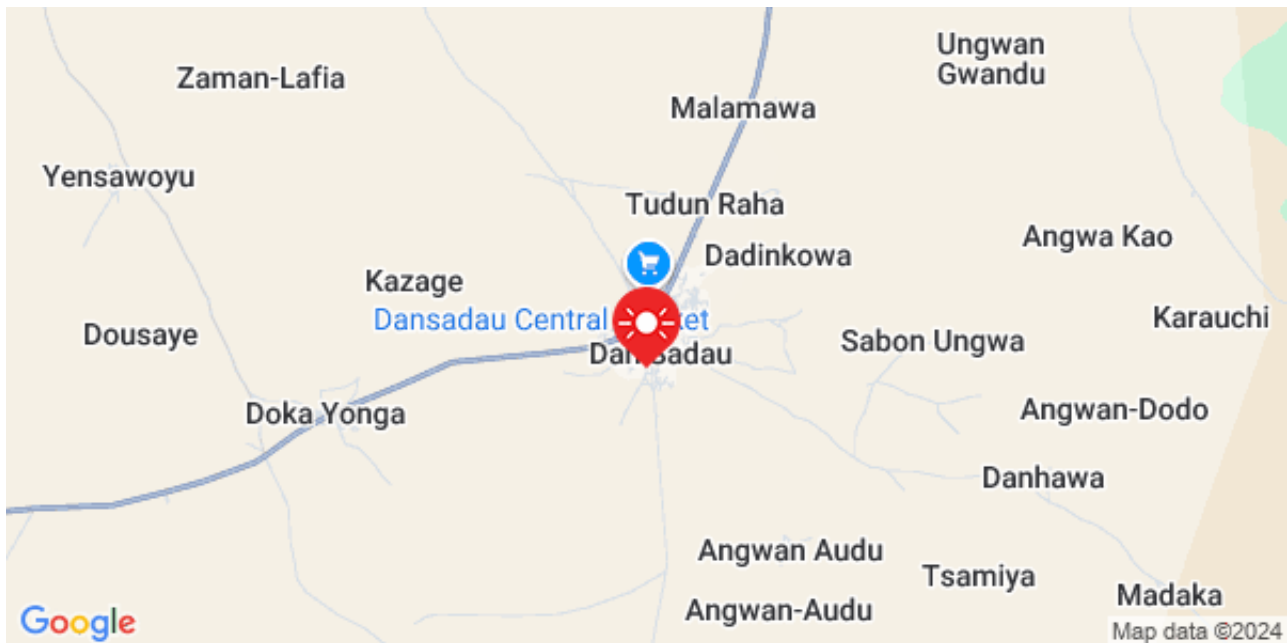


Developing

**05**

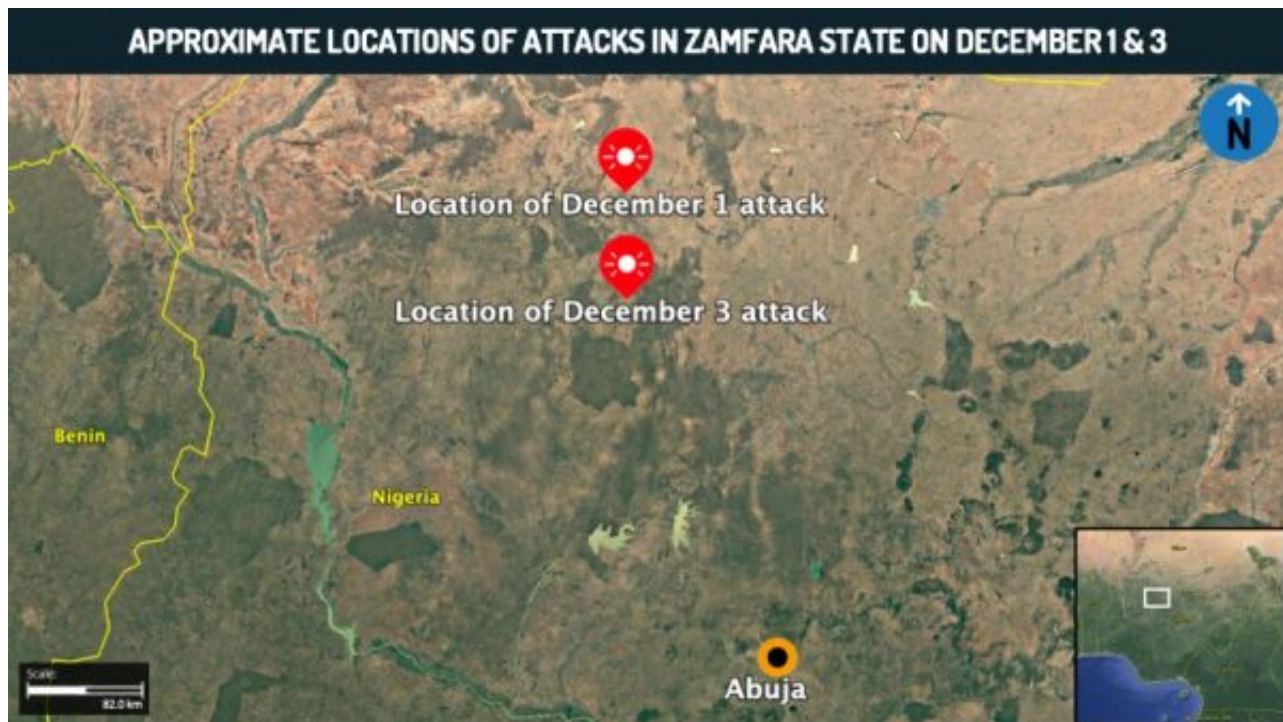
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Nigeria Alert: Zamfara State police claim Lakurawa militants perpetrated two IED attacks in Maru LGA, Zamfara State, per December 4 reports

Current Situation

- Reports from December 4 indicate that the Zamfara State police claimed that the Lakurawa militant group was behind two recent IED explosions in the Maru Local Government Area (LGA).
- According to the police, the first attack took place on December 1, when a commercial transport driver was killed after his vehicle hit an IED near Unguwar Galadima in Maru LGA.
- The police claimed that in a second attack on December 3, one person was killed and three were injured after a commercial transport carrying passengers triggered an IED near Tashar Sahabi. Local witnesses claimed that at least 12 passengers were killed and six were injured.
- The police stated that the Lakurawa militants conducted these attacks to counter ongoing security operations against them in the area. The police also alleged that the Lakurawa are relocating from Zamfara State to the Birnin-Gwari forest along the Zamfara-Kaduna state borders.
- However, locals reportedly attributed these IED attacks to local bandits, claiming that it was part of their broader strategy to launch a reprisal attack on the Unguwar Yargaladima village after its vigilante group killed the bandit group's leader in late November. The locals had reportedly earlier informed security forces of the potential for such a reprisal attack.



Source: [Daily Trust](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. This is a notable development considering the alleged involvement of the Lakurawa militants. It comes barely a month after the Nigerian authorities acknowledged the presence of the group in Kebbi and Sokoto states on November 7, presenting the Lakurawas as a “new” militant group. However, the group has reportedly operated in Nigeria since about 2017 and remains active primarily near the border areas with Niger. The precedent of the group’s activities indicates that the Lakurawas have mostly been engaged in intimidation and coercive behavior to preach their version of Islam to locals while also imposing taxes and extorting money. However, this coercive behavior is not known to include widespread or large-scale violence or the use of IEDs. In this context, the accusations voiced by the Zamfara police claiming that a group is able to launch twin IED attacks in quick succession in Zamfara State, which remains well outside their normal areas of operations, raises doubts regarding the veracity of the authorities’ narrative. That said, if the incidents were confirmed to have been launched by the Lakurawas, they would reflect the group’s heightened capabilities and associated threat in a larger geographical area in northwest Nigeria.
2. Given the unclear circumstances regarding the Lakurawas’ operations, it is more likely that the attack was carried out by bandit groups that are entrenched in the area. This aligns with bandits’ sporadic IED attacks, illustrating their IED assembling and operating capabilities. The likelihood of bandit involvement is also amplified by the locals’ claims that the attacks are part of reprisal against a local vigilante group from the Unguwar Yargaladima village for killing their leader. This aligns with the local security dynamics. It is further supported by the locations of the two attacks, suggesting an attempt to approach the village from multiple directions. The IEDs may also have been planted along routes leading to the village to prevent potential security reinforcements from reaching the village after locals informed the security forces of the bandits’ anticipated attack. To that end, the IEDs were potentially intended for security forces, with the civilian targets accidentally having triggered them while commuting through the area.
3. The attacks, irrespective of the perpetrators’ identity, underscore the entrenched security threats in Zamfara state and non-state actors’ possible attempts and capabilities to disrupt security movement and reinforcement along internal roads. Despite the persistent ambiguity regarding the

perpetrators, the security forces' certainty in claiming that they were Lakurawas could also be part of its narrative-building efforts. Therefore, the claims are likely intended to portray that the security forces maintain control over the security landscape by identifying a new threat and promptly implementing bolstered measures and efforts to eliminate them amid persistent public and international criticism regarding insecurity. **FORECAST:** The security forces are likely to bolster operations in the areas to hedge against criticism for persistent insecurity. They may release further claims linking the Lakurawa group to other offensives, and the authorities' consequent efforts to tackle them in the coming days. With the incident reaffirming non-state actors' continued ability to launch sporadic IED attacks, similar attacks could recur in Zamfara and other neighboring northwestern states. Overall, the security conditions are likely to remain precarious across northwestern Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. We advise avoiding all travel to northwestern states due to extreme levels of insecurity due to banditry and crime, with a particular risk of kidnapping while traveling along highways.
2. Travel to Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt can continue while exercising increased vigilance and adhering to stringent security precautions regarding criminal and security threats.