Karagwe, Tanzania
Security Overview and Travel Assessment

November 2016
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Executive Summary

In light of the 10 September earthquake in Kagera Region, Tanzania, and a previous devastating fire in Karagwe District in late April 2016, Amizade requested Armada Global’s assistance in conducting an updated threat assessment of Karagwe, Tanzania. While devastation from these disasters was documented in local reporting, Armada was only able to find cursory indicators of underlying sentiments that could lead to civil unrest or violence in the area. These indicators include Kagera government officials urging locals to remain calm and to not blame leaders for a perceived slow rebuilding process, arrests of government officials for trying to steal charitable donations in the aftermath of the earthquake, and concerns of a potential famine in the area. Also, while not in Kagera Region, two researchers conducting soil samples in the aftermath of the earthquake and their driver were brutally murdered in Dodoma Region, Tanzania. The motive for the murders did not appear related to the earthquake, but rather appeared to be due to a misunderstanding about the researchers’ activity in the village. While Dodoma is a separate region, the incident highlights the potential risk to outsiders being in remote villages without coordinating with local leaders.

Local reporting has not indicated that civil unrest and violence are issues in Karagwe District/Kagera Region due to the earthquake, but there are indicators of angst and displeasure among the populace with post-quake rebuilding efforts. These sentiments are reflected in interviews, and a plea was issued by local government leaders on 19 October 2016 to remain patient with the rebuilding process. The incident in Dodoma appears to be an isolated event unrelated to the earthquake. Thirteen culprits in the attack have also been arrested with the case garnering a significant amount of attention. Armada does not assess this incident is reflective of a trend.

Of note, Armada’s research into the April fire returned little information. Amizade staff indicated the fire was far more destructive than outlined in press reports. This further indicates that press reports may be an insufficient gauge to thoroughly assess the mood of the populace in Kagera Region.

While unrelated to the fire and earthquake, Armada’s research did uncover numerous reports of ongoing violence along the Rwandan/Tanzanian border due to non-attributable gang/militant activity. Considering this increased violence along the Rwandan/Tanzanian border in the Kagera Region, Armada recommends travelers avoid the border area entirely. More specifically, near the Kagera river and the town of Ngara, Tanzania. Given the need to traverse this area if traveling from Rwanda, alternate overland travel should be considered (via Uganda, for example).
April 2016 Fire

As of early May 2016, local reporting indicated a Catholic church in Karagwe was set ablaze by arsons. It was the third church in as many months to have been targeted in Karagwe. Local press reporting, however, did not detail the extent of the fire’s damage as relayed by Amizade staff. Further, as of September 2016, three Bukoba residents were convicted of arson for burning a church in Bukoba. The three were issued life sentences.

While the press report of the conviction noted the church burnings in Karagwe, it did not specify that the convicted Bukoba criminals were responsible for the Karagwe arson. Given the similarity of the crimes, it is possible that the responsible parties for the Karagwe fire are now in prison. Considering Amizade’s knowledge that the fire in April was far more extensive than local reports indicated, press reporting in the area may be insufficient, and hence not be a reliable indicator for detecting souring sentiments in the region.

10 September Earthquake

On 10 September 2016, an earthquake impacted the greater Kagera region of Tanzania to include Karagwe District. The earthquake killed more than a dozen residents, injured several hundred more, destroyed approximately 900 homes, and damaged many more. One estimate indicated the number of affected was approximately 126,000. Reporting did specify that response was perceived as slow, aid was not being distributed fast enough to shelterless residents, and private organizations were being hampered in distributing aid by government bureaucracy.

Several local government officials were arrested in the aftermath of the earthquake as they had attempted to steal donations for personal gain. These arrests included the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS), Amantius Msole; Kagera Regional Chief Accountant, Simbaufoo Swai; Bukoba Municipal Council Director, Kelvin Makonda; and CRDB Bukoba Branch Manager, Karlo Sendwa. The four had conspired to open a bank account to collect donations that nearly replicated the officially sanctioned donation account. As of the time of this writing, the criminal case against the four was ongoing.

On 19 October 2016, regional leaders in Kagera issued a plea asking locals to remain calm while the government went about the rebuilding process. Further, a 22 October report indicated the Kagera Region would also face a famine in the near term due to insufficient rainfall. The famine would hit residents particularly hard since many are still displaced from their homes.

No press reports were found highlighting civil unrest or violence due to the quake, however, government pleas for patience indicate angst exists in the populace. Interviews with locals also highlight dissatisfaction with response efforts. Relief efforts are not expected to drastically improve in pace or scope. This, coupled with the risk of famine and distrust of public officials, leads Armada to assess that local attitudes may become more hostile, possibly leading to civil unrest and increased violence in the region.
Also of note, reports indicated two earthquake researchers and their driver were brutally murdered in the town of Iringa Mvumi Village in Dodoma Region, Tanzania on 1 October 2016. The early press headlines tying the three to post quake efforts are questionable. The three were collecting soil samples for the Selian Agricultural Research Institute in Dodoma. As Dodoma was not hit hard by the quake, it is unclear if the group’s activity had any relation to the earthquake. The stated motive for the murders also did not relate to the earthquake, rather, the three were murdered because the locals suspected they were vampires and/or were collecting blood illegally. Thirteen culprits were arrested as of mid-October 2016. Armada notes that Iringa Mvumi is approximately 600-miles from Karagwe and, as such, does not assess this isolated incident to be related to unrest in the aftermath of the quake. Armada does recommend, however, coordinating with village leaders prior to conducting activity in remote villages, as this was specified as a neglected action which could have prevented the above incident.

**Violence Along Rwanda Border**

Reporting from summer 2016 indicated a significant security concern along the Rwandan border, specifically near the Kagera River and the town of Ngara. As of early September 2016, Tanzania had banned activities along the Kagera River which borders Rwanda. Fifty-nine citizens have gone missing, and it is suspected they were murdered by a militia attempting to control the river. Those missing originate from Karagwe and Kyerwa Districts. A Rwandan citizen claimed her child was shot and killed by a militia operating in the region. Tanzania has stated it would increase river patrols to counter this threat, but details on such have not been published. Reports indicate the Rukombe beach and Mubari islands are of particular concern.

Further, as of mid-August 2016, armed bandits from a neighboring country (NFI), were robbing, wounding, and murdering residents in Ngara, Tanzania. Ngara is in Kagera District along the border with Rwanda. Several reports of “bandit” activity in this area have been reported.

**Recommendations**

Amizade should continue to monitor local reporting in Kagera and collect insights from local staff to determine if civil unrest and violence in Kagera noticeably increases in the near term. If so, Armada would recommend a temporary cessation of activities in this region until stabilization returns. Even if no further indicators emerge, Armada recommends reviewing security action plans, communication plans, and response procedures and ensuring travelers are cognizant of these procedures.

Given increased militia activity along the Rwandan/Tanzanian border, specifically in the Kagera Region and Karagwe District, Armada highly recommends ceasing all activity near the border. The Kagera River and immediate vicinity as well as the town of Ngar should be considered off limits to travelers. As overland transit from Rwanda requires crossing and traveling in this area on poorly maintained roads, Armada recommends consideration of entry via Uganda with
overland travel from Entebbe/Kampala. Further, activities in remote villages should be coordinated in advance with village leaders to insure no ambiguity exists about staff’s activities.

In the event of a deteriorating security situation in Karagwe, Armada recommends traveling to a nearby safe site to seek support. Depending on the nature of the incident, the closest police station may be the preferred location. If concerns regarding the reliability of the local police are an issue, Armada recommends traveling to Bukoba, the capital of Kagera. In Bukoba, there is a Tanzanian military presence, hospital, and hotels catering to foreign safari guests. One particular hotel recommendation is Bukoba Kolping Hotel (https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g681257-d1449799-Reviews-Bukoba_Kolping_Hotel-Bukoba_Kagera_Region.html). This hotel is the most heavily reviewed and recommended in the area. Personnel should shelter in place at the Kolping until the security issue is resolved or until an extraction can be arranged.

In the event of a large-scale security concern in the region that makes travel to Bukoba a concern, it is recommended that Amizade personnel travel via highway to Uganda or Rwanda (depending on the nature of the threat) and seek shelter in a western hotel or in a safehouse provided by Armada’s local security partner. Recommended hotels in Kampala include The Sheraton (www.sheratonkampala.com) and The Kampala Serena Hotel (http://www.serenahotels.com/serenakampala/default-en.html). Both locations have been inspected by Armada staff and have high security postures. Armada’s local security partner can also provide secure lodging in a safehouse located in an upscale residential area of Kampala. This location has been inspected by Armada personnel and is staffed 24/7 with armed guards. Again, travelers should shelter in place until evacuation can be arranged.

As an added security measure, Armada also recommends outfitting travelers with emergency communication devices to assist in the event of an emergency.

Armada advises all travelers to practice the following security awareness techniques:

- Travel with emergency communication and tracking device
- Be cognizant of your surroundings
- Avoid predictable patterns
- Do not dress extravagantly or wear expensive jewelry
- Travel in groups
- Use only trusted transportation nodes (arranged by western hotel, for example)
- Do not hail street cabs
- Prior to your trip, register with the U.S. Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program - https://step.state.gov/step/
- Follow U.S. Department of State travel guidance for area
- Insure you have proper vaccinations and have registered for travel insurance and medical evacuation coverage

Finally, all travelers should carry contact information for their home embassy, included below:
The United States Embassy in Rwanda

2657 Avenue de la Gendarmerie (Kacyiru)
P.O. Box 28
Kigali, Rwanda
Tel: (250) 25-259-6400
Fax: (250) 25-258-0325

The United States Embassy in Tanzania

686 Old Bagamoyo Road, (Msasani)
P.O. Box 9123
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: (255) 22-229-4000
Fax: (255) 22-229-4970 or 4971

The United States Embassy in Uganda

Plot 1577 Ggaba Road,
P.O. Box 7007,
Kampala, Uganda
Tel: (256) 41-430-6001
Fax: (256) 41-425-9794