



## Militancy/Terrorism

**18**

AUG

16:31 UTC

### **Sahel SITUATION UPDATE: 37 civilians killed in suspected militant attack in Ouallam Department, Niger's Tillaberi Region on August 16**

#### Executive Summary

- The killing of 37 civilians in a suspected militant attack in Darey-Dey in Niger's Tillaberi region on August 16 comes amid a spate of high-casualty attacks against civilians in Niger. While jihadist groups traditionally refrain from claiming attacks targeting civilians, it remains possible that jihadists perceived locals of collaborating with security forces and conducted this attack to intimidate locals from helping the government.
- Regardless, these attacks highlight a change in the dynamic of the Sahelian conflict, with militant groups more willing to target civilians. While the security forces are likely to conduct counter-militant operations in response, given precedent, it is likely to have a limited impact on militant attacks in the area.
- Meanwhile, the Ghanaian National Peace Council (NPC) claimed that jihadists were planning to attack West African coastal cities during a joint dialogue initiative with the UN to counter militancy in northern Ghana on August 11. While jihadist groups have professed their desire to expand their territory, they rarely attack large cities and capitals within Sahelian countries, and it is unlikely they have the ability or inclination to do so.
- However, this claim demonstrates the NPC's heightened threat perception of militancy spilling over from Burkina Faso into Ghana and can explain its ongoing dialogue initiative, likely to prevent radicalization. Such initiatives, along with traditional counter-militant operations along Ghana's border with Burkina Faso are likely to persist.

#### Please be advised

**Across the region, the following notable incidents have been reported:**

#### Mali

Map #	Region	Cercle	Locale	Date	Description
1.	Mopti	Tenekou	Silama	August 11	Five ethnic Donzos reportedly killed in clashes with members of the al-Qaeda

2.	Segou	Niono	Dogofri	August 11	affiliate Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam waal Muslimeen (JNIM) Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) launch targeted strikes against JNIM militants
3.	Gao	Menaka	Menaka	August 15	Three FAMa soldiers killed as military vehicle strikes IED

## Burkina Faso

Map #	Region	Province	Locale	Date	Description
4.	Sahel	Soum	Goradji	August 11	Unknown armed individuals attack Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland (VDP) camp, kill five VDP. VDP kill 17 militants in response
5.	Sahel	Oudalan	Deou	August 15	At least 10 casualties reported in clashes between the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), JNIM militants

## Niger

Map #	Region	Department	Locale	Date	Description
6.	Tillaberi	Ouallam	Darey-Dey	August 16	Unidentified gunmen kill 37 civilians, including 14 children

**NOTABLE SECURITY INCIDENTS IN THE SAHEL**

Map showing the Sahel region with notable security incidents marked by numbered locations (1-6) and major cities (Bamako, Ouagadougou, Niamey). The map includes a scale bar (0 to 120 km) and a north arrow.

Numbered locations (1-6) indicate specific incidents:

1. Silama
2. Dogofri
3. Menaka
4. Gorgadji
5. Deou
6. Darey-Dey

Major cities marked with orange dots:

- Bamako
- Ouagadougou
- Niamey

Geographical features and borders are shown, including the Niger River and the Sahel region.

- Reports from August 11 indicate that the Ghanaian National Peace Council (NPC) claimed that militants are seeking to target economic centers on coastal West African cities, such as Accra, Nigeria's Lagos, and Benin's capital Cotonou. The statement was reportedly made during a joint workshop with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on countering potential militant spillover in Ghana's Upper East Region through dialogue.

## High-casualty militant attacks on civilians in Niger's Darey-Dey marks change in militant tactics further deteriorating security landscape

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strong risk posed to civilians by militant attacks.

3. **FORECAST:** The Nigerian Armed Forces (FAN) are likely to carry out counter-militant operations in Darey-Dey in response to this latest attack. However, given precedent, these operations are likely to have a limited impact on reducing militancy, with similar attacks likely to persist leading to additional Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) across Niger over the coming months. The security forces' inability to prevent such attacks is likely to reduce trust between the civilians and the authorities. This may lead to the creation of civilian self-defense militias to protect against militant attacks, with such an outcome likely to further deteriorate the security landscape over the coming months.

## **NPC's claim of militant threat to coastal West African cities highlights heightened threat perception of jihadist spillover**

1. Meanwhile, the Ghanaian NPC's claim of an existing militant threat to West African nations' most prominent cities, including Accra, Lagos, and Cotonou, is highly notable and comes after JNIM released a video featuring a Ghanaian national calling upon local Ghanaian Fulanis to join the jihad on [June 26](#). However, militants have thus far refrained from attacking large cities and capitals even within the Sahel, and thus it remains unlikely that the militants have the inclination or capabilities to launch an attack on the aforementioned cities at this time.
2. Regardless, this announcement and the group's collaboration with the UNDP demonstrate the Ghanaian authorities' heightened threat perception of militant spillover from Burkina Faso into Ghana. Although militant presence along the Ghana-Burkina Faso border remains limited, this ongoing dialogue highlights the authorities' adoption of soft counter-militant tactics to prevent radicalization of northern Ghanaian communities, which could make it easier for militants to gain a foothold in northern Ghana.
  - The Ghanaian government is likely to continue soft counter-militant tactics such as dialogue within various communities of northern Ghana to foster good community relations and prevent jihadists from capitalizing on potential communal tensions to entrench themselves in the area. At the same time, the government is likely to enhance patrolling along the border with Burkina Faso to prevent militants from entering Ghana as well as Ghanaian nationals from crossing the border to join Sahelian militant groups. The authorities are also likely to establish lines of communication and deepen cooperation with Burkina Faso and other neighboring countries to share intelligence and better coordinate efforts to prevent the spillover of militancy. However, while such efforts may somewhat curtail the spread of militancy, the latent threat of cross-border raids from Burkina Faso continues to persist.

## **Recommendations**

1. We advise against all travel to the border region between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, given the extreme risks of militancy, ethnic conflict, and violent crime.
2. Avoid all travel to northern and central Mali, including Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, Mopti, and northern Segou region, given the threat from militant and rebel groups operating in the area, as well as ongoing ethnic tensions and intercommunal violence.
3. Avoid all travel to northern and eastern Burkina Faso, particularly Sahel, Est, Centre-Est, Nord, Centre-Nord, and Boucle du Mouhoun regions due to the ongoing threat of militancy and violent crime. Avoid nonessential travel to outlying areas of the southern and western regions due to the increased risk of attacks.
4. We advise against all travel to Niger's Tillaberi and Tahoua Regions in the west along the borders of Mali and Burkina Faso, with the exception of Niamey, due to the ongoing risk of militancy.