

Daily Incident Briefing report

22/09/2021

Burundi

Reports of armed conflict in Cibitoke province

Clashes between soldiers and an unknown armed group were reported in the Mabayi commune of Cibitoke province on 27 November. As per local reports, the military launched an operation to “remove all armed elements” in the Kibira forest some days prior, resulting in the armed exchange. Security officials have yet to formally reveal the identity of the group, or casualty numbers. As the military campaign continues, further armed clashes can be expected in Kibira, which have the potential to spill over into surrounding residential areas.

DRC

Chikungunya outbreak recorded in Kwango province

As confirmed on 28 November, 27 cases of the chikungunya virus have been confirmed in the Kenge health zone of Kwango province. Associated fatalities have yet to be announced. Infants and older adults with underlying health issues are particularly susceptible to the mosquito-borne illness; symptoms include headaches, joint pain and fever. Currently, there are no vaccines or pharmaceuticals commercially available to treat chikungunya infections.

DRC

Prison break in Beni

At least 11 detainees escaped from the civil prosecutor’s cell in Beni city, situated in North Kivu province, on 29 November. The detainees escaped from the prison ceiling during torrential rain, and overpowered the security. This is the second prison break in recent weeks; at least 1,455 inmates escaped from Kangbayi central prison in Beni on 20 October during an armed attack. Increased security deployments should be expected in the greater Beni area in the coming days. Furthermore, this incident highlights the poor security standards prevalent throughout the DRC’s criminal detention facilities, which have been subject to several recent prison breaks.

DRC

Security operation in Goma

At least 46 suspected criminals, including 13 Rwandans, were arrested on 28 November in the North Kivu province city of Goma. The detained group were armed with at least eight semi-automatic rifles, ten loaded magazines, machetes, and an arrow. The arrests took place at an organised border closure raid by the national army (FARDC) and the police in the Bujovu area. Goma and its surrounds face significant insecurity; this is due to the proximity to the Virunga National Park and to regional neighbours, Uganda and Rwanda. Several cross-border criminals and myriad non-state armed actors infiltrate the city through porous borders and regularly undertake attacks against civilian and state interests.

Eritrea

Rocket attack on Asmara

Diplomatic sources confirmed on 29 November that multiple rockets originating from Ethiopia's Tigray region struck Asmara on 28 November. The rockets appeared to have targeted Asmara's airport and Eritrean military sites in the city and are believed to have been launched by Ethiopia's Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which is currently involved in an escalating conflict with Ethiopian federal forces. This is the third such attack on Asmara since the start of the Tigrayan conflict and follows a similar rocket attack on the airport on 14 November. The TPLF has previously alleged that Eritrea is intervening in the conflict on behalf of the Ethiopian federal government. These attacks on Asmara risk escalating the conflict into the international realm, potentially destabilising the entire Horn of Africa region. The attacks also indicate the TPLF's willingness to engage in insurgent activities and target cities outside of Tigray – including those in Eritrea – as its forces lose ground in the conflict.

Ethiopia

Prime minister declares Tigray operation complete

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed stated on 28 November that the military operation to seize the Tigray regional capital of Mekele was now complete. This follows the capture of the city – and strategic facilities such as administrative offices and the airport – by the federal army, and the withdrawal of TPLF-aligned forces. A search operation has now been launched to capture more than 130 political and military figures associated with the TPLF, including Tigray regional president Debretsion Gebremichael. Crucially, Tigray forces have vowed to continue fighting, and claimed on 29 November that they had retaken the town of Axum from federal control. Tigray forces have also been accused of targeting the Eritrean capital of Asmara in a rocket attack on 29 November. Despite the ongoing communications blockade, there is broad consensus that federal forces have indeed captured Mekele. Nonetheless, with the TPLF's leadership still at large, the conflict in Tigray is likely to continue, with the TPLF anticipated to resort to guerilla tactics going forward.

Kenya

Roadside attack in Mandera county

Five police officers were injured on 29 November, when their vehicle detonated a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) in Mandera county. The officers were escorting passenger buses between the Jabi Bar and Rhamu areas of Mandera when their vehicle struck the IED. While no entity has claimed responsibility, attacks of this nature are typically conducted by the al-Shabaab Islamist militant group. Accordingly, the incident is indicative of the threat posed by al-Shabaab in Mandera and other counties near Kenya's border with Somalia.

Kenya

Ambassador expelled from Somalia

According to reports from 30 November, the Somali government has recalled its ambassador to Kenya and expelled the Kenyan envoy to Somalia due to concerns over interference. Specifically, Somali authorities have accused the Kenyan ambassador of meddling in the upcoming elections in Somalia by putting pressure on Jubaland president Ahmed Madobe to renege on an electoral agreement that was brokered by the Somali federal government in September. Kenyan authorities have yet to respond to the claims by Somalia; however, the developments underscore tense relations between the two countries, which have culminated in acts of subversion by proxy elements, as well as formal retaliation such as mutual flight bans.

Rwanda

Former prime minister sentenced

Former prime minister Pierre Habumuremyi was sentenced on 27 November to three years in prison and a USD 926,000 fine for malfeasant administrative practices. Habumuremyi was arrested in July after being found to have issued illegitimate checks during his tenure as the rector and owner of the Christian University of Rwanda between 2018 and 2019. Moreover, a total of USD 1.05 million is owed by the defunct university in wages and land taxes due to the former prime minister's mismanagement. The development is in line with President Paul Kagame's stringent anti-graft policy, with both former and present public office holders considered susceptible to investigation and prosecution.

Somalia

Suicide bombing in Mogadishu

At least eight people were killed in a suicide bomb attack on a restaurant in Mogadishu's KM4 Junction on 27 November. The attack is believed to have been carried out by al-Shabaab, which frequently conducts such bombings in the city. It is possible that the blast was in response to the unexpected visit by the United States Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller to Mogadishu earlier that day. Regardless, the incident is indicative of al-Shabaab's continued operational capacity throughout Mogadishu despite repeated efforts to improve security in the capital and across Somalia.

Somalia

Kenyan ambassador expelled by authorities

According to reports from 30 November, the government has recalled its ambassador to Kenya and expelled the Kenyan envoy to Somalia due to concerns over interference. Specifically, Somali authorities have accused the Kenyan ambassador of meddling in the upcoming elections in Somalia by putting pressure on Jubaland president Ahmed Madobe to renege on an electoral agreement that was brokered by the Somali federal government in September. Kenyan authorities have yet to respond to the claims by Somalia; however, the developments underscore tense relations between the two countries, which have culminated in acts of subversion by proxy elements, as well as formal retaliation such as mutual flight bans.

South Sudan

Fatal explosion in Lakes state

At least five people were killed, and eight others injured, when a mortar shell exploded in Yirol East county of Lakes State. As per local reports on 27 November, residents of Pagarau village were undertaking a cultural initiation ceremony, during which they accidentally detonated the device after setting several fires for visibility. The incident serves as a reminder of the threat posed by unexploded ordnance – including land mines, mortar shells and grenades – which is prevalent throughout the country.

South Sudan

Disarmament exercise in Warrap state to resume

Local reports on 29 November indicated that the South Sudan Defense force (SSPDF) will resume a voluntary civilian disarmament programme in Tonj East county of Warrap state in the coming days. The initiative was previously paused following clashes between the SSDF and residents which resulted in over 140 fatalities in August after a soldier attempted to forcibly disarm a civilian. Notably, the voluntary component of the programme is considered the first phase and will be followed by a “disarm by force” exercise; a timeline for the two phases of the operation was not immediately disclosed. Precedent suggests that there will be a heightened risk of armed conflict in Tonj East county for the full duration of the campaign.

Tanzania

Opposition party expels members over fraudulent activity

The opposition Chadema party has suspended 19 members of parliament over fraudulent activity involving the ruling CCM party, according to reports from 27 November. The Chadema legislators in question reportedly took a false oath at the direction of the CCM party, despite not being elected to serve new terms in office. According to Chadema, the move was aimed at creating the impression of a credible opposition in parliament after the CCM swept to victory in both the presidential and parliamentary legs of the 28 October general elections. The account by Chadema has yet to be corroborated; however, the accusations are not without precedent given the CCM's undemocratic conduct in the local political landscape.

Uganda

Unrest in Kampala

Security personnel used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse protesting vendors in the Kalerwe market of Kampala on 28 November. As per local reports, the unrest was prompted by the alleged killing of a market vendor by a police officer the day prior; local security officials have denied their involvement in the fatality. While tentative calm has been restored in the area, further demonstrations – and subsequent unrest – over the issue cannot be ruled out in the coming days.

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