



Armed Conflict

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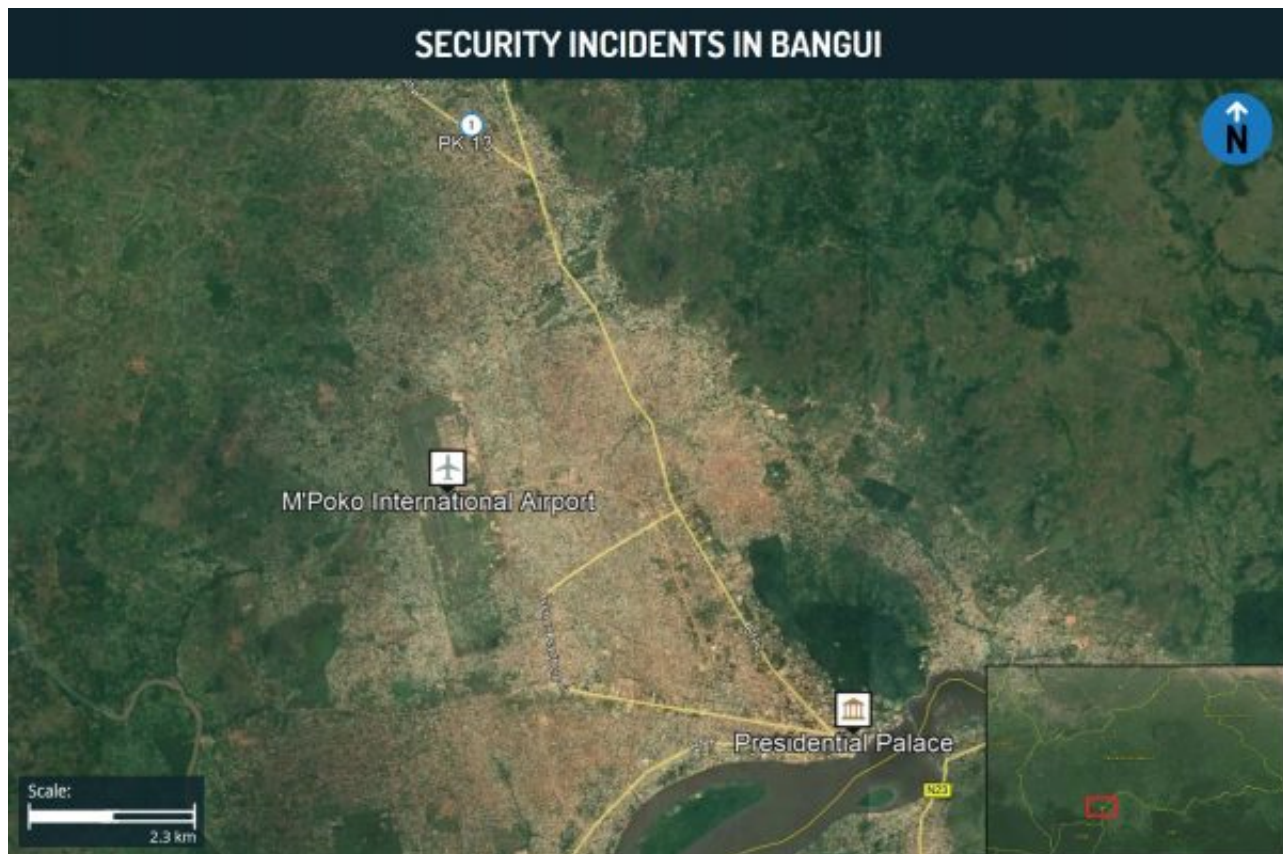
Central African Republic SITUATION UPDATE: Supply lines to Bangui resume as FACA, allies take over key positions from CPC forces in northwestern prefectures

Executive Summary

- Supply trucks from Cameroon arrived in Bangui on February 8 effectively ending a 50-day blockade of the capital. The route's reopening comes following intensified security operations supported by UN peacekeepers and other regional and international military actors against the rebel Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) positions.
- Despite the entrenchment of CPC rebel forces in the northwestern prefectures, government forces are likely to retain control over the route given the continued support of foreign military forces. However, the route is likely to remain vulnerable to rebel ambushes and attacks which could create short-term supply disruptions over the coming period.
- Meanwhile, the continued hostilities between the government and Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) around Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture highlight the complex role of dominant armed groups as they leverage their authority against the government and rival forces. Given the importance of Bambari as a mining locality, hostilities are likely to persist.
- Furthermore, the government announced March 14 as the date for the legislative elections second round, which is likely to further escalate already heightened political tensions given the opposition's continued rejection of presidential election results. Moreover, electoral preparations could witness an increase in rebel activity in attempts to disrupt the event.

Security Incidents in Bangui

Map #	District	Date	Brief Description
1.	PK 13	February 15	One individual shot dead by 'Shark' militia



Security Incidents in CAR

Map #	Prefecture	Locale	Date	Brief Description
1.	Ouaka	Bambari	February 10	FACA, allies take over Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture from CPC, UPC rebels claim to take one Russian private military personnel hostage, kill others.
	Ouaka	Bambari	February 11-12	Security forces clash with UPC rebels, dislodge UPC from Bambari stronghold
	Ouaka	Bambari	February 15	FACA launch new attack on UPC positions following arrival of reinforcements including Russian private military personnel
2.	Ouaka	Ndassima	February 12	UPC rebels clash with FACA, Russian mercenaries after receiving

3.	Mbomou	Bangassou	February 9	reinforcements from Bria
4.	Ouham-Pende	Bossemptele	February 7	Two peacekeepers injured in attack by FPRC, CPC forces on MINUSCA convoy
5.	Ouham-Pende	Bozoum	February 13	FACA forces take control of town in offensive from Yaloke
6.	Nana-Mambere	Baboua	February 5	CPC rebels overtake village after being dislodged by FACA from Yaloke, Bossemptele, Baoro, Bouar
7.	Nana-Mambere	Bouar	February 7	Forest guard kidnapped, tortured to death by CPC rebels
	Nana-Mambere	Bouar	February 12	Government forces recapture locations around Bouar
8.	Nana-Mambere	Gallo	February 12	CPC rebels fired at humanitarian convoy traveling from Cameroonian border to Bangui
9.	Nana-Mambere	Beloko	February 12	FACA clash with CPC rebels
10.	Mambere-Kadei	Nassoule	February 8	Government forces announce takeover of town from CPC rebels
11.	Lobaye	Boda	February 4	CPC rebels blocked Kenzo-Berberati axis at in attempt to cut supply line to Bangui for at least 48 hours
12.	Ombella-M'Poko	Bossembele	February 4	Government forces regain control of town
13.	Ombella-M'Poko	Yaloke	February 5	Government forces regain control of town



Other Developments

- On February 11, the President's office in an official press release announced that the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) had taken control of all positions along the road linking Bangui to Cameroon through Bouar and Beloko. In the statement, the government further called on dissident armed groups to lay down their arms and hand over rebel leaders to authorities.
- Reports from February 8 indicate the arrival of trucks from Cameroon in Bangui, effectively ending 50 days of blockade by Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) rebels occupying positions along the critical supply route.
- The official press release follows a CPC press statement reported on February 9 where the group claimed to retain control of the supply route having allowed for the exceptional passage of humanitarian convoys. Additionally, the group in a media statement reported on February 7 claimed to occupy more than 85 percent of national territory.
- Reports from February 6 to 10 indicate that CPC rebel fighters have in fact voluntarily retreated from several key positions along the Bangui to Beloko corridor, allowing FACA and Russian private military forces to regain control of several locations along the border route.
- According to a presidential decree on February 12, the government is slated to hold the second-round of elections in some constituencies, and the first-round in others where the December 2020 elections were not possible on March 14. Meanwhile reports from February 9 indicate that the government has extended the 15-day state of emergency declared from January 21 for a period of six months.
- Sources indicate that an unofficial Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) delegation met with emissaries representing Bozize and the CPC in Southern Chad on February 9. The same sources indicate that the regional partners have not established consensus over the need for a dialogue with dissident armed groups and political opponents.
- Reports indicate that peaceful protests against the CPC and former President Francois Bozize took place in Bangui on February 6. Furthermore, on February 12, around 100 protesters reportedly gathered in front of the ECCAS headquarters in Bangui to protest against any dialogue with armed

groups.

Assessments & Forecast

1. Following the CPC's announcement reported on [February 2](#) to accept the ceasefire agreement proposed by regional leaders, the government has considerably stepped up security operations against CPC positions in Ombello M'Poko, Nana-Mambere, and Ouham-Pende prefectures. The intensification of joint FACA-UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) operations along with coordinated support from Russian private military contractor (PMC) personnel have resulted in the government-allied forces recapturing several key positions along the key supply route connecting Bangui to the Cameroonian border. Though the success of the FACA-led operations has depended on external military support, it has nevertheless effectively ended a nearly two-month blockade on the capital since December 2020. At the same time, the continued hostilities witnessed in locations across Ouham-Pende and Nana-Mambere prefectures after the CPC's claims to voluntarily withdraw indicates that rebel fighters have likely scattered around these localities despite being allegedly dislodged. In fact, it is likely that CPC elements retreated from key positions in anticipation of security operations, preferring to target security forces from outlying positions through ambushes and similar guerilla tactics to disrupt the critical logistic route.
2. **FORECAST:** Despite the continued entrenchment of CPC rebel forces across the Nana-Mambere and Ouham-Pende prefectures, the government-allied forces are likely to maintain their hold over the key supply route over the coming weeks given the continued support from foreign military actors. However, the CPC are likely to continue conducting small-scale attacks along the road that connects Bangui to Cameroon rather than attempting to recapture these locations, considering the operational superiority of the involved foreign military actors supporting the government. To that end, supply chains are liable to witness occasional disruptions.
3. Additionally, the CPC's reported blockade of the Kenzo-Berbarati axis in Mambere-Kadei Prefecture is notable given that it represents the second major logistic route connecting Bangui to Cameroon's Douala Port. Though the route is relatively less developed and less utilized by commercial and humanitarian operators, the incident nevertheless highlights the CPC's continued attempts to impede the transportation of goods to the capital. Furthermore, Mambere-Kadei Prefecture has been relatively less affected by armed conflict through 2020, and also witnessed limited violence during the ongoing conflict between the government and the CPC rebels since December 2020. This is significant given the possibility of CPC forces increasing their presence southward in the southwestern prefectures while the security forces' presence in northwestern prefectures is strengthened.
4. Meanwhile, the UPC's claims of taking a Russian national fighting as part of a PMC working with the government forces as a hostage on February 10 come amid a series of skirmishes between government forces and UPC contingents around Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture. Though significant, the claims remain questionable given the lack of official corroboration. Furthermore, the resumption of clashes with government forces on February 12 is notable given that the government claimed to dislodge UPC forces from the town on February 11. The arrival of UPC reinforcements from Bria, Haute-Kotto Prefecture indicates the group's entrenchment and significant strength in eastern CAR, where they continue to effectively control large swathes of territory. The assertive posturing highlights the complex role of armed groups linked to the Khartoum Peace Agreement, especially dominant groups such as the UPC, who continue to leverage their territorial authority against the government and other rival forces.
5. **FORECAST:** Bambari has alternated between government and rebel control on several occasions since December 2020, and in this context, given the importance attached to controlling lucrative mining assets, hostilities around Bambari are likely to persist over the coming weeks. Furthermore, government forces have predominantly focused deployments on securing CAR's

western prefectures and associated supply routes, possibly increasing their vulnerability to rebel attacks in the east.

6. Meanwhile, political tensions are likely to escalate following the six-month emergency extensions and the announcement of March 14 as the date for the legislative elections' second round. The setting of an election date follows recent military success and indicates a sense of confidence, likely bolstered by major international partners legitimizing Touadera's presidency despite the opposition's continued rejection of the same. Furthermore, the ECCAS's reported meeting with former President Bozize and CPC emissaries could bolster factions aligned with Bozize over a potential lack of consensus among regional partners regarding Touadera's position. Though the ECCAS-led dialogue was not under official channels, it could potentially be used by the government to justify claims of regional actors supporting the CPC and may encourage additional protests against dialogue with rebels. **FORECAST:** Similar recent protests in Bangui were likely indirectly organized by pro-Touadera political actors to further bolster the President's legitimacy, with additional events likely to recur over the coming weeks. The heightened political tensions are likely to extend until the post-electoral phase, while armed groups are also expected to attack election-related targets across the country.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Bangui should be restricted to essential purposes only given the volatile security situation, while avoiding all travel to Bangui's PK5 area.
2. Avoid all travel to outlying areas of CAR given the ongoing armed conflict and high levels of sectarian violence and criminality.