

Militancy/Terrorism

12

DEC

14:43 UTC

Benin Alert: Four soldiers wounded in IED explosion in Porga, Materi Commune, Atakora Department on December 10

Please be advised

- Reports indicate that four soldiers were wounded after their armored vehicle struck an IED in Porga, Materi Commune, Atakora Department on December 10.
- The wounded soldiers were reportedly evacuated to Tanguieta Commune, Atakora Department.



Assessments & Forecast

1. This incident comes amid an uptick in militant attacks in northern Benin, as highlighted by recent attacks in Porga, where two soldiers were killed on December 1 and two injured in Mekrou, Banikoara Commune, Alibori Department on [November 30](#). The occurrence of three attacks in just under two weeks is highly notable given the rarity of militant attacks in Benin, with the most recent suspected militant attack prior to those in recent weeks taking place in [February 2020](#). While the identity of the perpetrators is not confirmed, the attacks are consistent with Jamaat

Nusrat al-Islam waal Muslimeen's (JNIM) threats to expand their operations into the Gulf of Guinea states, and reflect militant efforts to entrench themselves in northern Benin.

2. The use of an IED is highly notable as it is the first recorded use of this modus operandi by militants in Benin. This further supports the likelihood that the perpetrators of recent attacks are affiliated with an established militant group such as JNIM, with the assailants able to access the relevant resources and technical knowledge to create an IED, as well as to bring it into Beninese territory. In addition, with the location of Porga close to the Pendjari River that forms part of the Benin-Burkina Faso border, the attacks were likely perpetrated by militants crossing from Burkina Faso's restive Est Region, highlighting the ease with which potential assailants are able to cross the border. This further bolsters the assessment that JNIM militants were behind the attack, given their entrenched presence across the border in Est Region.
3. The fact that security forces have been struck twice in quick succession in Porga may reflect a deliberate decision by the militants to conduct these incursions, as they capitalize on the already enhanced military presence in recent months, supplying the militants with more potential targets. The growing military presence in the region highlights the authorities' heightened threat perception regarding a particular threat along the border with Burkina Faso, as well as the militant hostility towards security forces. The fact that militants have been able to carry out attacks despite this security deployment suggests that the authorities may have been slow to react to a growing militant presence in the area, and highlights their relatively limited intelligence-gathering capabilities. This is likely exacerbated by the fact that Porga is situated on the edge of the Pendjari National Park, which is part of the W-Arli-Pendjari national park complex covering vast areas in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger, and where militants are known to move freely.
4. **FORECAST:** Given JNIM's precedent of targeting security forces, the possibility of further military deployments in light of recent attacks is likely to trigger further similar attacks and clashes over the coming weeks and months. While security operations may achieve some success in dislodging suspected militants in the near term, they will likely have limited impact with regards to preventing further incursions given the weakness of the Burkinabe security forces on the other side of the joint border.
5. – While the militants' successful detonation of an IED suggests that they are likely to use them again in the future, their relatively limited use in Burkina Faso's Est Region suggests that they may not be JNIM's primary modus operandi, possibly due to a relative lack of resources or bomb-making capabilities. In this context, while raids and ambushes by armed militants are likely to remain the primary method of attack, militants are nonetheless liable to attempt further intermittent IED attacks in the foreseeable future.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Cotonou may continue while adhering to standard security protocols regarding criminal activity.
2. Avoid nonessential travel to the area of the W-Arli-Pendjari national park complex bordering Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo due to the presence of criminals and militants.