Niger Delta Weekly: Highlighting the Evolving Threat of Kidnapping

March 8-14, 2020

Description

Kidnapping for ransom has emerged as one of the greatest threat to human security in the Niger Delta, especially in Rivers, Delta, Edo, Abia and Bayelsa states. From abduction of expatriate oil workers by ethno-regional agitators to draw international attention to environmental and developmental issues in the Niger Delta, the phenomenon has evolved into a protracted security threat and a fast-growing criminal enterprise in the region. It is increasingly changing in nature and expanding in scope, including mass kidnappings. Kidnapping for ransom has become a frequent occurrence and everyone is at the risk of being abducted. According to data (see map below), over 300 kidnapping incidents have been reported in the Niger Delta since 2009. On March 5, 2020, for instance, an 80-year old mother of a local government chairman was reportedly kidnapped in Agudama-Ekpetiama community in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital. The kidnappers reportedly attacked the residence of the victim, shot sporadically to scare away residents, abducted the octogenarian into a vehicle, and later escaped into the creek in a speedboat.
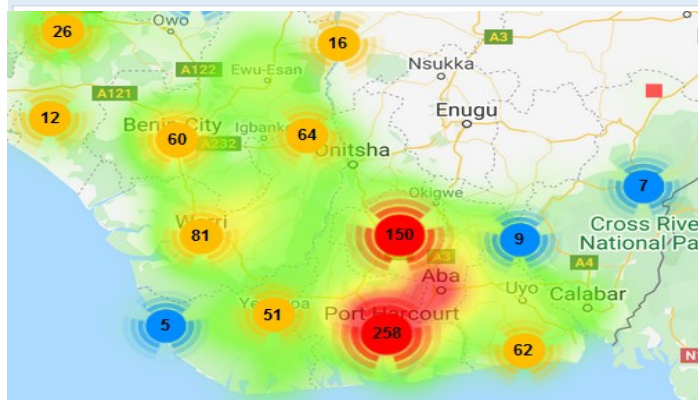
Why it Matters

The current trend of kidnapping for ransom is alarming as everyone is at the risk of being abducted. It is currently the greatest security risk facing individuals, families, businesses and organizations operating in the Niger Delta. The prevalence of kidnapping for ransom therefore constitutes far-reaching repercussions in the Niger Delta.

Social: The danger of kidnapping is not only in the cost of the ransom, but also the threat it poses to ones' life. Sometimes victims are abused, assaulted or killed. The fear of being kidnapped for ransom creates anxiety among residents and this can lead to high level of mistrust among residents, and contribute to general insecurity.

Economic: Kidnapping increases the cost of doing business which could be the cost of paying ransom or the cost of security measures taken. Some businesses have relocated from the Niger Delta because of insecurity. The prevailing risk of kidnappings could force more businesses to relocate outside the Niger Delta. This can exacerbate unemployment and undermine economic development of the region.

Political: The prevalence of kidnappings for ransom could be assumed by residents as symptomatic of the inability of the government to protect lives of citizens. As a result, residents may lose confidence in the capacity of public security agencies to provide public safety and security. Because of a lack of confidence in the capacity of the government security agencies, families and relatives of victims sometimes negotiate and pay ransom to kidnappers without involving the security agencies, and thereby incentivize more kidnappings.

Heat Map of Kidnapping Incidents in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

Heat Map shows concentration of reported kidnapping incidents in the Niger Delta from January 2009 – December 2019. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

The dynamics of crime in the Niger Delta indicates a causal link between kidnappings, economic challenges, and insecurity. Kidnapping is increasingly changing in nature and expanding in scope. The situation could worsen with the proliferation of kidnapping syndicates, if the underlying socio-economic drivers are not addressed. The proposed regional security outfit by the South-South governors could not have come at a better time. The proposed security outfit should be structured to effectively tackle the threat of kidnapping.

Contact Us

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Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system: Text report to **080 9936 2222**

Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and Brief Incident Description.