The counter-offensive was a notable success for the often criticized Nigerian army, however concerns remain that the insurgents will continue attempts to capture Maiduguri, and that the security forces may find themselves
over-stretched in the coming weeks. Fierce fighting has also broken out along Nigeria’s borders with Cameroon this week, as Chadian forces launched ground and air assaults against the militants. On February 4 Chadian soldiers entered Nigeria and re-captured the Boko Haram held town of Gamboru Ngala, reportedly killing hundreds of insurgents. In response, the remaining militants in the Gamboru area, believed to number around 800, launched a counter-attack, crossing the bridge from Gamboru into the Cameroonian border town of Fotokol, killing 91 residents and wounding 500 more, before being pushed back by Chadian and Cameroonian military forces. The group has previously warned Nigeria’s neighbors not to become involved in the fighting. This latest incident comes a week after Chadian troops moved into Malumfatori, a Nigerian town which lies near the borders of Chad and Niger, after ground and air assaults. Chad’s deepening involvement in the fighting demonstrates how the conflict with Boko Haram is taking on an increasingly regional dimension, and signals an intensification of efforts by neighboring states to defeat the group, who many believe poses a threat not just to Nigeria, but to the whole Lake Chad region. Chad has an interest in the Boko Haram fight on economic as well as security grounds. Many goods into the landlocked country are shipped up from the port at Douala in Cameroon through Cameroon’s narrow northern region, an area that has been ravaged for over a year by Boko Haram incursions from Nigeria. It has been reported that Chadian forces have also now amassed near the town of Diffa in Niger and are believed to be bombarding the vast Sambisa forest, where the militants have bases. Further fighting between Boko Haram and Chadian troops should be expected in the coming weeks. Despite the evident successes recorded by the Chadian military, so far Nigerian officials have refrained from commenting on Chad’s involvement in the fighting, in a move which is likely to have political motivations. President Jonathan has repeatedly come under fire for his government’s failure to quash the insurgency and the Boko Haram issue is likely to be a divisive one in next week’s elections. In another positive step, it is understood that African Union officials are in the process of finalizing plans for a multinational force to fight Boko Haram, based in the Chadian capital N’Djamena, although there are still a number of unanswered questions over funding. Senior officers from the UN peacekeeping department are also believed to have been involved in the planning process, and French President Francois Hollande has confirmed that France will provide weapons and logistical support for the multinational effort, but stopped short of saying whether France is or will be involved in military action. In a separate incident in the town of Potiskum, 230 km west of Maiduguri, a suicide bomber blew himself up outside the house of federal legislator Sabo Garbu, killing 10 people. Levels of violence also rose significantly in Gombe this week, with a suicide blast near a mosque in Gombe City on January 31 followed by a further blast near the Gombe City stadium on February 1 occurring soon after President Jonathan left a PDP party rally in the stadium. The first incident, involving two suicide bombers on a motorbike, killed five people and wounded eight, while the second killed one (believed to be the bomber) and injured 18. Further violence broke out following the incident, with angry youths blaming the bombing on Jonathan’s visit and attacking PDP supporters. Although the death tolls are not as high as in previous Boko Haram attributed suicide bombings, the timing of the latest attack has shocked many and both the president and Buhari have now canceled scheduled election rallies in Damaturu in Yobe State and Maiduguri in Borno State respectively. The risk of further Boko Haram attributed terror-style attacks remains high throughout the north-east, particularly in urban centers, and authorities have warned that the insurgents are planning to use young, female suicide bombers to carry out attacks at polling stations in the next three weeks. In further political clashes, four people have reportedly died in Taraba State throughout the course of this week, in fighting between PDP, APC and SDP supporters. A dusk to dawn curfew has now been imposed in Suntai town in an attempt to curb the violence. Gunfire was also reported in the early hours of Wednesday along the Bauchi-Jos highway, as police attempted to stop an armed gang that previously stormed a mosque in Bauchi City, shooting and killing a member of the state ministry for local government affairs.
Key Security Events
January 30 - February 5, 2015

GOMBE STATE, FEBRUARY 1:
The Nigerian army repelled a Boko Haram assault on Maiduguri in which the militants attacked four major entry points to the city - Ngom, Dalwa, Molai and Jawuri - in the early hours, just after the first morning prayers.

LAGOS STATE, FEBRUARY 5:
An Israeli national and his Nigerian driver were kidnapped at Eleko Junction in the early hours of February 5 while traveling to Lagos Airport from Lekki.

RIVERS STATE, FEBRUARY 2:
There was a coordinated bombing of five different High Courts - Port Harcourt, Degema, Isiokpo, Omoku and Ahoada – by unknown attackers.

KADUNA STATE, FEBRUARY 4:
Eight APC supporters are believed to have died after violence broke out between them and PDP supporters in Kaduna State. The APC suspended their party tour of Kaduna Central following the incident.

BENUE STATE, JANUARY 31:
Over 100 Fulani herdsmen are reported to have stormed five villages in Logo LGA, killing nine people and displacing hundreds more.
Politics and Security

- France has sent military advisers to Niger’s southern border with Nigeria to help coordinate military action by regional powers fighting the Islamist group Boko Haram, a French army official said on Thursday. The deployment was announced as warplanes pounded Boko Haram positions just over the border in Nigeria, a resident in the Niger town of Bosso said, and hundreds of Chadian troops massed at the frontier to prepare an attack. Chad has sent about 2,500 troops as part of efforts to take on the militant group, which has intensified its fight to set up a breakaway Islamist state in Nigeria and has staged cross-border raids. Chadian troops crossed into Nigeria this week from Cameroon, on the southern side of Lake Chad. A French army official told Reuters a detachment of about 10 military personnel had been stationed in Diffa at the request of Niger, its former colony. “It is there to coordinate the armies on the ground in the fight against Boko Haram,” the official said. Full Article

- The Federal Government on Thursday formally launched a New National Security Strategy document to combat terrorism in the country. The new strategy is already being used as the document was prepared in 2014. In his speech the National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, said the new strategy has helped the security apparatus deal with the current insurgency in the country. The public can now formally request copies of the document from the office of the NSA. President Goodluck Jonathan formally launched the new strategy which is contained in three different documents: National Security Strategy, Counter Terrorism Strategy and Cyber Security Plan and Strategy. In his speech, Jonathan noted that the National Security Strategy was a wakeup call on every Nigerian to develop that “individual and collective consciousness and readiness to forestall, preempt, protect and defend the country against natural and man-made disasters. It also demands multi-sectoral, domestic and international approaches, efforts and cooperation,” he said. He noted that the strategy was carefully thought-out and approached security from a comprehensive perspective, leaving nothing to chance. Full Article

Boko Haram’s Suicide Bombers Are Almost All Young Women

No more than 10 years old, a girl with explosives strapped to her small frame walked into a market in Maiduguri, Nigeria, one day last month. Minutes later, the girl, whose name is still unknown, had killed at least 19 people, including herself. She was just one of an estimated 20 young females Boko Haram has delegated to escalate its campaign of violence in advance of the country’s elections on February 14. The Islamist militant group is almost exclusively using women as suicide bombers, a tactic that sets it apart from every other terrorist organization.

“The bombings started in June last year, and there have been two waves since then,” said Elizabeth Pearson, an expert at the Nigeria Security Network. “It is a very deliberate tactic being used by Boko Haram.” The Maiduguri market bombing in December was just one example of how Boko Haram is deploying women – and girls – to carry out attacks. In 2014, Pearson said, 85 percent of all female suicide-bomber attacks in the world took place in Nigeria.

“These bombings are significant as they all took place outside the three key states Boko Haram targets,” Pearson wrote in a blog post. “The female suicide bomb campaign is not an act of desperation but a show of strength.” However, it is conceivable the increase in female suicide bombers in Nigeria during the past six months could signal the group is lacking recruits, according to Mia Bloom, an expert on female terrorists at the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies. “Usually when you see lulls in recruitment, you look to women,” Bloom said.

Source: IB Times Full Article
Economics and Business

- Recent economic developments have, again, thrown up the debate on the diversification of the economy and the importance for Nigeria as a nation to look in the direction of agriculture, which has the potential to generate significant revenue and offers more sustainable and equitable development than oil. With 60 percent of Africans and by extension Nigerians, directly depending on agriculture for survival, coupled with the growing poverty and food insecurity, agriculture should be top priority, and if the Nigerian Government is really committed to putting the nation among the league of major economies of the world in the year 2020, it must look inwards towards reforming the sector. The agricultural sector should be Nigeria's next "oil" in this ever changing economic climate. Research has shown that Nigeria, the world's largest producers of cassava, is responsible for nearly that of the second and third producers Brazil and Indonesia combined.

- Nigeria has set out an ambitious project to have energy sufficiency by tapping renewable energy in villages across its 36 states. Africa's largest oil producer is grappling with a serious energy crisis. Most of the impoverished communities outside Nigeria's capital, Abuja, have no access to grid electricity. Instead, people use lamps, battery-powered flashlights and diesel generators. The Durumi village has become an exception, it has solar power. Durumi is one of three solar pilot projects set up by the federal government to show the potential of renewable energy. Each house has its own lighting system and street lights allow the village market to stay open at night. Albert Okurogu, the coordinator for Operation Light Up Rural Nigeria, stated "When I first visited this community everyone was in the dark."
About Triple Canopy

Triple Canopy is a leading provider of mission support, security, training and advisory services to government agencies and multinational corporations across a range of market sectors and geographies. The company excels at delivering complete program management solutions to help clients achieve critical mission objectives in challenging locations worldwide. From logistics and life support to personal protection and training, clients rely on Triple Canopy to mitigate risk and ensure business continuity. Triple Canopy is ISO 9001:2008 certified and a founding signatory of the International Code of Conduct.