



IPCR

# NATIONAL CONFLICT WATCH

January, 2026

# NATIONAL CONFLICT WATCH – JANUARY 2026

## A SUMMARY OF CONFLICT CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

### Overview

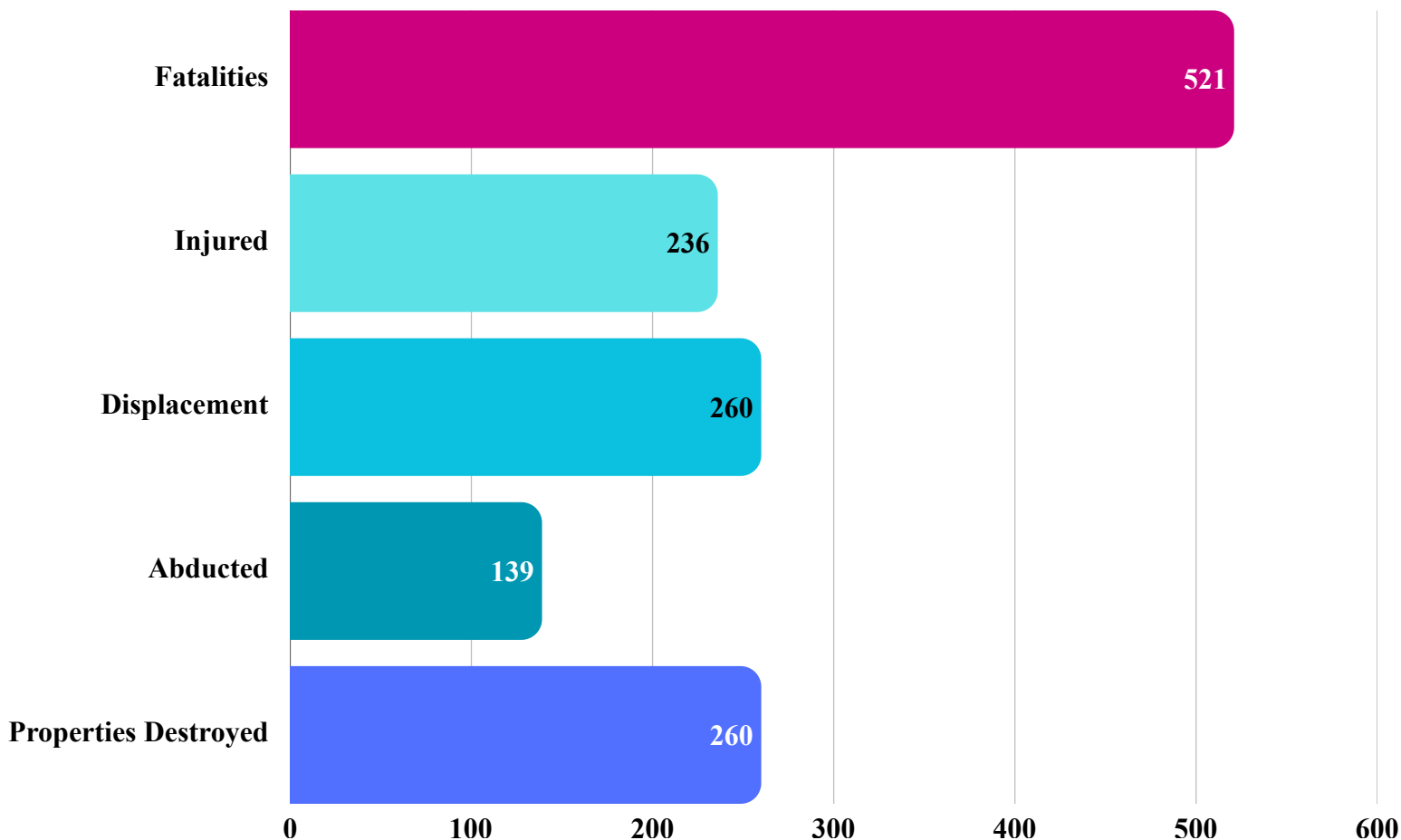
The security landscape in Nigeria remained volatile and fragmented in January 2026. The North-East region is still faced with insurgency from Boko Haram and ISWAP, with Borno being the epicenter of violence. The modus operandi of the terrorist group in the region is marked by IED attacks, raids, and ambushes.

The North-West is also witnessing persistent banditry, kidnapping-for-ransom, and localized violence, especially in Zamfara and Katsina states, with over 8,000 people displaced. Meanwhile, North-Central Nigeria is inundated by severe violence in Kwara due to Boko Haram activity, and Plateau has struggled with agro-based and communal conflicts.

The South-South region is dealing with widespread cult-related violence and organized crime, especially in Edo and Bayelsa states. South-East Nigeria was marked by continued armed group activity and social unrest due to the impact of sit-at-home orders. In the South-West, criminal activities like kidnapping and banditry were most pronounced in rural and forested areas, particularly in Oyo and Ondo states.

Across Nigeria, there are active and latent conflicts occurring despite some counterinsurgency successes. Armed groups continued to operate in sanctuaries, creating widespread insecurity, livelihood disempowerment, and loss of lives. This is the situation in hotspot areas within the country and the broader West Africa Sahel region.

### JANUARY 2026 CONFLICT IMPACT CHART



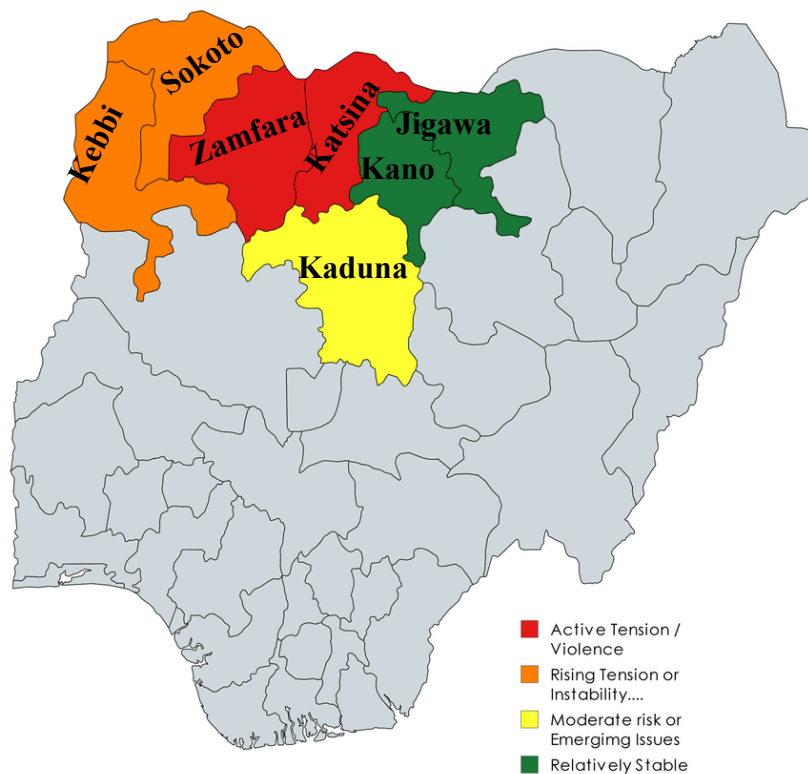
## CONFLICT ANALYSIS OF GEOPOLITICAL REGIONS

### NORTH-WEST

The security landscape in North-West Nigeria in January 2026 remained volatile but fragmented, characterized primarily by persistent banditry, kidnapping-for-ransom, and localized armed violence. The most affected states were Zamfara State and Katsina State, where armed groups continued to conduct village raids, highway ambushes, and abductions despite intensified military and police operations. Sokoto State and Kebbi State experienced rising tensions linked to cross-border bandit movements, cattle rustling, and intermittent attacks on rural settlements. Violence in Kaduna State remained localized but persistent, particularly involving kidnapping along major transport corridors. In contrast, Kano State and Jigawa State recorded relatively lower levels of armed violence, with security agencies maintaining preventive and intelligence-led operations to limit spillover risk.

In January 2026, the region witnessed over 40 fatalities, more than 85 kidnappings, and displacement exceeding 8,000 persons. Even when joint security offensives achieved measurable gains in arms recovery and suspect arrests in the region, forest-based sanctuaries, porous borders, and community vulnerabilities continue to sustain armed group activities.

North-West Conflict Hotspots

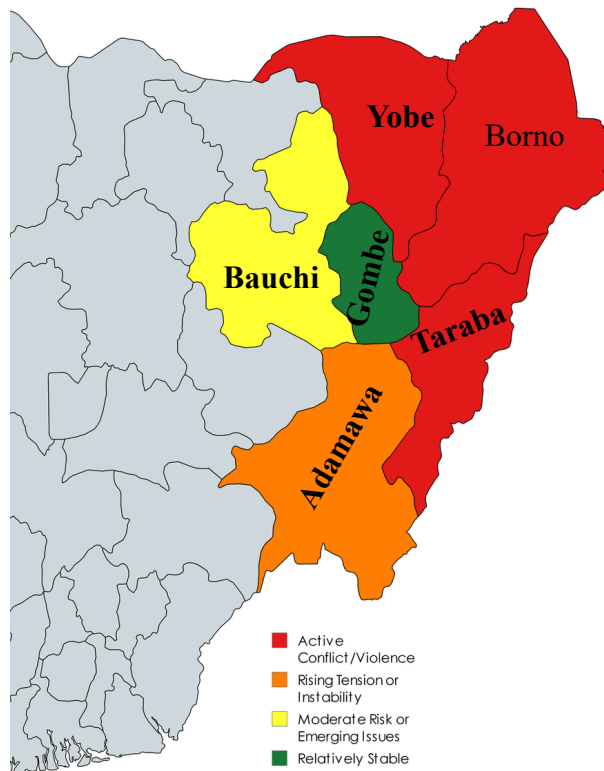


## NORTH-EAST

Sustained insurgent operations and fluctuating security dynamics has plagued North-East region. Borno State remained the epicenter of violent activity, with Boko Haram (JAS) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) maintaining operational presence, although other sub nationals have continued to experience their peculiar insecurity. The JAS and ISWAP operate through the use of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, ambushes, raids on civilian communities, and targeted assaults on security formations. Military counter-insurgency efforts intensified during the month, particularly within the Sambisa Forest corridor and Timbuktu triangle, leading to reported militant neutralizations and arms recovery.

Yobe and Adamawa States experienced intermittent insurgent incursions and IED-related incidents, reflecting continued vulnerability along border and forested areas. Taraba State recorded localized farmer-herder tensions, while Bauchi witnessed isolated armed criminal activity. Gombe remained comparatively stable, with minimal conflict-related fatalities. The month reaffirmed the persistence of asymmetric warfare tactics by terrorist and other non-state armed group (NSAG).

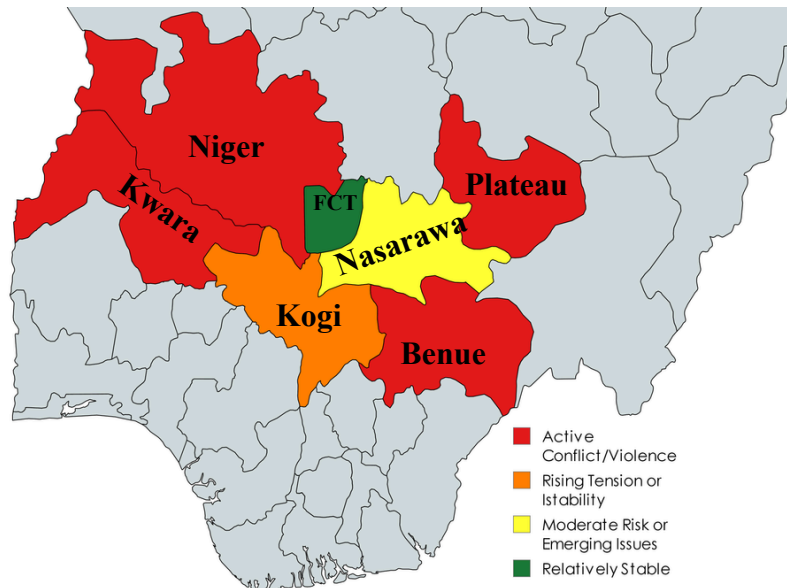
### North-East Conflict Hot Spots



## NORTH-CENTRAL

In January 2026, Kwara State saw severe and active violence as many civilians were killed and dozens abducted by the activities of Boko Haram. Benue and Plateau States continue to experience armed conflicts, kidnappings, and reprisals, though incidents were fewer in January. Kogi State faces heightened tensions and security operations in response to regional violence and bandit threats. At the same time, Niger State shows signs of rising criminal incursions with recent attacks on police stations and kidnappings. Nasarawa State remains at moderate risk due to spillover violence from neighboring areas. In the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), fewer incidents were reported, but the city remains on alert for national-level threats. Some of these threats come from the activities of Yahoo boys and other ‘get-rich-quick’ groups. In terms of law enforcement, 419 arrests were made, and weapons such as firearms, pistols, locally-made guns, and other contraband, including motorcycle keys and suspected cannabis, were seized.

### North-Central Conflict Hotspots

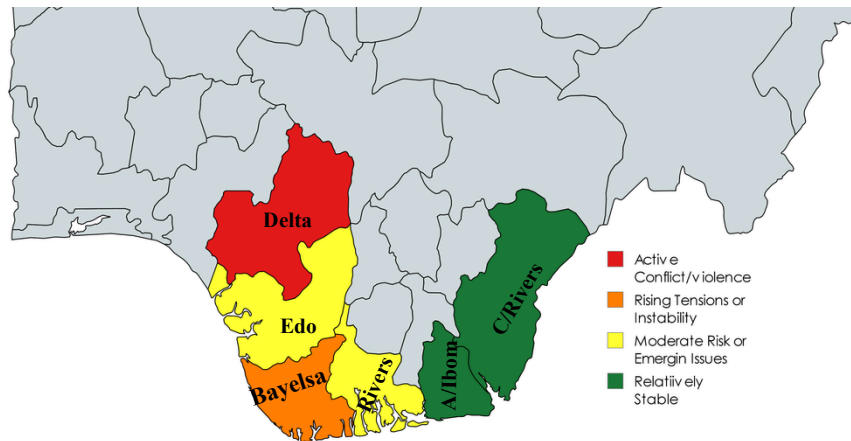


## SOUTH-SOUTH

South-South Nigeria continued to experience persistent criminal insecurity rather than large-scale armed confrontations. Criminal activities, including cult-related violence, organized crime and kidnapping, remained the dominant security concerns. Although the post-festive period saw a slight reduction in mass movement-related violence, criminal networks remained active, especially in Edo and Bayelsa States.

Even when intelligence-led security operations successfully disrupted several planned attacks, they did not fundamentally change the decentralized nature of the violence. Cult groups continued to be instrumental in carrying out targeted violence, further blurring the lines between criminal and social conflicts. The security response, though effective in preventing visible casualties, highlighted the deep-rooted nature of the conflict and the need for sustained efforts to address its underlying drivers. Overall, January reflected conflict persistence and criminal rather than escalation or de-escalation.

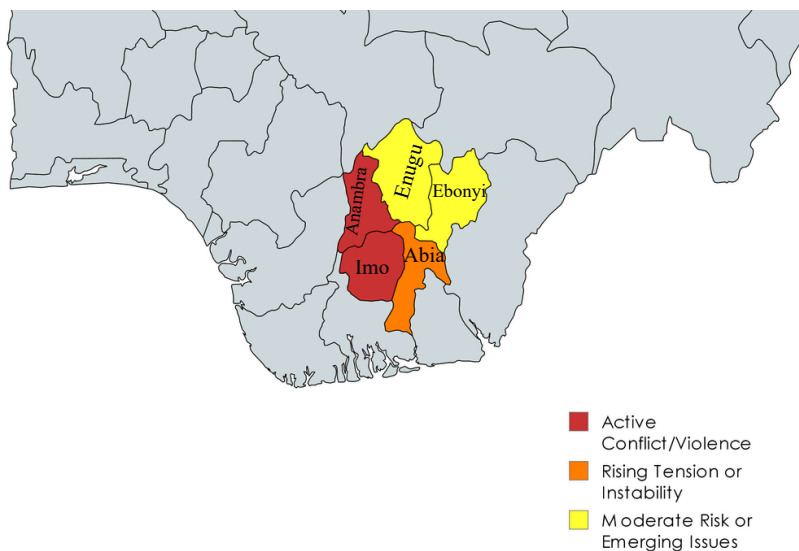
### South-South Conflict Hotspots



## SOUTH-EAST

In January 2026, the South-East zone of Nigeria continued to grapple with armed group activity, criminal networks, and economic disruptions due to sit-at-home orders and social unrest. Some states, such as Imo and Anambra, remained entrenched in active conflict/violence, with armed groups continuing to exert influence and causing disruptions to daily life and economic activities. In Abia, rising tensions were observed, largely linked to the ongoing security environment and the impact of sit-at-home orders on commerce. Meanwhile, Enugu and Ebonyi experienced moderate risk, with underlying security threats such as kidnappings and terror threats, but no major violent incidents were reported in January 2026. Overall, the South-East region reflected a continuation of conflict dynamics rather than significant escalation or de-escalation. While there were no large-scale confrontations, armed group activity, economic disruptions, and social unrest remained central concerns, indicating a complex and persistent security environment.

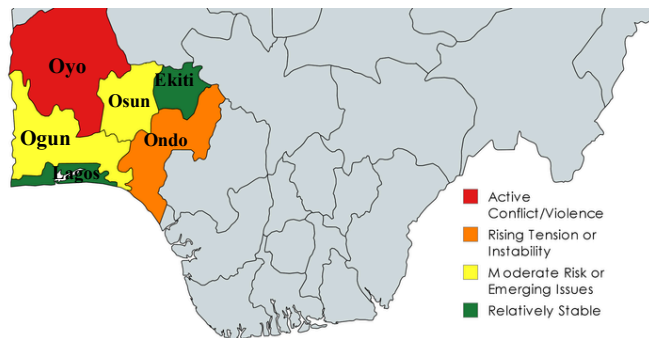
### South-East Conflict Hotspots



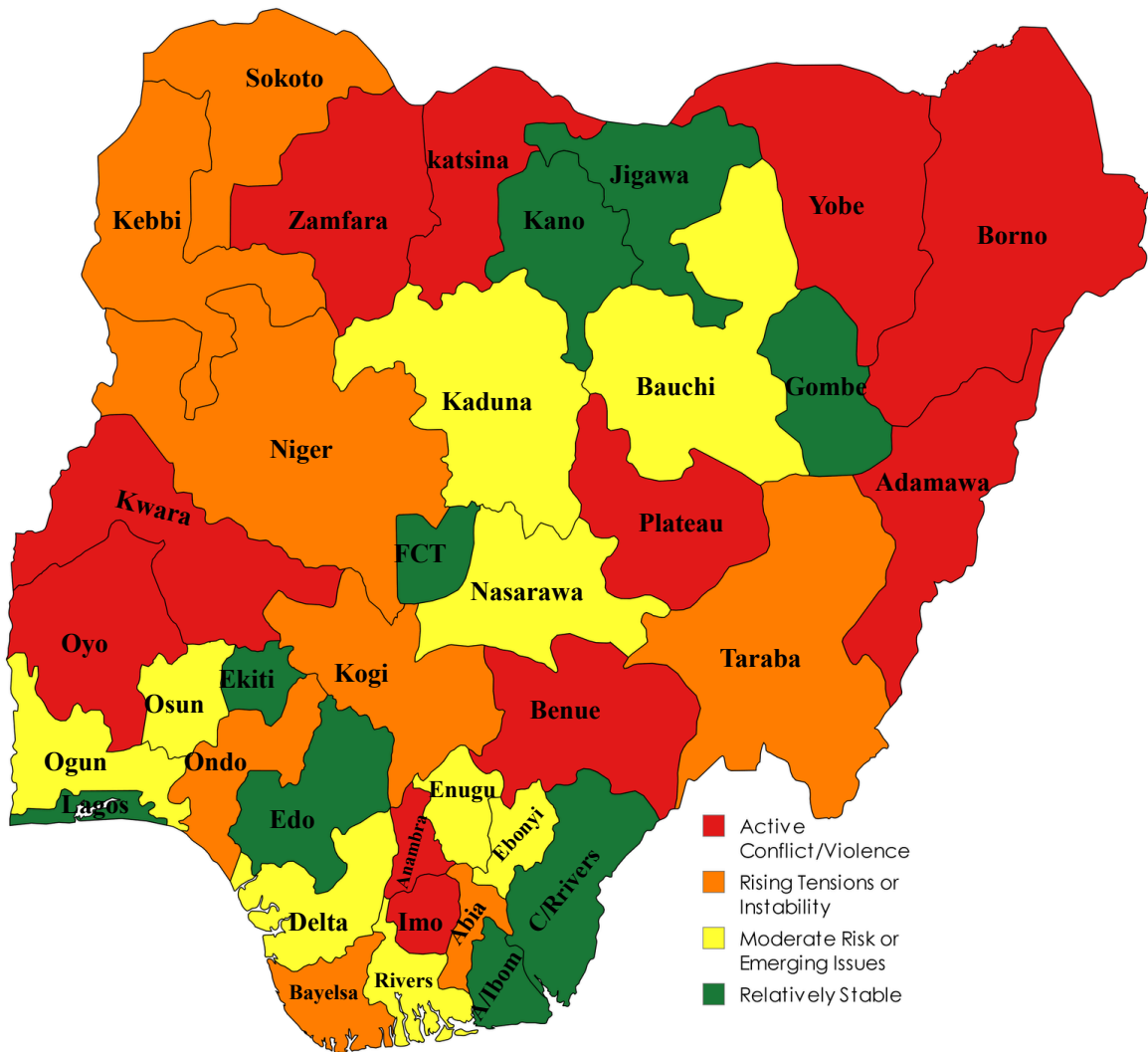
## SOUTH-WEST

The South West region of Nigeria experienced predominantly criminally driven insecurity, rather than insurgency or large-scale armed confrontation. The security landscape was shaped by armed banditry, kidnapping, cultism and localized communal tensions, particularly in forested and rural corridors. Oyo State recorded the most significant security concerns during the month, with violent incidents linked to armed groups operating around forest reserves, including areas near Old Oyo National Park. While major urban centers remained relatively stable, rural communities experienced heightened fear, mobility restrictions, and livelihood disruptions. Ondo State witnessed sporadic kidnapping and robbery incidents, alongside suspected bandit movements near forest and boundary areas. Security responses were largely preventive and intelligence-led, including operations by the regional Amotekun corps. Osun State and Ogun State remained at moderate risk, with security issues centered on armed robbery, cultism, communal disputes, and occasional farmer–herder tensions. These incidents were localized and did not escalate into widespread violence. Lagos State remained comparatively stable, although authorities continued monitoring latent risks related to urban crime pressures and potential spillover threats. Overall, January reflected a fragile but contained security environment across the South West. While fatalities and kidnappings were recorded, the violence remained largely decentralized and criminal in nature. Proactive security interventions helped prevent broader escalation, though forest insecurity and cross-border criminal mobility remain persistent risk factors entering early 2026.

### South-West Conflict Hotspots



## CONFLICT HOTSPOTS



### Securities Personnel Casualties

In the month of January, 2026 At least 30 security personnel were killed in various zones across states in Nigeria, highlighting persistent nationwide insecurity. Among the casualties was a major in the nigerian army, who was killed on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 when ambushed to a military patrol team by ISWAP fighters in Damasak, mobbar local government area of Borno state.

# Cross-border Outlook

## LAKE-CHAD BASIN AND SAHEL REGION

In January 2026, the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel regions experienced a continuation of intense conflicts and instability, marked by escalating jihadist violence, cross-border attacks and humanitarian crises. The Sahel region particularly, Sudan witnessed severe fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), leading to high civilian casualties and widespread displacement. In Niger, jihadist attacks on rural communities and key infrastructure further destabilized the country, triggering both military responses and civilian hardships.

In the Lake Chad Basin, Chad and Cameroon faced growing security challenges due to the spillover effects of the Sudan conflict, ongoing separatist violence and Boko Haram insurgency. Mali continued to struggle with extremist violence in its northern and central regions, exacerbating inflation, food insecurity, and service disruptions. Despite some relative stability in countries like Mauritania and Senegal, the overall security environment in the region remained fragile and volatile. The humanitarian situation was dire with over 18,000 families displaced and significant property destruction. The continued dominance of extremist groups and the lack of regional coordination contributed to the persistence of violence and insecurity, with few signs of de-escalation in sight.



## NO DATA FOR GULF OF GUINEA

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Deploy forward operating bases, aerial surveillance, rapid response units, and integrate federal and local forces across all Geographical zones.
2. Implement ranching and modern herding practices, land-use mediation, early-warning systems, and state-level peace commissions across North-West and North-Central Geographical Zones.
3. Track ransom payments, criminalize facilitation networks, provide victim compensation, and monitor telecoms along high-risk corridors particularly in the North-West, North-Central Zones and South-West Geographical zones.
4. Collaborate with Sahel countries through ECOWAS and MNJTF frameworks, monitor arms flows, protect humanitarian corridors, and advocate diplomatic de-escalation.
5. Expand de-radicalization, and enhance cross-border coordination in the North-East and Lake Chad Basin axis,
6. Expand community-based early-warning systems, livelihood programs, psychosocial support, and infrastructure protection across all Geographical zones.

### CONCLUSION:

January 2026 reflects a multi-layered security landscape with geographically distinct challenges. While large-scale coordinated offensives were absent, conflict intensity remains structurally embedded due to forest sanctuaries, porous borders, ransom economies, governance deficits, and socio-economic pressures. Arrests and weapons recoveries indicate operational effort; however, long-term stabilization requires a shift from reactive measures to integrated civil–military coordination, justice sector reform, economic resilience programming, and regional diplomatic engagement. Without these, Nigeria risks continued cyclical and geographically dispersed insecurity throughout 2026.

# WEAPONS RECOVERED

## ARMS/WEAPONS RECOVERED:

- **Firearms:** 8 firearms (locally made, rifles, and pistols), 55 AK-47s, GPMGs, PKT MGs, RPG tubes.
- **Ammunition:** Over 11 live cartridges, 4 rounds of 9mm Beretta, thousands of 7.62mm rounds, and unspecified grenades.
- **Explosives:** IED components and hand grenades.
- **Vehicles:** 1 Toyota Highlander, 9 vehicles (including unregistered ones), 6 motorcycles.
- **Other Items:** Criminal gear, mobile phones, cannabis, and various tools

**Note:** The figures displayed may not fully reflect the actual scale due to verification challenges and the fluid security environment.