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NATIONAL CONFLICT WATCH

March 2026

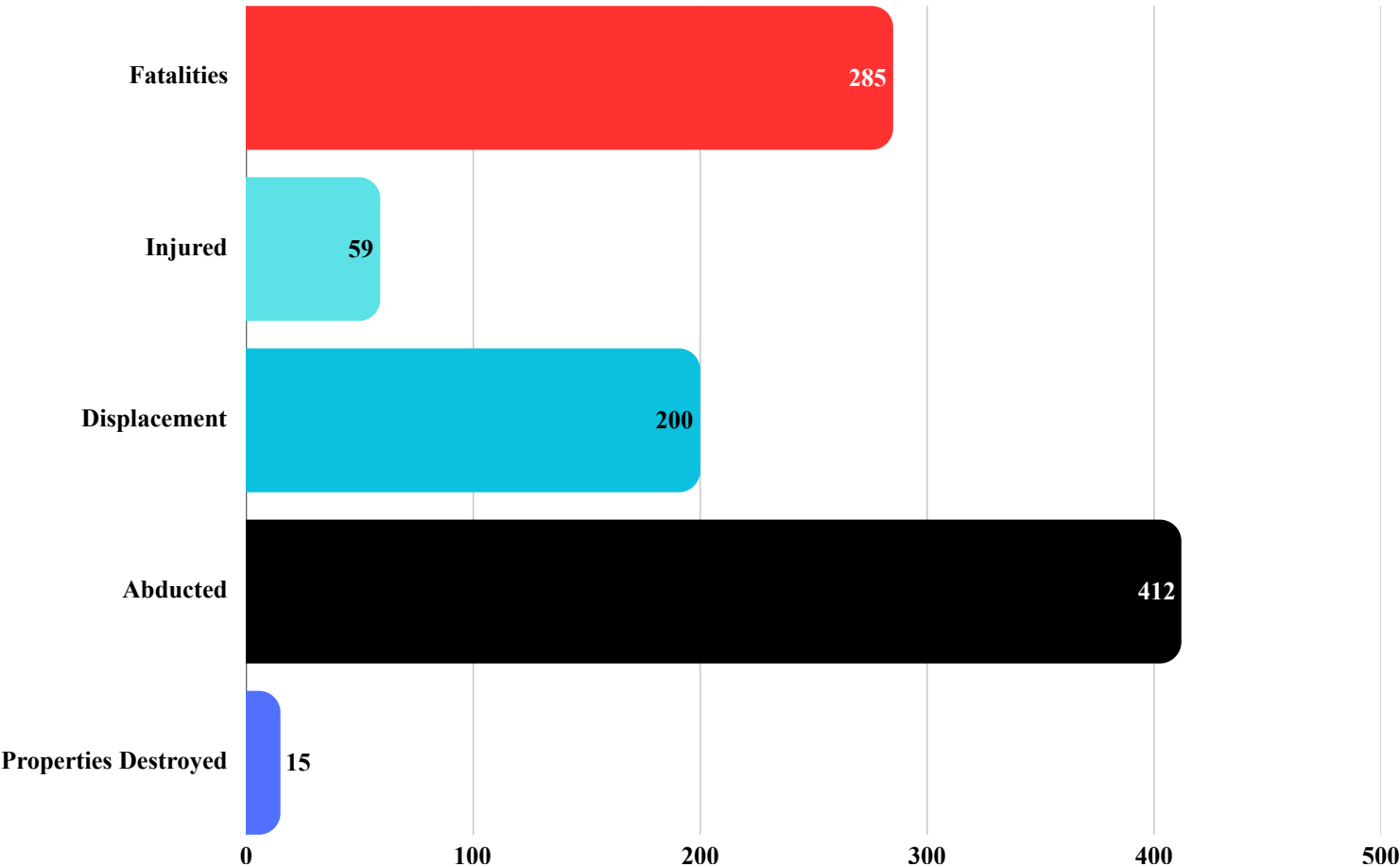
NATIONAL CONFLICT WATCH – MARCH 2026

A SUMMARY OF CONFLICT CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

Overview

Nigeria’s conflict landscape in March 2026 remained highly dynamic, driven largely by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) operating across all six geopolitical zones and extending into transnational theatre such as the Lake Chad Basin. Violence took multiple forms, including banditry, farmer–herder clashes, insurgent attacks, communal conflicts, political unrest, cult-related violence, raids, political violence, kidnappings, and armed robbery. The month of March, 2026 witnessed an escalations in one or more of the above violence. In the North-Central, communal clashes persisted, along with attacks from terrorist in Kwara, Niger, Benue and Plateau States. The North-West experienced continued armed raids, village attacks, and kidnappings for ransom, resulting in significant displacement and humanitarian pressure. In the North-East, the Maiduguri bombings of 16 March 2026 signaled a resurgence of urban terrorism, with over 20 civilians killed and many injured. The South-West remained relatively stable but recorded criminality-driven incidents such as armed robbery and isolated violent attacks, reflecting localized security concerns. In the South-South, rising clashes and interconnected insecurity continued, driven by entrenched structural challenges. Within the South-East, Imo and Anambra remained the most volatile states, while Enugu and Ebonyi were relatively calmer but still vulnerable to spillover from the wider regional crisis. At the regional level, the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel continued to experience overlapping humanitarian and conflict pressures, highlighting the need for integrated security, development, and climate-responsive interventions supported by sustained international cooperation. Overall, the situation in March 2026 underscored the strong link between domestic instability and regional security threats, fueled by governance gaps, climate stressors, economic hardship, and the proliferation of armed groups.

MARCH 2026 CONFLICT IMPACT CHART

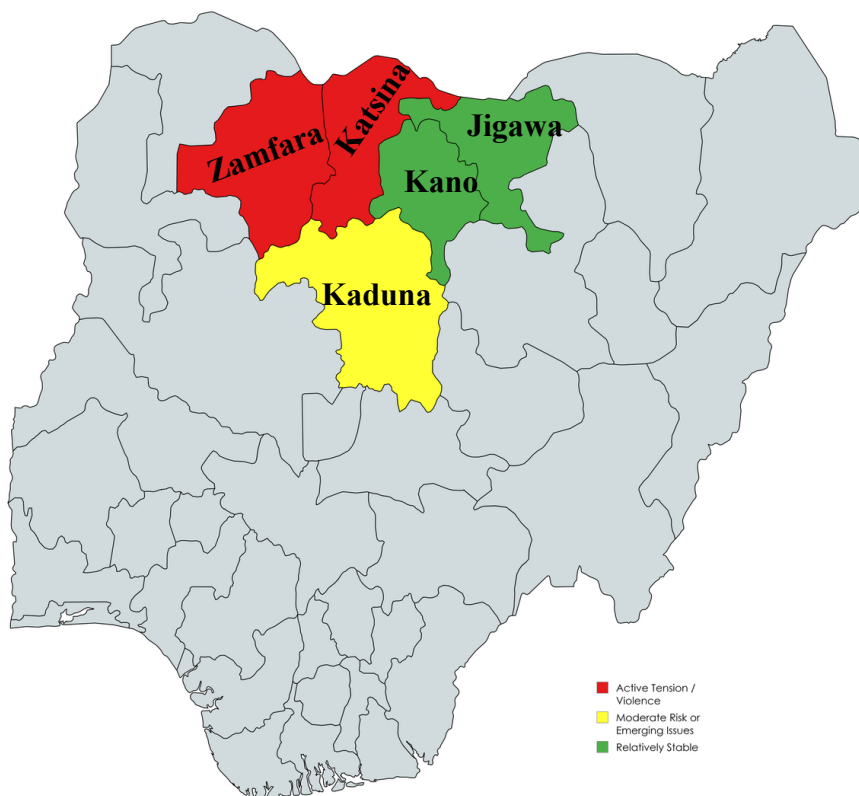


CONFLICT ANALYSIS OF GEOPOLITICAL REGIONS

NORTH-WEST

North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, Kano, and Jigawa remained highly volatile, with persistent and evolving armed violence driven largely by banditry and rural insecurity. Zamfara State remained a major hotspot, with repeated attacks on rural communities, coercive control by bandit groups, and incidents including the killing of vigilantes and the abduction of foreign nationals in mining areas, reflecting both insecurity and economic motivations behind armed groups. Kaduna State also continued to experience recurring rural attacks involving killings, kidnappings, and assaults on vulnerable populations. Kebbi State recorded a notable escalation in violence, particularly attacks on security personnel, including the killing of police officers and soldiers, highlighting the growing boldness of armed groups. Katsina State remained one of the worst-affected areas, with multiple deadly attacks on communities, clashes with security forces, and repeated targeting of vigilante groups, resulting in civilian casualties and injuries. In contrast, Jigawa State remained relatively stable with fewer reported violent incidents, while Sokoto and Kano experienced lower but persistent levels of insecurity linked to broader regional spillover effects. Overall, the North-West in March 2026 reflected a deepening security crisis characterized by rising fatalities, expanding bandit tactics, and sustained pressure on both civilians and security forces.

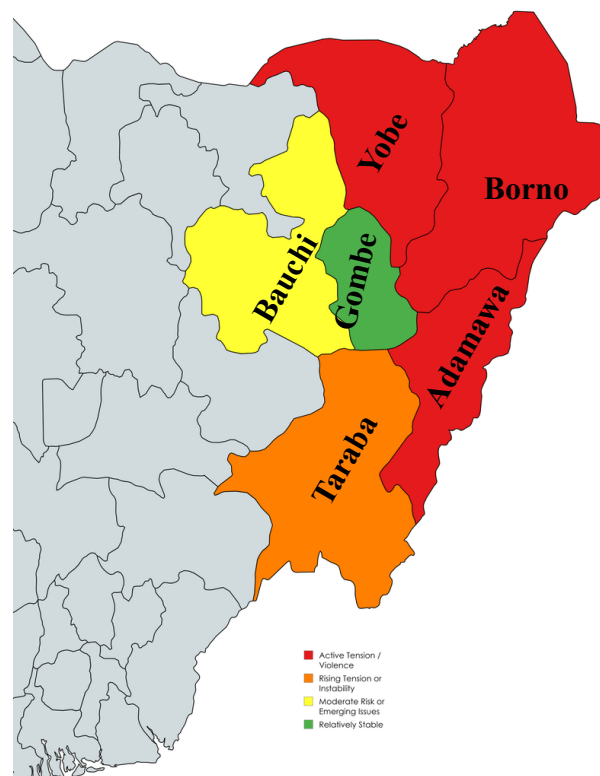
North-West Conflict Hotspots



NORTH-EAST

In March 2026, Nigeria's North-East comprising Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba States remained the epicentre of insurgency and insecurity, driven primarily by sustained activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP, alongside displacement crises and community-targeted violence. Borno State recorded the most severe incident on 4 March 2026, when insurgents overran a military base and attacked Ngoshe community in Gwoza LGA, killing over 100 civilians, including the Chief Imam and community elders at least nine soldiers, and abducting more than 300 women and children. In Yobe State, a major ISWAP attack on Goniri community was repelled, with over 20 insurgents neutralized. Adamawa State continued to experience sporadic insurgent incursions in northern local government areas, while Taraba State saw a sharp rise in farmer–herder violence, particularly in border communities such as Donga and Takum LGAs. Bauchi State recorded notable security-related activity, including the interception of a large consignment of explosive precursors, while Gombe State remained comparatively stable within the region.

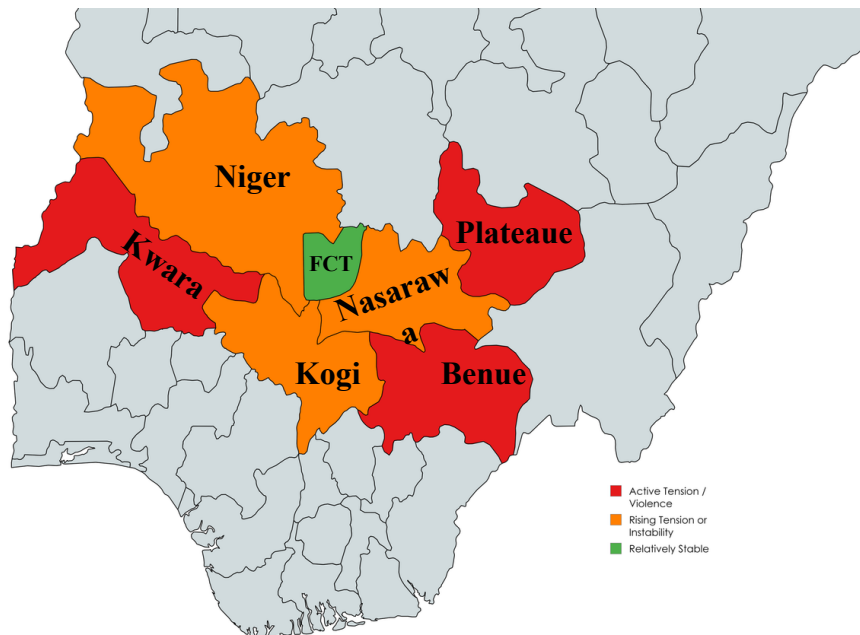
North-East Conflict Hot Spots



NORTH-CENTRAL

In March 2026, North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), continued to exhibit a volatile security environment driven by persistent banditry, communal conflicts, and politically linked violence, reinforcing its status as one of the country's most unstable regions. The month recorded over 44 fatalities, 13 injuries, and 32 kidnappings. Benue State remained a major hotspot, with ongoing farmer–herder conflicts and militia attacks resulting in recurrent killings and displacement. Kogi State insecurity corridor affected by spillover from banditry and militant movements across neighboring states. In Kwara State, the aftermath of a major February massacre extended into March through arrests and ongoing investigations. Nasarawa State experienced similar farmer–herder and communal tensions as Benue, though at relatively lower intensity. Niger State, bordering high-risk corridors such as Kwara and Kaduna, increasingly came under threat from armed groups and bandits. In Plateau State, the killing of security personnel in an ambush highlighted ongoing armed confrontations. Meanwhile, the FCT (Abuja) remained relatively secure from large-scale violence due to strong administrative and military presence, although it continued to face proximity risks from surrounding volatile states.

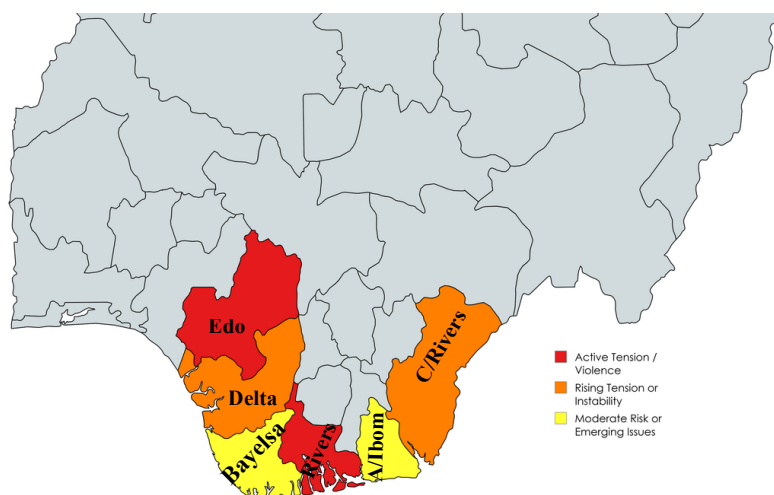
North-Central Conflict Hotspots



SOUTH-SOUTH

The South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River States, remains strategically important due to its oil and gas resources but continues to face diverse and evolving security challenges. In March 2026, Edo State recorded the highest level of security operations, with anti-kidnapping raids, cult crackdowns, and violent confrontations, including incidents such as the Warake forest gun duel (3 March), the Ogbeson–Iguoshodin clash (7 March), and multiple kidnappings and rescues across Etsako, Esan, and Ovia LGAs, underscoring its status as a major hotspot for kidnapping syndicates and cult groups. Rivers State experienced complex, multi-layered insecurity involving political violence, armed robbery, civil unrest, and security-related fatalities, highlighted by incidents such as the Etche NSCDC–tipper driver clash (9 March), the Amaechi convoy ambush (6 March), and the GRA kidnap attempt (20 March), reflecting heightened tensions among political actors, criminal networks, and security agencies. Cross River recorded high-fatality incidents, including the Obubra community–military clash (11 March) with at least four deaths, mob lynching in Calabar South (10 March), and political violence in Bakassi (14 March), indicating rising communal resistance and weak trust in law enforcement. Akwa Ibom experienced fewer violent incidents but notable security concerns, including sea robbery attempts, human trafficking networks, and a community–military clash in Ikot Abasi (27 March), pointing to emerging organised criminal activity. Bayelsa remained relatively calm but recorded large-scale anti-drug operations involving multiple arrests in Yenagoa, suggesting entrenched illicit drug networks that could fuel future criminality, particularly youth-related crime and cultism.

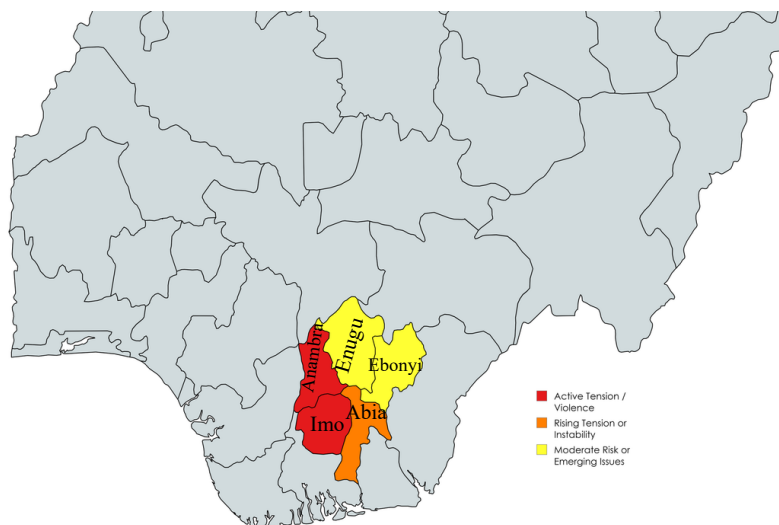
South-South Conflict Hotspots



SOUTH-EAST

The South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo States, has continued to face persistent insecurity driven by unknown gunmen activities, kidnappings, armed robbery, communal violence, and other criminal incidents. Imo State remains one of the major hotspots of violent activity in the region, alongside Anambra, with both states accounting for a significant proportion of deaths linked to armed group operations and violent enforcement activities. Anambra in particular continued to record high levels of violent crime, armed attacks, and political-related tensions into March 2026, making it one of the most affected states. Ebonyi State experienced spillover effects of regional insecurity, including fear of attacks, sit-at-home disruptions, and occasional criminal incidents, though no major large-scale outbreak of violence was recorded. Similarly, Enugu State reported localized insecurity such as kidnappings and armed group movements without significant large-scale violent incidents, while Abia State continued to experience criminality, kidnappings, and broader regional insecurity trends without major recorded outbreaks.

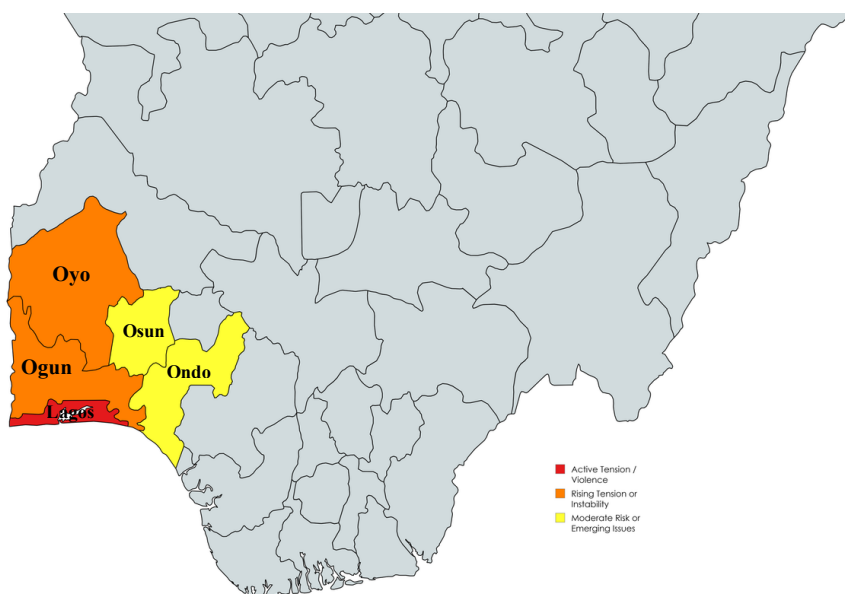
South-East Conflict Hotspots



SOUTH-WEST

The South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States remains relatively more stable than other regions, but continued to experience persistent insecurity challenges in March 2026, including armed robbery, isolated violent incidents, law enforcement-related shootings, and security agency interventions. Lagos State recorded the highest number of violent incidents, driven by armed confrontations, homicide cases, and security-related shootings, including fatal encounters involving security personnel in densely populated areas. Oyo State showed signs of emerging instability, with incidents of violent attacks, criminal arrests, and localized insecurity, particularly in urban centers like Ibadan where youth-related violence and organized crime persist. Ogun State experienced criminal activities and arrests involving suspected armed robbers and illegal operations, with continued spillover risks from Lagos along major transport corridors. Ondo State recorded isolated violent incidents and security interventions, with latent risks in rural and border communities, while Osun State remained relatively calm, though minor criminal activity and underlying communal and political sensitivities highlight the need for continued monitoring.

South-West Conflict Hotspots



CONFLICT HOTSPOTS



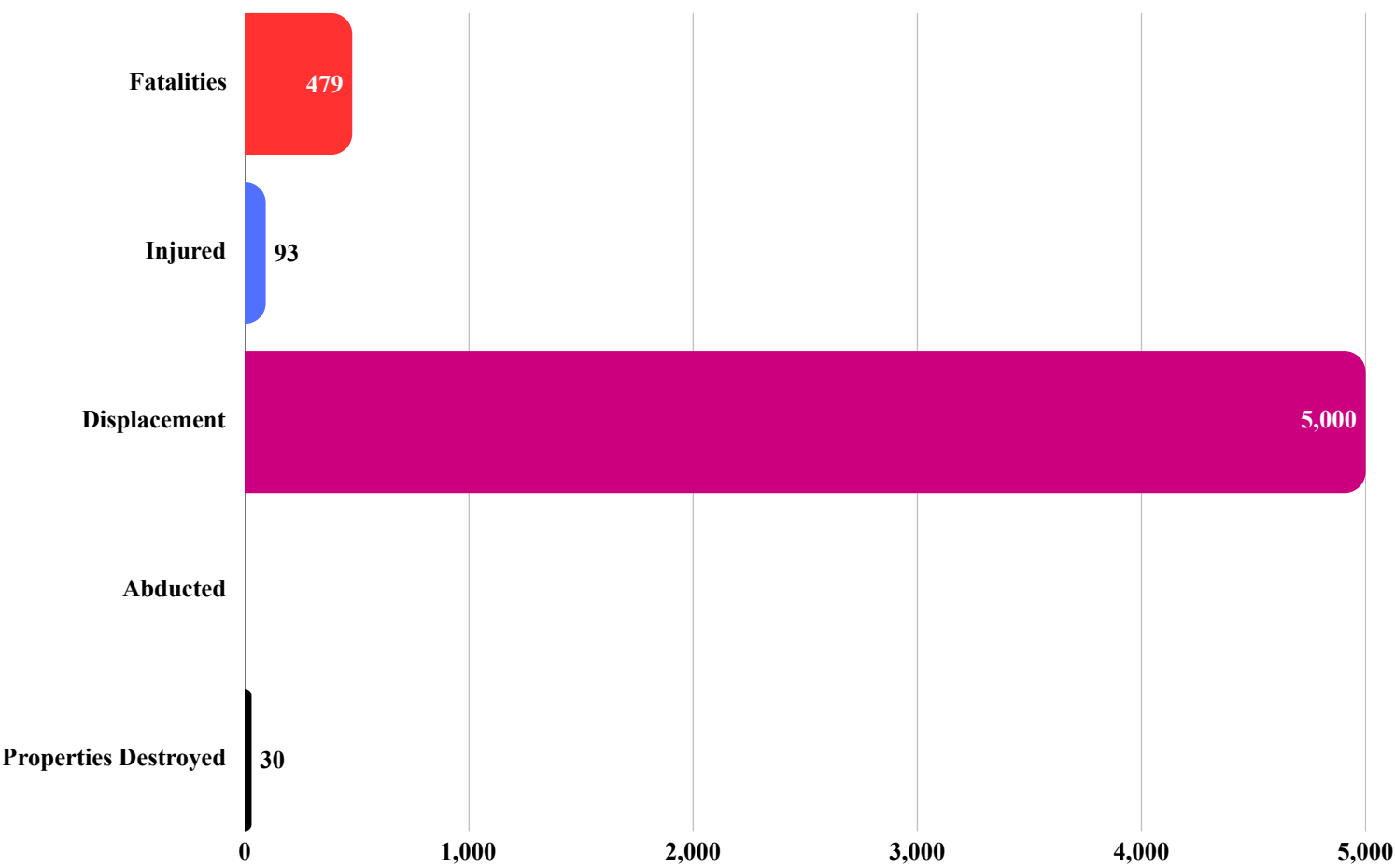
Securities Personnel Casualties

On 1 March 2026, insurgents overran a Forward Operating Base in Mayanti, Bama LGA of Borno State, resulting in the killing of the Commanding Officer, Major U.I. Mairiga, along with three other soldiers. On 4 March 2026, suspected JAS/ISWAP fighters launched an attack shortly after Iftar on Ngoshe community in Gwoza LGA, Borno State, overrunning a military base and killing at least nine soldiers. On 5 March 2026, another attack targeted a Forward Operating Base at Banki Junction, Borno State, leading to the death of an Army Major and several soldiers. Also on 5 March 2026, troops of the 21 Special Armour Brigade were ambushed during clearance operations in Sambisa Forest, Borno State, resulting in the death of one officer and eight soldiers. In a separate incident, a community–military clash in Obubra, Cross River State, on 11 March 2026, led to the killing of two soldiers.

Cross-border Outlook

LAKE-CHAD BASIN AND SAHEL REGION

The Lake Chad Basin and wider Sahel region remained highly volatile in March 2026, driven by insurgency, armed banditry, ethnic clashes, and climate-related pressures on livelihoods affecting Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. In Sudan, the conflict remained severe due to continued power struggles between the national army and the RSF, resulting in political instability, humanitarian crises, and major violence, including an attack in the Ruweng Administrative Area that killed at least 169 people and injured 50 others. Chad faced ongoing political uncertainty, armed conflict, and a worsening humanitarian situation marked by displacement, food shortages, and refugee inflows, alongside cross-border violence such as a deadly drone strike near the Sudan border. In Niger, insecurity remained intense, with extremist violence in Tillabéri and Diffa, ongoing military operations, and worsening humanitarian conditions, highlighted by a deadly attack in Tahoua region that killed 30 people and led to the theft of about 500 cattle.





NO DATA FOR GULF OF GUINEA

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establish rapid response and reinforcement mechanisms by deploying well-equipped units capable of immediate action, supported by improved air assets (helicopters and UAVs) for surveillance, evacuation, and quick reinforcement of vulnerable locations. At the same time, leverage on technology-driven solutions by expanding the use of drones, thermal imaging, and AI-based threat detection systems, alongside secure communication networks to prevent interception and enhance operational efficiency.
2. Restore and strengthen regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel by revitalizing MNJTF operations, enhancing intelligence sharing, and supporting partner states with logistics, surveillance, and training for effective border security and civilian protection.
3. Protect civilians and reopen humanitarian space by establishing secure corridors and “days of calm,” deploying trained civilian military protection units to safeguard aid delivery, and fast-tracking cash assistance and mobile clinics for newly displaced populations.
4. Reinforce community-based early warning, local policing, and trust building by expanding early-warning networks, formalizing and training vetted community response teams under state oversight, and deploying rapid-response liaison units to prevent and de-escalate communal conflicts.
5. Target organized crime and oil theft by creating an inter-agency taskforce to dismantle illicit revenue networks, freeze assets, and prosecute offenders, while implementing environmental remediation and alternative livelihood programs in affected areas.
6. Strengthen arms control and border management by tightening small arms interdiction, enhancing joint patrols and biometric checks, and conducting public information campaigns to counter violent extremism and promote demobilization awareness.
7. Scale up rural Livelihood, entrepreneurship, and Capacity Building Programs targeting high risk zones such as the North East, South East and South South, reduce vulnerabilities to insurgent recruitment and criminal networks.

CONCLUSION:

Nigeria’s overall security outlook, along with that of its surrounding regions, remains deeply troubling. The country has become a convergence point for multiple crises, with the Northern regions emerging as the most volatile hotspots. The rapidly worsening instability and highly fragile security environment can largely be attributed to weak governance and inadequate responses to the mass loss of lives, livelihoods, and the escalating threats to safety. The surge in violent attacks, the persistence of kidnappings, insurgent assaults, communal clashes, and cult-related violence reflect not only the scale of insecurity but also the broader challenges of governance and economic fragility. These trends demand urgent action, particularly through the intensification of proactive conflict mitigation strategies, resilience-building initiatives, and the activation of community-based early warning and peace building systems.

WEAPONS RECOVERED

ARMS/WEAPONS RECOVERED:

- **AK-47 rifle: 6**
- **Empty magazine: 1**
- **locally fabricated rifle: 1**
- **Pump-action guns: 13**
- **Locally fabricated firearm: 10**
- **Live rounds: 950**
- **Locally fabricated Beretta pistols: 2**
- **Other weapons (battle axe): 1**
- **Cartridges: unspecified**
- **Magazines: 4**
- **Rounds of live 9mm ammunition: 4**
- **Locally made pistol: 2**
- **Rounds of live ammunition: 7**

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