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Four cases of Ebola-related deaths increase the health threat in the south-eastern N'Zérékoré Region. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola epidemic over in December 2015. The European Union (EU) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) sign two agreements totalling \$56m of aid to finance the Guinean energy sector. Guinean security forces arrest two presumed militants in Conakry and Kindia.

Four deaths in N'Zérékoré highlight risk of Ebola flare-ups

The risk of a renewed spread of Ebola has increased in **Guinea**, following two further deaths on 17 March in **N'Zérékoré Region** – a south-eastern region bordering **Liberia**.¹ The outbreak has since 2014 negatively impacted the economy, as the country's projected strong GDP growth rates decreased from 4.5% to 0.6% in 2014 and multilateral institutions' forecasts only marginally increased to 0.9% in 2015.²

The death toll has risen to four in a week.³ A total of 2,386 people have died of Ebola in Guinea since mid-2014.⁴ Neighbouring countries Liberia and **Guinea-Bissau** have closed their borders with Guinea since this renewed outbreak in order to limit the spread of the epidemic.⁵ In **Koropara Prefecture** (N'Zérékoré Region) the government has identified 961 potential contacts of the deceased, and commenced a systematic vaccination programme on 23 March for all first and second tier contacts.⁶ The reoccurrence appears to be the result of complacency.

*"The resurgence of the Ebola virus is a direct consequence of the abandonment of health expert instructions, especially with regard to sanitary measures."*⁷

Fodé Tass Sylla, spokesperson of the national anti-Ebola campaign, said that the government will enclose the surrounding area to prevent further spread of the virus.⁸ Dr **Sackoba Keita**, coordinator of the anti-Ebola campaign, claimed that the current epidemic should be eradicated by mid-April.⁹ Keita believes that Guinea is sufficiently well prepared to overcome the current resurgence of the disease.¹⁰

*"Liberia handled its situation. Sierra Leone did the same. This is not the case in Guinea, which was unable to do the same. However, it is important for us not to let emotions dominate the level-headedness with which we must tackle this epidemic."*¹¹

¹ Aminata.com, 23 Mar 2016.

² Multiple sources: www.worldbank.org; www.africaneconomicoutlook.com

³ Source, journalist, Conakry

⁴ www.who.org

⁵ Source, journalist, Conakry

⁶ GuinéeNews, 24 Mar 2016.

⁷ Source, journalist, Conakry

⁸ RFI, 24 Mar 2016.

⁹ Source, journalist, Conakry

¹⁰ Source, journalist, Conakry

¹¹ Aminata.com, 23 Mar 2016.

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** declared the end of the Ebola epidemic in December 2015.¹² However, despite the recent cases in Guinea, the WHO has announced that the outbreak no longer represents a threat to international public health.¹³ The WHO claimed that all original chains of transmission have ended, but that these new cases occur as the virus is reintroduced via minor chains, not of great risk to the general population.¹⁴ The WHO also confirmed that it expected relatively regular, insignificant flare-ups to continue, as has happened in previous decades in **sub-Saharan Africa**.¹⁵

“Our main worry is that the villagers that came into contact with one of the dead cases are very numerous. Moreover, among them are several high risk contacts which could test positive.”¹⁶

EU and AFD provide \$56m in funding for energy sector

The **European Union (EU)** and **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** (French development agency) have signed two agreements totalling \$56m on 23 March to bolster Guinea’s domestic energy production.¹⁷ Guinea’s electricity supply has become largely outdated and inefficient, as economic stagnation has meant that the government has been unable to make the required large-scale upgrades on the network.

The AFD will provide 60% of the funding and the EU the remaining 40%.¹⁸ This is the first time the AFD has supported the energy sector in Guinea, as its previous investment focused exclusively on the health sector and urban and rural management.¹⁹ The financing will go specifically towards rehabilitating and extending the distribution network in **Kagbélin** and **Ansoumaniah**, two neighbourhoods of the capital **Conakry**.²⁰ According to AFD director **Jean Pierre Michelli**, the rehabilitation of the distribution network will benefit over 50,000 households across the city.²¹ Many areas within the city remain without reliable access to electricity.²²

France-based Veolia Environnement S.A has since 2015 been the sole manager of the public energy company **Électricité de Guinée (EDG)**.²³ The EDG has for several years been under financial stress, and required a **World Bank**-backed recovery plan, commenced in 2012, to remain operational.²⁴ The World Bank has since provided over \$68.3m in loans for the energy sector in Guinea.²⁵ Nonetheless, in recent weeks several of Conakry’s neighbourhoods have experienced extended power cuts due to scheduled load shedding.²⁶

Currently, only 26.2% of the Guinean population has access to electricity – one of the lowest rates in the **West Africa** region.²⁷ Nonetheless, Michelli believes that Guinea has the potential to export its electricity production to neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone.²⁸ Michelli stated that this is an effective way of securing hard currency and reducing the government’s debt.²⁹ Guinea’s current

¹² www.who.org

¹³ Reuters, 29 Mar 2016.

¹⁴ Reuters, 29 Mar 2016.

¹⁵ Reuters, 29 Mar 2016.

¹⁶ Source, journalist, Conakry

¹⁷ Le Jour Guinée, 23 Mar 2016.

¹⁸ Le Jour Guinée, 23 Mar 2016.

¹⁹ www.afd.fr

²⁰ Le Jour Guinée, 23 Mar 2016.

²¹ Le Jour Guinée, 23 Mar 2016.

²² Le Jour Guinée, 23 Mar 2016.

²³ Jeune Afrique, 27 Apr 2015.

²⁴ Jeune Afrique, 27 Apr 2015.

²⁵ www.worldbank.org

²⁶ Guinée News, 24 Mar 2016.

²⁷ www.worldbank.org

²⁸ www.worldbank.org

²⁹ Guinée News, 24 Mar 2016.

production capacity is estimated at approximately 6,000 megawatts, although dilapidated network infrastructure means much of this is lost.³⁰

French ambassador to Guinea **Bertrand Cochery** notes that even with the country's slowly recovering economy (see above), energy will play a crucial role in revitalising various sectors.³¹ Many of Guinea's key sectors – including the single most important economic pillar, mining – have suffered severely from decreased investment and business activity since the beginning of the Ebola outbreak.³²

*“This is the beginning of concrete modernisation of the Guinean economy. It is also a sign of hope – the **Kaléta** dam, for example, is an important step, but this is not enough. We need a distribution network that works. We also need energy storage and transport to be efficient and well maintained. It is paramount for us to show that [the energy] sector is paramount to the country's recovery.”³³*

Security forces arrest two suspected terrorist militants

Guinean security forces have arrested two suspected militants in **Kindia Prefecture (Kindia Region)**, 140 kilometres from Conakry.³⁴ The arrests illustrate the extent of security forces' efforts to clamp down on terrorist threats, with a seemingly aggressive stance. The arrests were part of heightened security measures implemented following the attack in **Grand-Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire)** on 13 March, where militants killed 22 people.³⁵ Guinea had already increased security measures following the arrest in January of **Mauritanian** escaped prisoner **Saleck Ould Cheikh** near the border with Guinea-Bissau (see *ARC Briefing Guinea January 2016*). Cheikh showed the ease with which militants can cross borders in the region.

Sources in Guinea claim that there have been relatively few threats at the national level from militant groups.³⁶ Nevertheless, the first terrorist attack on Ivorian soil has produced a ripple effect across the region, as no country appears fully protected against such attacks.³⁷ One of the arrested suspects had allegedly made a call to domestic news website **Guinée News**, threatening to attack several hotels in Conakry.³⁸ He reportedly stated that “*Guinea will burn in a few days*” and that “*five hotels in Conakry will explode within 72 hours*”.³⁹

Security forces made no public announcement after the arrests, although they have commented that they have increased security measures in major public sites including hotels and embassies, and other foreign businesses and organisations – for example the **Franco-Guinean Cultural Centre**.⁴⁰ The **Novotel** in the **Kaloum** district of Conakry had already reviewed its security mechanisms – all entrances and exits have permanent security as well as systematic control measures to examine possessions.⁴¹ The interior ministry has recommended that all hotels increase security personnel over the coming weeks.⁴² The national police force has committed to making itself available to these hotels if they lack security personnel.⁴³ However, Colonel **Aliou Diakité**, spokesperson for the Guinean armed forces, made clear that the reinforcement of security measures concerns not only the

³⁰ www.afd.fr

³¹ Source, journalist, Conakry

³² Source, journalist, Conakry

³³ French ambassador to Guinea, Bertrand Cochery, Conakry

³⁴ Africaguinee.com

³⁵ Africaguinee.com

³⁶ Source, journalist, Conakry

³⁷ Source, journalist, Conakry

³⁸ AIP, 18 Mar 2016.

³⁹ AIP, 18 Mar 2016.

⁴⁰ Source, journalist, Conakry

⁴¹ Source, journalist, Conakry

⁴² Africaguinee.com

⁴³ Africaguinee.com

interior but also increased supervision of Guinea's borders, particularly with **Mali** to the north and Côte d'Ivoire to the east.

*"What happened in Côte d'Ivoire was foreseeable seeing as these terrorists operate everywhere. This is why we must remain very vigilant. We will increasingly monitor all movement at the borders, as well as in the interior, as these militants can recruit within the country too."*⁴⁴

President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) has said his government is willing to collaborate with anybody who has information related to terrorist threats, while he stressed that Guinea will require cooperation with its international partners in order to be effective.⁴⁵ The **United States** military has issued a statement to say that it will restrict the movement of its members – part of United States Africa Command – in **Senegal**, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, **Burkina Faso**, and **Ghana**.⁴⁶

Implications

The resurgence of Ebola, despite the WHO's announcement that the pandemic had ended, remains a possibility. Evidently some members of the Guinean public are ignoring sanitation recommendations. Nonetheless, the continued deployment of several hundred WHO experts, and several research centres, and the implementation of vaccination measures, would indicate that the worst of the epidemic has ended. The most important aspect in order to gauge risk is the management of minor flare-ups over the coming few months. If the current case results in few casualties due to the government's timely and effective response, it would indicate that authorities have the capacity to keep flare-ups under control.

The focus on infrastructure and energy projects marks a renewed strategy for the AFD and the EU towards development aid in Guinea. French involvement in the energy sector is becoming increasingly significant, as Véolia already manages EDG, and AFD is now financing major projects.

The arrests in Guinea indicate an apparent aggressive stance towards terrorist threats in the region. Guinea appears lucky to have avoided an attack, as the arrest of Cheikh in January and the sweeping threats that the alleged militants have made, both show. Guinea, although historically unaffected by militancy, as with many of its neighbours, appears increasingly a target.

⁴⁴ www.aa.com.tr

⁴⁵ www.aa.com.tr

⁴⁶ Reuters, 16 Mar 2016.

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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