

Centre for Democracy and Development

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan Monitoring

Report for February 2016

Introduction

Military onslaughts against jihadist across Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad intensified in February 2016. In countries of the ECOWAS, namely Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ghana and Ivory Coast, fears of attacks increased as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) intensifies effort to expand its operational scope beyond Mali and Burkina Faso.

The battle to rid the ECOWAS and Sahel of jihadist elements is far from over. While military operations continue to dominate government approaches to deal with the threats, reports of jihadist expansion into new countries have been abound. For instance, Senegal intercepted some of its citizens in Mauritania attempting to join Boko Haram and Nigeria officials arrested an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) recruiter. Occasional Boko Haram attacks persist in northern Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Mali despite constant military pressure from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). While French forces continued its operations against AQIM, ambush attacks on Mali government forces, aid workers and UN mission peacekeepers persist. Factors that contribute to the continued violence by extremists groups include a significant lack of government

resources, poor coordination between countries, political corruption, and competing priorities among country leadership.

Human rights are increasingly being sacrificed in the name of national security. The vast majority of human rights violations perpetrated by the states are not reported in media outlets. These violations, however, play right into the terrorist's hands, as their violence is often aimed at instigating violent state reactions on the populace, thereby isolating the government from its people. Terror and insurgency leadership then attempt to fill the security vacuum left behind. States with limited resources such as those in the ECOWAS and Sahel region are more prone to turn quickly to violence as a reaction to terrorism, making them desirable for terrorism and insurgency groups because of their limited ability to organize effectively against such groups.¹

Conflict produced by violent extremism is exacerbating an already critical food and nutritional crisis that has been growing for over a decade. In many countries of West Africa and the Sahel, severe acute malnutrition is high among children. In Boko Haram-affected areas across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, the estimated number of children with severe acute malnutrition increased from 149,000 to 195,000 between January 2014 and January 2016.² In the Sahel, 23.5 million people are suffering food insecurity while 6 million people need emergency food assistance, according to the United Nations for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

¹ Brian Blankenship (2016), When Do States Take the Bait? State Capacity and the Provocation Logic of Terrorism <http://jcr.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/05/05/0022002716645656.abstract>

² http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Beyond_Chibok.pdf

Similarly, female mortality rates during childbirth, infant mortality rates, and children below the age of three mortality rates have all skyrocketed, particularly in internally displaced people (IDP) camps. Sexual violence is a characteristic of the ongoing violence in northeast Nigeria, during which hundreds of women and girls have been raped by fighters belonging to Boko Haram. Many of the women and girls were abducted, forcibly married to their captors and became pregnant as a result of rape.³

Beyond Boko Haram and its scope of violence in Nigeria, Chad and Niger, the gradual spread of Al Qaeda affiliates in the region is worrisome. Amidst recent grief from the attack on Radisson Blu, in Bamako, Mali, last November, a similar attack was carried out in Burkina Faso in January. This trend of attacks has heightened fears across West Africa and forced countries to take drastic security measures in recent months.

Highlights

Islamic terrorism in the ECOWAS and the Sahel region has dominated political debates in all countries. In Nigeria, political analysts have identified the inability of former President Goodluck Jonathan to address the crisis caused by Boko Haram as one of the big factors that culminated in his defeat by now-President Muhammadu Buhari. In Mali, fighting between the military and jihadists dominate daily news headlines. Reports of violence include gun battles, landmine attacks, rocket attacks on peacekeeper bases and other more criminal behaviour such as banditry. Although militaries in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad have made measurable gains over Boko Haram,

³ http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/Nigeria_BadBlood_EN_2016.pdf

the group still managed to carry out attacks in remote areas and suicide attacks in vulnerable areas such as markets and IDP camps.

Nigeria's campaign against Boko Haram has triggered a surge of bombings in neighbouring Cameroon, where the army is making headway in stopping attacks on military targets. Cameroon's Far North Region was ravaged by over 20 Boko Haram attacks in January and February alone. Many of these attacks were carried out by teenager's suicide bombers.

Country By Country Analysis

Nigeria

Boko Haram continued its attack on soft targets in February 2016, killing a substantial number of people in Mairi, Malari in Konduga Local Government Area, Dikwa, Kachifa and Yakhari of Borno State, Kuda village of Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

However, the Nigeria government claimed it had out-rightly decimated the group, referencing cases of Boko Haram fighters who have surrendered to the Nigeria Army. The Nigerian Army rescued several people, cleared several camps, arrested and killed several Boko Haram fighters throughout much of Borno state.

Despite recent success by the Nigeria Army in its fight against Boko Haram, reports of continued Boko Haram attacks in remote communities angered many who feel the government should do more. It is clear that President Buhari's goal to defeat Boko Haram by the end of 2015 was not met and likely unachievable. Frustrated by the Dalori attack in January, Senator Baba Kaka Bashir

Garbai was criticized by President Buhari and the governor of Borno State, Shettima, for alleging Boko Haram controls three local areas of Borno. Indeed, despite claims by the government that the group no longer controls terrain, new Boko Haram hideouts and safe havens are constantly being discovered. Furthermore, many of the areas allegedly under the control of the Nigeria Army are inaccessible due to landmines and Boko Haram presence.

Mali

Many arrests have been made by Malian officials following the extension of State of Emergency in early January 2016. Although several terrorist groups remain active in northern Mali, the peace process is gaining momentum. Many people are returning their homes in Timbuktu as peace and stability improves. Aid workers project roughly 41,000 Malian refugees have returned home as a fragile peace agreement signed in mid-2015 has taken hold. Commercial activities are said to be steadily picking up in Gao and Timbuktu, but many returnees continue to live in difficult conditions with ruined houses, lootings and a near absence of sources of livelihood. In many places, food and clean water are difficult to come by and a considerable lack of resources has caused inflation rates to skyrocket, leaving many unable to afford basic sustenance.

Currently, UNHCR, a UN Refugee Agency is assisting to rebuild and maintain communities through projects focused on education, health care, hygiene and clean water.

Other Countries

Intelligence reports have warned that attacks by Islamist militants is imminent in major population centres throughout West Africa. According to the reports, Islamic fighters are considering using

car bombs, attacking public areas popular with foreigners and targeting beaches according to unnamed sources. Economic activity has been paralyzed in Chad and northern Cameroon following frequent Boko Haram attacks on trucks transporting goods from Nigeria's Borno state to the two nations. Trucks have been diverted despite MNJTF checkpoints on the borders and have become a regular occurrence. As a result, shops in N'djamena have not received supplies from Nigeria's Borno state, a major source for goods. In the most recent attack, the insurgents drove three trucks loaded with goods destined for northern Cameroon and the Chadian capital, N'djamena, to an unknown destination. Chad and northern Cameroon have supply routes originating from Maiduguri in northeast Nigeria.

Boko Haram attacks in Niger have abated except for a few attacks ahead of its election in February, but the elections seemed to be uneffaced. In Mauritania, Cheikh Ould Saleck who escaped on January 1, was recaptured in Guinea by Guinean armed forces and sent him back to Mauritania. While Ould was on the run, some 30 Islamists launched a hunger strike on allegations that they were being punished for Ould's escape. In three weeks before Cheikh Ould Saleck was recaptured he is believed to have travelled about 500 km (312 miles) through three West African countries.

Trends Analysis

Attacks and Operations

Hopes are high in Mali and Nigeria about the restoration of law and order to regions devastated by violent extremists. Stakeholders in Mali think the peace process is progressing while in military

advances continue by air and ground troops in Nigeria. However, the security situation in much of Borno remains unstable as Boko Haram continues its attacks. Seven people were reportedly missing after Boko Haram insurgents allegedly attacked a group of firewood traders in Jawu village, about 8 kilometres from Auno town, west of Maiduguri.

Tactics and Response

The attacks in Mali and Ouagadougou have resulted in increased armed military presence in major hotels and leisure centres across West Africa, and in particular in areas where AQIM operate. Government offices, foreign missions, popular hotels and other major public places are often barricaded with thick concrete slabs, making movement by vehicle much harder in major parts of these cities.

Amidst increasing fuel scarcity and the blockage of fuel tankers from supplying fuel to hinterland communities in Nigeria, Boko Haram logistics now use jerry cans to transport fuel. The military and other security agencies have intensified effort that have resulted in large fuel shortages. As a result, many of Boko Haram attacks in January were conducted without the use of vehicles. Many bicycles were recovered and destroyed by the Nigeria army while many motor cycles found in Boko haram camps were without fuel. The army has also intercepted several drug and stimulant sellers. Intelligence report says the drugs are used to boost sexual performance of the group and to keep them awake.

Government Response

In the aftermath of the attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso in November and January respectively, leaders from both countries agreed to work more closely to fight jihadists by sharing intelligence and conducting joint security patrols. There are several multinational groups that have emerged in West Africa and the Sahel over time to tackle extremist groups but they have largely been ineffective. In December 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger formed the G5 Sahel grouping, an institutional framework created to coordinate development and security policies of the region. Also, there is the Multinational Joint Task Force, France's counter-terrorism mission in the Sahel region known as Operation Barkhane and others. These groups are often marred by internal bickering, conflicting interests, confused on strategy and tactics and laden with selfish interest of different leaders. The emergence of these groups has put a question mark on the efficacy of the ECOWAS and the AU.

Government response to terrorism has largely been hinged on military might rather than on tackling the root causes of terrorism. Since the attack on Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's government has responded by significantly increasing military presence in civil space. This has also occurred in population centres in Senegal and Ghana. However, leaders have failed to realise that military might is not sustainable, especially when the extremist themselves are not afraid of death. Increased military presence in public spaces has created conditions for human rights violations. Using solely military in many cases has incited extremist's force against government forces. While military force is critical, it should however not be treated as sole solution.

Although Mali attempted a peace agreement in June 2015, the inability and incapacity of the government to fulfil the peace conditions continues to undermine the peace process. There are

indications that confidence has steadily eroded between the government and the rebels, slowing peace initiatives to a halt. The government and the rebel alliance - Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) - have both accused each other of stalling on implementation. In Nigeria, the government has continued to express its willingness to dialogue with Boko Haram. One thing is clear in both instances: these are just temporary measures. If the real issues are not addressed, peace will likely never be achieved.

Thousands of Malian children have been sold to armed groups by family members or school officials in exchange for money. In other cases, the children themselves may have been lured in by money and the appeal of “fighting for God,” especially after indoctrination in religious schools. Girls are often bought or abducted and forced into marriages with combatants or used in sexual slavery. In 2013, the United Nations added Mali to its child soldiers list of shame. Malnutrition affects one in three children in Mali; latest figures show a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 12.4 percent among children under five across the country. In the region of Timbuktu, this rate rises to 17.5 percent, exceeding the World Health Organization's critical emergency threshold.

In Nigeria, several children are lost to malnutrition each day. Feeding condition in IDP camps in Nigeria is very poor and alleged cases of omen in IDP camps forced to trade sex for food is rampant. The cost of living in remote areas of Borno State where people have managed to return into has skyrocketed and deemed many areas unaffordable for the many of them. Government food supplies remain critically low. Nigeria needs 1.5 billion dollars as immediate relief fund for the states of the north east affected by Boko Haram activities.

Figures and Casualties

Nigeria									
Rescue	adoption	vigilante	civilian death	injuries	soldier death	injuries	terrorist death	arrest	Surrender
696	1	4	307	329	2	2	134	345	3
			Cameroon						
		2	93		2		several	several	

Regional

In ongoing AU coordination for military responses to violent extremism, a donor conference was held in Addis Ababa in February. The conference was attended by the Chairman of the African Union (AU), Idriss Deby Itno, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to the AU, Haile Menkerios, and the Head of the UN Office for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

The ECOWAS and the AU have largely been ineffective in dealing with the arms threat in Africa. Rather than practical solutions, these bodies have continued to utilized roundtable conferences and meetings that often produce few if any results. The ECOWAS office in Abuja has become simply another redundant bureaucratic step.

International Support

The countries ravaged by extreme violence have benefited from a series of external support in the last few months. Support pledges came from, among others, the European Union, the United

States, Russia and China. The United States has already established a drone base in Cameroon to assist with intelligence gathering and has a small detachment of its troops in Nigeria and neighboring countries who are not meant to be actively involved in the war.

In January, as part of their Excess Defense Articles Program, the United States donated over 24 mine-resistant armor-protected vehicles to the Nigerian Army. According to reports, more than half of the vehicles are not functional. Similarly, Germany's President is expected in Nigeria in February as part of her African tour. Her visit is also expected to attract some support for the fight against Boko Haram.

Germany shows commitment towards counter violent extremist in Africa, particularly in West Africa. The German cabinet approved the deployment of 550 Bundeswehr troops to Mali in early January. This was further to the campaign by President Francois Hollande in Europe for support following the Paris and Bamako attacks. German deployment of troops to Africa to counter terrorism has so far been minimal. In 2012 when France began its deployment over the crisis in northern Mali, only 10 German soldiers were involved.

The German troops are better trained and equipped than most of the peacekeepers already on ground in Mali and can provide emergency combat support that is currently provided by French troops. The German government's proposal will extend the deployment until 31 January 2017. The German soldiers will be stationed in Gao, northeastern Mali, where soldiers from the Netherlands are operating a base camp. With increasing casualties to landmines, the U.S. military is helping the U.N. mission counter IEDs, while several European countries staff an intelligence cell in Mali that analyzes input from unarmed drones, sensor-equipped attack helicopters and Special Forces.

The Strategy

In view of these challenges, the ECOWAS CTSIP fills the gap for the need of robust and proactive policy recommendations address the security issues of terrorism within the region. The ECOWAS CTSSIP calls on states to develop de-radicalisation programs that seek to counter radical ideologies and terrorist propaganda and social awareness programs for youth groups. Counterterrorism programs should also be incorporated into school curriculums.

The CTSIP is built on the primacy of terrorism prevention and respect for human rights. Our strategy emphasizes good governance and a democratic culture as prerequisites for effective counter-terrorism. Counter-terrorism requires both military and non-military strategies and tools, however CTSIP observes that the largest percentage of efforts usually lean toward military means. Cooperation among states and technical assistance in all fields constitute a cornerstone for the successful implementation of this strategy.

The three pillars of the ECOWAS CTSIP strategy are: prevention, rescue and reconstruct. Prevention seeks to mitigate the conditions that lead to terrorism while also seeking to ensure timely and effective responses to terrorist acts. Rescue.... Reconstruct seeks to rebuild society and reassert the authority of the state after a terrorist attack.

Conclusion

Violent extremist groups pose a serious threat to international peace, security and stability and constitutes a criminal act that undermines efforts aimed at achieving democracy, good governance and development. In West Africa, particularly within the ECOWAS bloc, the challenges posed by violent extreme groups have further impoverished many people and created dire humanitarian crisis. The reversal of democratic and development gains of previous decades⁴ is a result of the chaos caused by these elements.

Terrorism is a major global problem. States in the Sahel and ECOWAS have proven to be weak against political corruption, poverty, social injustice and governance in remote areas. Large areas left ungoverned by states are now controlled by terrorist elements, insurgent groups and criminal gangs. While some groups like Boko Haram have evolved locally, other groups use West Africa as a base of operations and spread their terror to other parts of Africa.

There is a desperate need to increase state response that addresses these threats using a holistic approach. The unfortunate inability of the region to form a common alliance against crime and terrorism has made the region a common ground for breeding criminals and terrorist organizations.

Recommendations

⁴ Banfield J. Tell (2015) Like It Is the role of civil society in responding to serious and organised crime in west Africa, International Alert, September 2015

- African countries must think beyond their individual country's security and think holistically about areas of influence outside their borders. African leaders must meet and address these grey areas and develop joint counterterrorism strategies.
- Porous borders and state-within-state spaces not governed by a legitimate central government must be collectively addressed through a continent-wide strategy.
- Transparency of the state and its institutions is essential. There is need to operate an open policy with consistent interface with civil society and the media as a measure of galvanizing national support.
- ECOWAS states need to share actionable intelligence and information. Cooperation in investigation, prosecution and counterterrorism operations is essential to defeating violent extremist groups in the region.
- Those who have been displaced need to be provided with psychological, mental, physical and emotional support before they are returned to their communities. Governments need to guarantee their safety, ensure rebuilding of their community, houses, markets, roads/bridges before they are returned to their respective communities.

Appendixes

The existing Islamic Extremist Groups

Although there are many violent Islamic extremist groups within the ECOWAS and the Sahel, this particular edition examines a few of the prominent groups that were active in January 2016.

AQIM: Spun out of the jihadi insurgents who fought during the 1990s Algerian civil war, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has existed as an al-Qaeda franchise based in desert borderlands since 2007. Since November 2015, al-Qaeda

and its affiliate fighters have attacked hotels in the Malian and Burkina Faso capitals, killing dozens of Westerners with increasing sophistication. Assaultants in Ouagadougou planted explosives to slow rescuers and sent an apparently live audio message from the scene entitled: "Message Signed with Blood and Body Parts." Among several attacks the group carried out in February 2016 was an attack on Malian security forces while escorting humanitarian convoy near Goundam, Timbuktu. Two soldiers and two attackers were reportedly killed in the incident while an additional three Malian soldiers were wounded and three attackers arrested.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar: A veteran of the war in Afghanistan, the elusive one-eyed Algerian terrorist made a name for himself as a leader of desert bandits aiming to kidnap and kill Westerners. A few years ago, he broke with AQIM after its leaders criticized him for not being violent enough. Groups he has founded since then have gone on to kill scores of people, mostly foreigners, in Algeria, Mali and Burkina Faso. The jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar and his al-Mourabitoun movement are proving to be a growing menace. The group is widely believed to be the perpetrators of attacks on two hotels and a café in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou, in which over 30 people are killed.

Ansar Dine: Ansar Dine, led by Tuareg commander Iyad Ag Ghali, briefly seized the desert north of al AQIM in 2012 and the two groups are involved in an intensifying insurgency that has spilled over Mali's borders. They are largely Tuareg who refused to signed government offered peace in June 2015 and have continued Islamic terrorist operations with profits from drug smuggling. The continued smuggling explains Ansar Dine involvement with the new Islamic terror group FLM (Macina Liberation Front). This group also claimed involvement in the November 2015 hotel attack in the capital. FLM openly identifies with the Fulani (Macina are the local branch of the Fulani) tribe⁵. The Sahara Emirate is led by Abu Yahya al Hammam and has a long history of taking hostages in the Sahara and Sahel. For example, the group is holding Swede Johan Gustofsson and South African Stephen McGowan in northern Mali. The two were held with Dutch citizen Sjaak Rijke, who was freed last year in a French Special Forces raid. In February, Ansar al-Din carried out an attack on a MINUSMA camp using a suicide vehicle-born improvised explosive device (SVBIED) and rockets. Seven peacekeepers were reported killed and 30 injured. Additionally, the group claimed

⁵ Mali: The North Smolders <http://www.strategypage.com/qnd/mali/20160115.aspx>

responsibility for the attack on a French military vehicle north of Kidal, killing an unknown number of French soldiers.

Macina Liberation Front: FLM is composed mostly of young Fulani men and is associated with Ansar Dine and AQIM. Although most Malians are Moslem, few want anything to do with Islamic terrorism. FLM started out with calls for Fulani people to live according to strict Islamic rules. That in turn led to violence against tribal and village leaders who opposed this.

The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad: The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad or the Azawad National Liberation Movement, formerly known as the National Movement of Azawad, is a political and military organisation based in Azawad and greater northern Mali. The movement is made up of Tuareg rebels, some of whom fought in the Libyan army during the 2012 rebellion. In 2012, MNLA officially announced the merger of his ethnic Tuareg fighting group (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) with the Islamic fighting militia, also composed of Tuaregs, called Ansar Dine⁶. The merger eventually failed as a result of mutual suspicion and distrust. In February 2016, the MNLA claimed responsibility for an attack on Malian Army checkpoint in Ménaka. Two Malian soldiers were killed and 3 were injured.

Boko Haram/ ISWAP: This northern Nigerian militant group first made a name for itself by opposing Western education and for abducting hundreds of schoolgirls in the notorious 2014 Chibok raid. Recently, the group has been responsible for increasingly bloody attacks in Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. In the spring of 2015, some Boko Haram leaders declared loyalty to the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL) and rebranded themselves the Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP). In January, the group conducted a horrific attack in Dalori in which 86 people were reportedly killed, including many women and children. Boko Haram has mastered the act of using young, often kidnapped girls to carry out suicide bomb attacks, targeting vulnerable areas such as markets and refugee camps.

⁶ <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/national-movement-liberation-azawad-mnla>

<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/197785-fact-check-buharis-claim-boko-haram-not-holding-territory-nigeria-exaggerated.html> Fact-Check: Buhari's claim that Boko Haram 'not holding any territory' in Nigeria exaggerated

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http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/198278-nigerian-army-busts-boko-haram-fuel-ammunition-supply-chain.html	Nigerian Army busts Boko Haram fuel, ammunition supply chain
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/world/africa/suicide-bomber-girls-kill-58-in-nigerian-refugee-camp.html?_r=0	Young Bombers Kill 58 at Nigerian Camp for Those Fleeing Boko Haram
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In February 2016, 21 out of 25 total violent incidents were directly related to VEOs listed.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) forces, and Malian Army and Malian authorities were the primary targets.

While in recent months VEOs relied on improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, the two most damaging in February were suicide attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).

Under unclear circumstances there is a concerning increased violence near Ménaka, especially at the village Inékar.

Since July 2015, 28 violent incidents occurred between Ansongo and Ménaka, rockets were discovered and destroyed before being launched, and three suspected militants were arrested.

01 – 05 February 2016: French forces discovered and destroyed rockets southeast of Tessalit, Kidal Region.

Ansar al-Din, group led by Iyad Ag Ghali with close ties to AQIM, announced launching its own media branch on 28 February 2016.

The killing of Abu al-Nour is a blow to AQIM's Saharan Emirate. In a video released by the group early January 2016 Abu al-Nour appeared to be in charge of the military training.

In February: French forces conducted missions in north of Timbuktu and Gao region, both areas considered to be strongholds for AQIM and al-Murabitun respectively.

05 February 2016: Suicide bomber and a VBIED targeted MINUSMA police camp in Timbuktu. Four attackers and one Malian soldier killed, and three soldiers injured. AQIM claimed responsibility of the attack.

07 February 2016: Allegedly, a former collaborator with AQIM been assassinated in Boni near Douentza, Mali. AQIM suspected to be behind the assassination after the group believes he became a traitor.

09 February 2016: Malian Military vehicle struck an IED in Mondoro, central Mali, near the borders with Burkina Faso. Three Malian soldiers killed and two injured.

11 February 2016: Gunmen in two 4x4 vehicles carried an attack on Malian customs checkpoint in Hombori. Two civilians and one Malian customs officer killed. Militants also burned a vehicle.

11 February 2016: Allegedly an unknown militant killed when mishandled an IED between Gao and Sévaré.

11 February 2016: Two unknown militants executed an officer of Water and Forests Agency in Sokolo, central Mali.

11 February 2016: Unidentified militants on motorcycles allegedly attacked group of civilians returning from Abalagh market in Niger. Seven civilians reportedly killed in what appeared to be a result of inter-community tensions. The incident took place on the border between Niger and Mali.

<u>12 February 2016</u> : Unknown militants ambushed Malian military convoy on Timbuktu – Goundam transit route. Three Malian soldiers killed and two injured.
<u>12 February</u> : Ansar al-Din carried an attack on MINUSMA camp using VBIED suicide bomb and rockets. <u>Seven peacekeepers killed and 30 injured</u> .
<u>14 February 2016</u> : MINUSMA/Barkhane vehicle struck an IED in Kidal city.
<u>13 February 2016</u> : Communities of Tondo and Kalandja villages, Niafunké Circle, clashed over herding dispute. Four killed and 20 injured.
<u>16 February 2016</u> : Unknown gunmen assassinated head of Douassak Tuareg clan in Inekar, near Ménaka.
<u>18 February 2016</u> : A rocket targeted MINUSMA camp in Tessalit, Mali causing no casualties reportedly.
<u>19 February 2016</u> : Unknown gunmen attacked Malian Army checkpoint in Ménaka. Two Malian soldiers killed and 3 injured. Group identified as <u>Mouvement de la jeunesse pour la libération totale de l’Azawad</u> allegedly claimed responsibility.
<u>19 February 2016</u> : An IED discovered and dismantled in Kidal city.
<u>20 February 2016</u> : MINUSMA logistics convoy struck an IED 6km north of Tabankort while heading to Kidal. No casualties or damages reported.
<u>22 February 2016</u> : Sahara Media said French forces clashed with suspected members of AQIM 150km north of Timbuktu.
<u>23 February 2016</u> : Militants suspected to be members of AQIM attacked Malian Army checkpoint in Léré. Three soldiers reportedly killed and two injured. Also two militants supposedly injured but managed to escape. Suspects arrested at Ber three days later and two taken vehicles were recovered then handed back to the Malian Army by members of the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA).
<u>23 February 2016</u> : Malian Army vehicle struck an IED near Doro while traveling to Gao. One soldier injured.
<u>24 February 2016</u> : Unknown gunmen seized two vehicles of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) while in a mission at Taboye, Gao region. Vehicles were later recovered by members of <i>Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés</i> (GATIA).

25 February 2016 (see image): French vehicle struck an IED near Tabankort. French forces did not report the incident.
<u>25 February 2016</u> : Chadian peacekeeper killed his superior and a doctor at MINUSMA camp in Kidal. Chadian peacekeepers reportedly were unhappy with living conditions at the camp.
<u>29 February 2016</u> : MINUSMA vehicle of Chadian peacekeepers struck an IED in Taghlit, located on Aguelhoc-Tessalit transit route. Three peacekeepers injured.
<u>29 February 2016</u> : French forces reportedly targeted an AQIM camp north of Timbuktu. Two AQIM commanders, Abu al-Nour and Marwane al-Misri, were killed during the operation.
<u>29 February 2016</u> : Al-Murabitun spokesman identified as Abu Dejana al-Qasimi (al-Saudi) escaped an operation conducted by French forces in Tilemsi area, Gao region.
<u>17-29 February 2016</u> : Villages in Ménaka area witnessed several violent incidents between different ethnic groups based in the area. Local observers said at least 100 people killed, including civilians and children. Reportedly in one incident <u>at least 10 people killed</u> . On <u>27 February 2016</u> unknown gunmen allegedly killed eight civilians near Ménaka. Supposedly the attack took place on Ifokritine and Silatine transit route. Six more killed in clashes on 25 February 2016.