The Triton Report is compiled monthly by highly specialised data collators and former British Military Ammunition Technical Officers using state of the art data-mining technology. We work with global partners to gather, analyse and evaluate, comprehensively, all recorded IED events worldwide.

NIGER COUNTRY SUMMARY

APRIL 2017
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During the period from 1 January 2016 to 3 March 2017, five IED-related incidents were recorded in Niger. All but one of these incidents occurred within the Diffa region. The sole event outside of this region was a prison attack on 17 October 2016 in Koutoukale, Tilléberi region.

Following the unsuccessful attempt to release prisoners, the majority of whom were involved in the Boko Haram (BH) group, security forces recovered a Person Borne IED (PBIED) from a deceased militant. Although this may suggest BH involvement, the Interior Minister stated that the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) were likely responsible.

In recent weeks, there has been an increase in the number of ambush attacks along the Burkina Faso/Mali/Niger border linked to MUJAO and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) affiliated groups. Although these groups have experience using IEDs against targets, no AQIM IED attacks have been recorded for Niger in the TRITON database, while MUJAO's last IED attack occurred in May 2013. An almost four-year gap between incidents could suggest a reduction in IED-making capabilities, but the recent renewal of violence and reappearance of a PBIED could indicate a potential future threat.

Of the attacks in the Diffa region, two were classified as roadside IEDs and both targeted security forces. The first incident occurred on 16 January 2016, when a military vehicle “ran over” the device 10km from Kabalewa town near the River Yobe. At least six soldiers were killed with up to seven others injured. Although media reports claimed it was a landmine, it may have been a roadside IED, and it has been tagged accordingly in the TRITON database. The comment of “ran over” could indicate a Victim Operated (VO) case, but command initiation cannot be ruled out. In this instance, the device was attributed to Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) militants, however, this classification was placed before the split between BH and ISWA so it may have been carried out by what would now be a BH faction.

The remaining two incidents involved PBIEDs. On 17 March 2016, five ISWA suicide operatives were shot and killed during an attack on Bosso, where one of the PBIEDs functioned after a soldier shot one of the

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Operatives and accidentally functioned the device. The last suicide attack occurred 20km from Diffa on 05 April 2016 and resulted in three civilian fatalities. In this case, three operatives boarded a bus before functioning their devices. The militants had reportedly crossed the Komadougou river to enter the town. This specific border crossing was and remains a regular crossing point for militants seeking to infiltrate Niger from Nigeria.

No incidents have been recorded since 17 October 2016. It is possible that the reduction could be attributed to Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) operations that started in June 2016, and dislodged militants from the Nigerian and Niger border regions. This may have contributed to Islamist groups losing a foothold from which to launch attacks in the region. Additionally, the split between BH and ISWA may have resulted in a drop of IED related incidents, as ISWA has primarily launched attacks using other forms of weaponry such as small arms and RPGs. ISWA may also be choosing to focus its resources on targeting security forces due to the groups’ leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi claiming that Islamic State (IS) ideology prevents him from targeting “ordinary people”. This contrasts significantly with BH’s indiscriminate violence against Muslims who are commonly referred to as “apostates” for not resisting against the Nigerian government to fight for the implementation of the group’s version of Islam and Sharia law.

Nonetheless this does not exclude the possibility that IED attacks in Niger have ceased, alternatively it could be a case of incidents not being reported in open sources. The latter alternative is more likely, given that IEDs were recently claimed to be the “biggest threat to Multinational Joint Task Force members” who are operational in the region, and as Engineer Captain Nseke Dibombe Laurent remarked, the MNJTF continues to face “roadside” and “suicide IEDs”, although this may largely refer to Nigeria and Cameroon. Interestingly, the report from which this statement was taken cites the Diffa and Agadez regions as two sites where the MNJTF engineers were working. This is likely reflective of the ongoing militant insurgency and corroborates the likelihood that incidents and finds may be going unreported.

**DEVICE TYPES**

Although no imagery is available of attacks in Niger, examples of IEDs deployed by BH and ISWA are available and it is possible that these may provide some indication as to what type of devices the militants could be building. Militants in the region have been known to use HME (potentially fertilizer based), commercial and military explosives in IEDs, with the latter two categories acquired through smuggling and following thefts and/or the overrunning of supply stores and bases. Munitions incorporated have included but are not limited to artillery rounds (105mm and 155mm), mortar shells (60mm and 81mm), 30mm cartridges and cluster sub-munitions (BLG-66 and GR-66-EG) for example.
Cluster munitions recovered from caches (DHQ Facebook). Image on the right shows munitions used in attempted PBIED attack (Nigerian Police Force Blog) both images from 2015.

A recent interdiction on 26 February 2017, indicates that ISWA does retain IED capabilities and this is currently the group that claims attacks most often in Niger. This is assessed due to the equipment that three militants were detained with after travelling from Chad to Gombe state, Nigeria. Although this incident occurred in Nigeria, it is likely indicative of some of the IED making knowledge which could be spread throughout the group.

In the image opposite please note the multimeter that can be used to check the functionality of circuits, some batteries, a partially completed circuit board and a torch as a possible container. This type of device has been seen during a clearance operation in February 2016 encompassing Kwaptara, Mijigete, Garin Boka, Mosole, Ngubdori, Ma'asa, Dukje and Gulumba in Dikwa and Bama, Borno state.

In terms of suicide initiated devices, the deployment of which remains a popular BH tactic, a range of different types of devices have been recovered, including at least one incorporating cluster sub-munitions. These devices have been worn on the body or carried by the operative.
A PBIED and several IEDs recovered from an IED factory in Geram, Lake Chad basin between 04 and 05 November 2016, are shown in the image opposite. The device consists of a blue vest with multiple compartments, and is designed to be worn around the chest or waist.

The grey containers in two of the compartments and the foreground of the image, probably contained the main charge. A green probable detonating cord is visible from the top, which likely linked the charges to an initiator and power source.

PBIEDs have also incorporated what is assessed as being 30mm cartridges. This has been evidenced on multiple occasions going back to at least December 2014 (see image opposite of a PBIED recovered in Kano in 2014), indicating a preference for this design, perhaps due to the availability of the materials.

Evidence of similarly constructed devices used over the past year can be seen in the following series of images. Each appears to have a comparable style of pouch; The image opposite from an attempted attack on Bakassi IDP camp on the 30 Oct 2016 (Twitter), may contain 30mm cartridges.
It is unclear what has been used in the device shown in this image, which is from an attack in Maiduguri on 07 Feb 2017. (Emenikesblog.com) However, it shares the same compartment design and circular main charges, which could indicate that they are cartridges.

Similar Boko Haram PBIED design from 16 February 2017 (Facebook), it may have incorporated a different type of main charge, note the white packet at the top of the image.

It appears that the two switches are similar in construction. The first was reportedly attached to a PBIED used on 16 January 2017 during an attack against Maiduguri University, while the second was taken from an attack against Muna Dalti area of Maiduguri on 16 February 2017. (Twitter/My News Ghana) It is possible that they may be rocker switches, although the poor quality of the images prevents clarification. The consistency between the two could suggest that at least in the Maiduguri area there may be some standardisation in the construction of PBIEDs.

In term of roadside IEDs, many different types of containers have been used, including but not limited to: gas canisters, lampposts, plastic drums, metal pipes and cylindrical containers. In February 2017, three of these devices targeted security forces during clearance operations in Borno state, resulting in at least four fatalities and 18 injuries. It is likely that there are more of these devices being encountered due to IED incidents, especially those against security forces, being underreported.
Two roadside IEDs, pictured opposite, had been buried along a supply route used by soldiers before being located and rendered safe on 11 August 2016 in Gambori, Borno state. (DailyPost/Twitter)

They bear a resemblance to the devices seen in the earlier image of recovered items within the Boko Haram factory in Geram, which could signify that they were intended for a similar purpose. The rectangular strips on top of the IEDs are likely pressure plates.

Between 01 and 02 June 2016, security forces also rendered safe three IEDs concealed along the roadside in Ajiri village, Borno state. The devices, shown opposite, contained in metal cylinders were attached to a mix of yellow, blue and red wires and probably attached to the large battery. (Facebook) The middle device has a handle attached, likely for the ease of carrying. It is possible that the length of wire and the size of the battery would imply that the device was probably a Command Wire IED.

**ASSESSMENT**

This report has encompassed the types of IED encountered in Niger since January 2016, and assessed potential types and builds of devices that could be deployed in future. Roadside IEDs and PBIEDs have both been evidenced on two occasions each. The groups attributed to devices were MUJAO, with one incident in the Tilléberi region, and ISWA; thereby BH by extension, with three. It remains likely that the IED threat to Niger could be higher due to underreporting of incidents as well as a continuation of militant activity around and inside Niger’s borders. Although imagery from Niger has been unavailable, the IEDs included in this document have been used previously by militant groups active across borders who may have shared IED capabilities with cells in Niger. Potential threats in the future could come from the Burkina Faso/Mali/Niger border with MUJAO and AQIM linked groups as well as from Nigeria’s border from ISWA and BH who could seek to expand their IED activities in the south.