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## Mitigating Travel Risks to Africa



Effective security management is vital for companies sending staff to remote African countries.

### Bottom Line Up Front

- Given the attraction of expanding economies and deep pockets of natural resources, business travel is on the rise across Africa and is likely to increase in the years ahead. Individual countries present a nuanced set of risks, but there are a number of emerging trends across the region, including an increasing terrorism threat, ongoing issues of regime instability and seasonal infectious diseases.
- Public and private sector enterprises can substantially mitigate risks, threats and hazards to travelers by understanding and objectively evaluating current and emerging political, social, security, and health-related trends.

**As of early September 2012**, the stagnant economy in the United States and across Western Europe has prompted companies to increasingly invest in emerging markets. Africa, with a plethora of natural resources, has become an increasingly attractive market. To place this in context, Goldman Sachs released a report earlier this year that compared the current economic opportunities in Africa to those in China during the 1990s, while the International Monetary Fund noted that seven African countries will be included among the top ten fastest growing economies between 2011 and 2015. In the first of a two-part series on business travel to challenging environments, this **Intelbrief** will focus on the current and emerging threats, risks and hazards across the African continent.

The basis for safe business travel is preparation and planning. **The Soufan Group's** approach to proactively managing business travel risk involves understanding the current threats and identifying emerging trends to provide layered and comprehensive security mitigation. The first step involves the timely and objective analysis of a range of potential hazards — from regime instability to infectious diseases — on a quantitative scoring system from one (low) to five (high). Each of these scores is aggregated specifically for business travelers. Based on an interpretation of their subcategory scores, an overall country risk score for business travel is assigned, which can be used as a guide to identify the critical planning, preventive and monitoring measures that will be required. (Please see the table on page 4.)

### Regime Instability and the Importance of Forewarning

Across the region, a number of countries are at a high risk from regime instability. With increasing regime instability comes weaker infrastructure and the diminished ability of the state to maintain security. The sudden outbreak of violence in Tunisia and its rapid spread to Egypt, Libya and Morocco illustrated the importance of evaluating the risk of regime instability; in each of these countries, many employees were left stranded and in some cases companies were forced to pay exorbitant costs for ships and airplanes to evacuate their staff.

Libya is an example of a country that remains a severe risk for regime instability: the state faces severe limits on its power to govern and continues to struggle to prevent ethnic and religious violence. Radical Islamist groups are active in the east of the country and continue to operate with impunity. Over the coming months, violent disruptions during the drafting of a new constitution — particularly among different Islamic groups — are likely to result in a heightened and sustained level of political and security risk.

A popular country for investors — especially in the energy sector — is Nigeria, a country that also presents a high risk for regime instability. In the north of the country, Muslims hold long-standing grievances over a range of issues that include economic inequalities and a lack of political representation. Over recent years, these grievances have manifested in riots between Christians and Muslims, often originating in Jos Plateau State. There is no quick fix to address these issues and further outbreaks of unrest are certain to occur.

Adding to Nigeria's security concerns is Boko Haram, an Islamist terrorist group that has conducted a campaign of attacks targeting Christians in the north, which, in some cases, has sparked outbreaks of retaliatory violence. Christian groups have issued warnings that a Boko Haram attack in the south of the country would result in coordinated reprisal attacks. This scenario could conceivably spark widespread violence and undermine the legitimacy of President Goodluck Jonathan's government. Elsewhere across the continent, there is a comparable likelihood of significant violence and political instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan. (For more on Boko Haram, see the June 19th [Intelbrief](#), [Boko Haram: An Increasingly Radical Threat](#).)

A closely related issue is civil unrest. Civil unrest poses a risk to business travelers in two ways. First, demonstrations often turn violent and, in certain African countries, are anti-Western in nature. Second, protests can cause disruptions to meetings, business operations and travel. Specific drivers of widespread and violent outbreaks of unrest can include disputed elections, contentious foreign policy issues or unpopular government policies. As such, there will likely be a heightened risk of unrest over the coming months in the run-up to elections in Ghana and Zimbabwe in 2012, as well as to the Kenyan general elections scheduled for early 2013. Other issues that can incite civil disorder include uncontrolled inflation or the loss of government subsidiaries. In January 2012, for instance, there were large protests in Nigeria following a rapid rise in prices. More generally, there has been a recent increase in violent protests in Sudan and Angola following the government's implementation of austerity measures.

## **Terrorism and the Increasing Threat to Business Travel**

There is a rising terrorism threat to business travelers across Africa. Until recently, the global Salafist-Jihadi threat to Western interests — particularly hotels, restaurants and embassies — was primarily a threat in the Middle East and South Asia. But this has evolved as groups with some degree of affiliation with [al-Qaeda central](#) have strengthened in North Africa, the Sahel and East Africa. These terrorists have attacked locations frequented by business travelers in Kampala, Uganda; Abuja, Nigeria; and Mombasa, Kenya. Notably, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has expanded its operational presence across the Sahel, particularly in Mauritania, Mali and Nigeria. According to the United Nations, the group is providing Boko Haram with operational and ideological support, and AQIM has warned that it intends to conduct further attacks against Western interests over the coming months.

The terrorism threat to business travelers, particularly those in the energy sector, extends to separatist groups. Between 2006 and 2010, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) staged frequent and innovative attacks against the oil sector in the Niger Delta. Although the group signed an amnesty agreement with the government in 2010, a component of the group remained active and continued to attack the oil and gas sector albeit at a lower operational tempo. This separatist threat also reaches into other countries. In late January, the South Sudan Liberation Army warned foreign oil companies against constructing an oil pipeline to transport oil to Kenya. Similar groups also pose a threat to business travels in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Infectious Diseases and Health Systems

An often overlooked but critical component of a travel risk management plan is an understanding of — and the preparation for — infectious diseases. Travel significantly increases the likelihood of contracting illness as infections spread quickly on aircraft and travelers often pass through multiple countries where a range of different diseases are present. Infectious diseases include both those termed *water-borne*, such as typhoid, cholera and hepatitis, and *vector-borne*, such as malaria and dengue. (Note: Vector-borne diseases are those caused by an infectious microbe transmitted to people by blood-sucking insects). Across the African continent, there is an exceptionally high-risk to business travelers from these types of health challenges.

To help mitigate risk during business travel, preparation is paramount. It is crucial for travelers to understand and obtain the vaccinations recommended for the country (or countries) to be visited. Guidelines are provided on a number of reliable websites, including the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). In many African countries, presenting a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required for entry. It is also good practice to check the CDC for information on current infectious disease outbreaks. Presently, for example, there is an outbreak of Ebola in the western region of Uganda that has already caused 16 confirmed deaths and is disrupting travel to the country. A number of infectious diseases are also seasonal, especially from September through November; with higher precipitation rates during this period, cases of dengue fever rise dramatically in many tropical countries.

Another important component of preparation is maintaining an awareness of the location, type and capabilities of available health care. The quality and number of hospitals vary considerably across the African continent; outside of capital cities and heavily populated ex-patriot communities, health care can be primitive and responding to an emergency — without prior planning — could be difficult, potentially expensive, and very possibly insufficient to address the medical challenge.

**Part 2 of this series will examine the risks of business travel to South America.**

### Near-Term Forecast

- With companies and government agencies sending more staff to remote and poorly understood African countries, an effective security risk management system will become increasingly important in providing the needed preventive programs and medical care necessary to avoid costly evacuations.
- Across the Sahel and North Africa, there is a growing terrorism threat to Western interests, particularly from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Targets include multinational companies, embassies, hotels and restaurants. Regime instability will remain problematic in both Libya and Nigeria, while cases of dengue fever are likely to spread during the fall months in tropical countries.

### Long-Term Forecast

- Planners can substantially mitigate personal risks by planning trips so that they do not overlap with national holidays, elections or other possible flash points.
- Upcoming elections in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ghana all have the potential to result in outbreaks of civil unrest in capital cities.

***The Soufan Group's world-class network of intelligence analysts produces specialized geopolitical and risk assessment products tailored to the unique needs of our clients in the public and private sectors. We welcome the opportunity to discuss your requirements and explore how our intelligence services can assist you in achieving your strategic objectives. For more information, please contact us at: [info@soufangroup.com](mailto:info@soufangroup.com)***

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**Table 1: Business Travel Risk Assessment by Country — Africa**  
 1 = Low Risk 5 = High Risk

Country	Regime Instability	Terrorism	Crime	Kidnapping	Civil Unrest	Infectious Diseases	Health Care	Armed Conflict	Overall Risk
Nigeria	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	4
Libya	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5
Algeria	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4
Equatorial Guinea	3	1	3	2	2	4	4	2	3
Congo	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	3	3
Sudan	5	3	3	4	5	4	4	5	5
South Sudan	5	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	5
Angola	3	2	4	3	4	4	3	2	3
South Africa	3	2	5	3	3	3	2	2	3
Cameroon	3	3	5	3	3	4	4	2	4
DRC*	5	3	4	5	4	5	5	3	5
Ghana	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	3	3
Kenya	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	2	4
Morocco	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	2	3
Egypt	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4

\* Democratic Republic of the Congo