

Daily Incident Briefing report

30/11/2020

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.

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.

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.

For more information on this report or **The Signal Room** in general, contact info@thesignalroom.com

Reporting for **The Signal Room** is powered by Signal Risk. Signal Risk uses reasonable endeavours to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information contained herein and every effort has been made to provide the most current, correct and useful information, but all such information shall be subject to change or alteration at any time and the use of such information is at the sole discretion of the intended recipient(s). Therefore, Signal Risk and its associated parties shall not be responsible and disclaims all liability for any loss, damage (whether direct, indirect, special or consequential) and/or expense of any nature whatsoever, which may be suffered as a result of or which may be attributable, directly or indirectly, to the use of, or reliance upon any information in this document.