

KRE Global Monitor

December 2016 - March 2017

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Welcome to the December 2016 - March 2017 edition of the red24 Kidnap for Ransom and Extortion (KRE) Global Monitor. This quarterly publication, authored by red24's Special Risks Analysts, provides Liberty International Underwriters (LIU) clients with important information on recent incidents, as well as current and emerging KRE trends. In this edition, we focus on the threat of kidnapping in [Mexico](#). Our incidents snapshot section provides a short analysis of significant KRE incidents reported between 15 December 2016 and 15 March 2017, including details of incidents in [Afghanistan](#), [Brazil](#), [China](#), [Greece](#), [India](#), [Iraq](#), [Kenya](#), [Libya](#), [Mozambique](#), the [Philippines](#), [Russia](#), [Syria](#), [Turkey](#) and the [US](#).

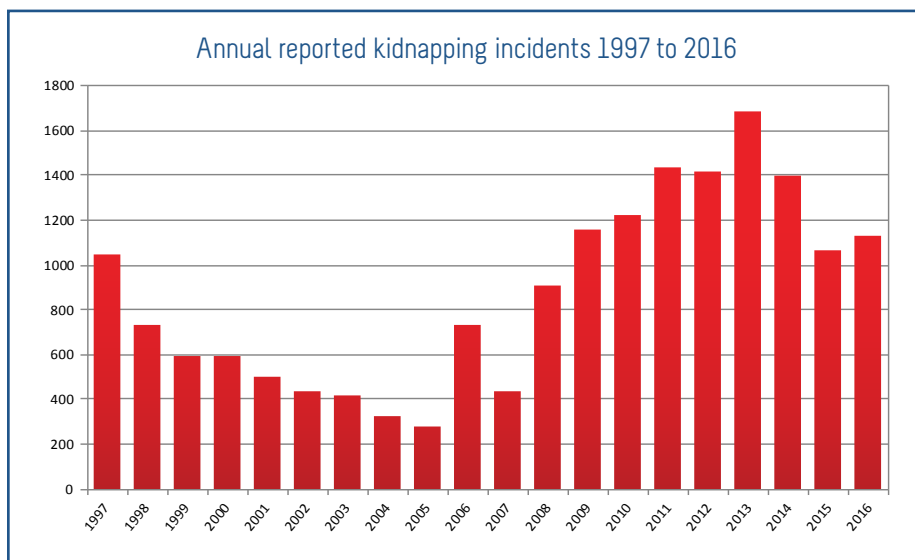
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KRE in Mexico

Kidnap for ransom and extortion (KRE) has long been synonymous with Mexico and the country's overall kidnapping threat is rated as high. Mexico has consistently featured in the top kidnapping hotspots globally for several years, and in terms of threat levels in the Americas in 2016, Mexico retained its unenviable position as the worst kidnapping-affected state in the region. red24 rates Mexico as a high-risk destination and operating environment, due to a number of security concerns, including, but not limited to KRE. Additional security threats include elevated high levels of petty and violent crime, corruption, political unrest and persistent drug cartel-related violence, all of which contribute to an environment conducive to kidnapping activity. red24 anticipates that Mexico will continue to rank among the world's top ten worst kidnapping-affected countries in 2017.

With many multinational companies maintaining large local employee bases and maintaining or pursuing an extensive operational presence in Mexico, kidnapping and extortion will continue to present particularly credible security risks to local employees and business operations. Although locals will remain the predominant target of kidnappers and extortionists, the KRE threat to foreign travellers will remain elevated, especially to persons conducting longer-term travel in higher-risk areas.

Due to the nature of the security environment, and factors such as poor law enforcement and judicial systems, accurate data sourcing and



authentication poses a major challenge when assessing the nature and extent of the kidnapping threat in Mexico. The general crime under-reporting rate in Mexico is assessed to be high by regional and international standards. According to a recent study by the Center for Impunity and Justice Studies (CESIJ), less than seven percent of all crimes in Mexico are reported, of which only approximately 4.5 percent are successfully prosecuted. These statistics point to a potential under-reporting rate of more than 90 percent, and a conviction rate of approximately one percent of total crimes committed. When it comes to kidnapping incidents, under-reporting rates are widely believed to be especially high; perceptions of police/bureaucratic corruption/collusion and/or ineffectiveness and an increased possibility of retaliation (in the form of further incidents or reprisal violence), mean that the majority of kidnappings are not reported to police.

Under-reporting aside, the differing methodology used in compiling official and unofficial data on kidnapping in Mexico presents a further challenge. Official government statistics are based on recorded kidnapping incidents (where cases have been opened with police); other agencies compile data using anecdotal and survey-based evidence as well. In the case of government statistics, kidnappings that result in deaths are listed as homicides. Although official data includes, but does not distinguish between, economic kidnapping (abductions for financial advantage) and political/ideological kidnapping (abductions for political concessions), other forms of the crime are excluded; these include custodial, tiger, express and virtual kidnappings.

According to the National Commission of Security (SESNSP), a total of 5,273 kidnapping incidents were recorded during the four-year period between January 2013 and December 2016. However, in a recently released report by non-governmental kidnapping watchdog, Alto al Secuestro, approximately 8,669 kidnappings were reported during that period. Further challenging these figures, the latest 2016 National Survey of Victimization and Perception on Public Security (ENVIPE), stated that approximately 62,636 people had been affected by kidnapping in 2015 alone.

In light of the above challenges, it is generally accepted that government statistics in Mexico fail to accurately represent the actual threat level on the ground. Nonetheless, they do form a consistent, and thus fairly useful, baseline from which to identify changes in kidnapping characteristics in the country, on both a state and municipal level. Analysing annual changes in kidnap incident levels, together with related crime and drug-cartel developments, is helpful in assessing and forecasting kidnapping trends. For the purpose of baseline consistency, unless otherwise noted, the graphically illustrated figures in this report are sourced from official government reports released by the SESNSP. According to SESNSP statistics, the decrease in reported kidnapping incidents in Mexico, witnessed since 2014, was subject to a slight reversal in 2016. A total of 1,128 kidnap incidents were reported in 2016, compared to the annual total of 1,067 in 2015. It is red24's position that upwards of 4,000 traditional kidnappings occur in Mexico on an annual basis.

Background to Mexico's kidnapping threat and recent government initiatives against it

While kidnapping has been a key feature of Mexico's security environment for decades, the nature of the threat has evolved in terms of scope and scale in response to domestic and regional developments. Kidnapping initially emerged in Mexico as a tactic of the militant wings of marginalised political groupings during a period of widespread political unrest in the 1980s. These groups orchestrated kidnappings as both an income-generating tactic and a means to elicit political concessions. Successful security operations by Mexican security agencies led to a decline in politically motivated and criminal kidnappings in the mid-1990s. However, incident figures surged again in 2006 in response to government offensives initiated by the former president, Felipe Calderon, against criminal gangs, which were recognising the potential rewards associated with KRE activity and increasingly participating in this form of crime. Although Calderon experienced some success in targeting and reducing the operations of kidnapping groups, unforeseen ramifications of his government's security plan included an upsurge in violence and KRE activity between 2008 and 2011.

The election campaign of Calderon's successor, President Enrique Pena Nieto, was, to a large degree, built on instituting new military, political and socio-political strategies to combat the country's rampant violence and high kidnapping levels. During his first year in office in 2013, Nieto's strategy appeared to be gaining momentum, with the 22 February 2014 arrest of the Sinaloa drug cartel kingpin, Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman. The creation of the National Gendarmerie Division in 2014 was also touted as a key development for improving security in Mexico; however, security-related developments from mid-2014 onwards, including the much-publicised abduction and murder of 43 students in Guerrero state, and the 2015 escape of Guzman, placed increasing pressure on Nieto's regime to take further action against criminal kidnapping perpetrators and drug cartels in Mexico.

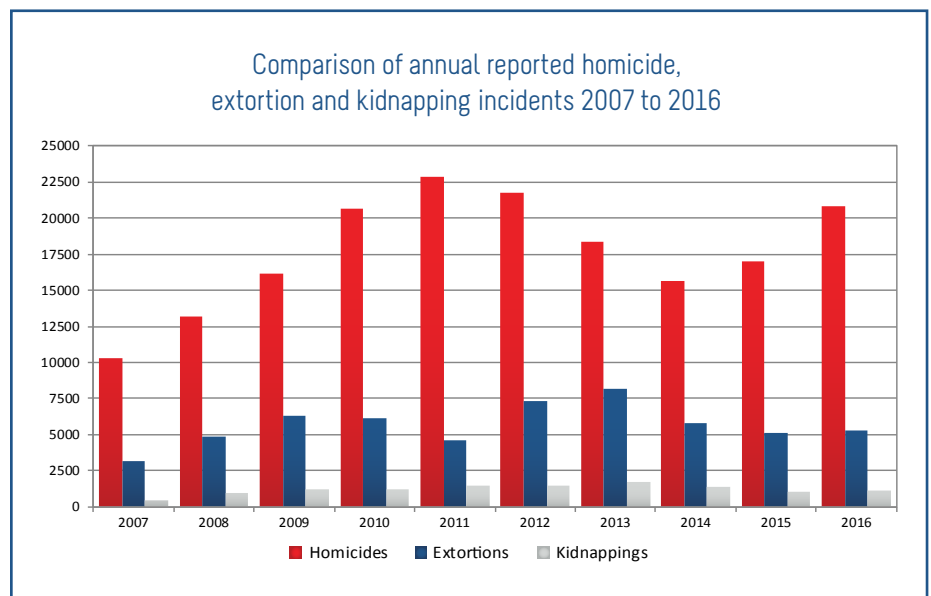
While Nieto's government has made some strides in addressing Mexico's security challenges, including a reported decrease in kidnapping incidents between 2012 and 2015, his strategy has also faced major challenges. These have included persistent political instability, various socio-economic challenges, and changes in the structure and modus operandi of drug cartels in response to government offensives against them. It is within this environment

that Mexico's kidnapping threat has continued to evolve and flourish, with extortion and non-traditional kidnapping activity, such as virtual kidnapping and cybercrime, increasingly coming to the fore. Furthermore, homicide figures increased in 2016, raising concerns regarding President Nieto's ability to guarantee security in the lead-up to the 2018 presidential election, a period that precedent indicates will likely be characterised by a further increase in criminal activity, violence and political instability. As President Nieto's term comes to an end and Mexico prepares for the next presidential election in 2018, the country's security challenges, including high homicide and kidnapping rates, and solutions to them, are expected to form a key part of the campaigns of potential presidential candidates. Precedent indicates that the new dispensation's security plan to tackle rampant criminality, drug-trafficking-related violence and kidnapping activity will likely influence the kidnapping threat level and form in the medium-term. Related developments will need to be closely monitored in the lead-up to, and after, the poll.

Perpetrators: Motives and tactics

Criminal gangs

Mexico's KRE industry has experienced a criminal syndication in recent years. Criminal entities are now the primary perpetrators of kidnapping, with the threat stemming from organised crime groups and syndicates, as well as low-level opportunistic gangs. This development arose both as a result of the attractiveness of these types of crime in comparison to traditional KRE, and the plethora of criminal entities that continue to take advantage of the relative security vacuum resulting from the splintering of drug cartels into smaller units, due to the ongoing fallout of key drug cartel leaders being arrested. Criminal groups will change their *modi operandi* in response to government offensives or operational constraints.



The most significant kidnapping threat stems from sophisticated criminal groups that operate on a localised level and focus specifically on kidnapping as their primary *modus operandi*. These established groups are able to leverage control and influence within the local security environment, including co-opting local municipal police and government officials into their criminal agendas.

Non-professional, often opportunistic criminal elements, as well as those with a direct connection to the victim, account for a further proportion of cases, while the role of corrupt law enforcement officials is also assumed in a significant number of kidnappings; as many as 20 percent of cases are believed to involve some direct link to government personnel, be it local law enforcement, federal police, the military, judiciary and/or politicians.

Drug cartels and transnational criminal organisations

Transnational criminal organisations (TCOs), such as Mexico's major drug cartels, which maintain a presence in most Mexican states, also pose a credible kidnapping and extortion threat. Although kidnapping for ransom and other motivations is an established tactic of cartels and drug trafficking organisations (DTOs), fewer than 30 percent of kidnapping cases feature direct TCO involvement. TCOs are continuously evolving in terms of *modus operandi* and recruitment strategies. This is illustrated by the 10 March 2016 discovery of a fake private security firm in Puerto Vallarta; the organisation, which has been linked to the Jalisco Cartel, had reportedly been a front for the recruitment of cartel members. Prospective employees, lured by potential high wages and benefits, were subsequently forced to sell drugs or conduct assassinations by the cartel. If they refused they would be held hostage, with the only way out being a hefty ransom payment by family members.

Countrywide, cartel-related violence increased during 2016; this was fuelled largely by an increase in conflict between various cartels for control over territory. The trend of increasing violence across the country is not anticipated to significantly dissipate in the short- to medium-term, but rather be further fuelled by inter-cartel violence, as well as by clashes between security forces and cartels. The increase in violence between police and cartels will be driven by the deployment of thousands of additional security forces to areas identified as suffering from elevated cartel-related violence in recent months. This will force cartel members and police into contact with each other, thus increasing the risk of clashes between the opposing groups.

Additional KRE-related threat types

Express kidnapping

Express kidnapping is a common modus operandi of criminal groups in Mexico. This form of kidnapping involves victims being held for a short duration, in which they are forced to withdraw money from ATMs or to hand over PIN details. Government statistics indicate that there are more than ten express kidnappings a day, or at least 3,650 a year; however, the Council for Law and Human Rights, a Mexican NGO, believes that 98 percent of victims do not report such incidents and that this threat could therefore be much higher than indicated by statistics.

Express kidnapping gangs, which tend to operate in groups of two or three and generally work from at least one vehicle, are based in many urban centres across Mexico. The profiles of the victims targeted in such crimes differ according to the area in which the incident takes place and the sophistication of the perpetrating group. Significantly, express kidnappings are equally likely to take place in both affluent and lower-income areas. Most cases involve the victim being held at gunpoint or knifepoint; almost all incidents involve robbery of personal possessions and as many as 20 percent of cases involve assault, including sexual assault of female victims. Female travellers may specifically be targeted in express kidnappings, given the perception that they are more physically vulnerable.

Virtual kidnapping

Virtual kidnapping activity, which often emanates from incarcerated individuals, has significantly increased in many areas of Mexico in recent years. In a virtual kidnapping, a ransom demand is made, although there is no actual hostage taking; rather, negotiations with those from whom the ransom is demanded are made on the pretext that a connected person has been abducted. Virtual kidnappings may also take a hybrid form, whereby the incident is initiated as a virtual kidnapping. However, once the victim is at the perpetrators' intended location, the victim is made explicitly aware of his abduction and is held against his/her will by the assumption that they will be harmed should they escape. There have been several reported incidents of virtual kidnapping affecting foreign nationals in Mexico over the past two years. Hybrid cases, which involve traits of both virtual and traditional KRE, pose an additional risk, also with potentially serious consequences.

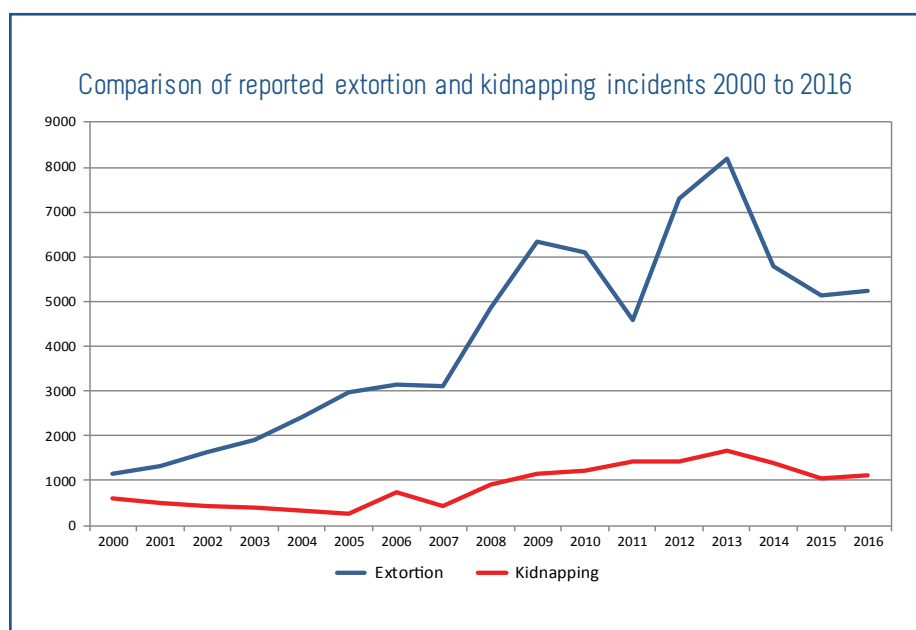
In a recent example of a virtual kidnapping incident, on 19 July 2016, two Chilean nationals were targeted in a virtual kidnapping incident while on holiday in the city of San Cristobal de las Casas, located in Mexico's Chiapas state. The victims, journalist Monica Gonzalez, and her daughter, were reportedly contacted telephonically via the hotel receptionist by the perpetrator, who claimed to be a police officer and requested some information from the travellers. The perpetrator then claimed to be a member of the Los Zetas organised crime group and instructed the foreign nationals to turn off their mobile phones and stay in their hotel room. On 20 July, the perpetrator once again contacted Gonzalez telephonically and, using the threat of physical harm, coerced them into vacating the hotel and checking into a specified alternative accommodation a short distance away. Authorities state that they became aware of the situation after being contacted by the Federal Police (FP) enquiring about the whereabouts of the victim on 20 July. Following a joint investigation by the FP and the Attorney General of Mexico (PGR), the victims were found and both were released. Further details regarding the abduction, including the identity of the perpetrators and whether a ransom demand was made, have yet to be released.

Going forward, expect virtual kidnappings to increasingly include a cyber crime element; surveillance of potential victims is increasingly gathered using social networking platforms, or via stolen identity data; these methods are also used by traditional kidnappers.

Extortion

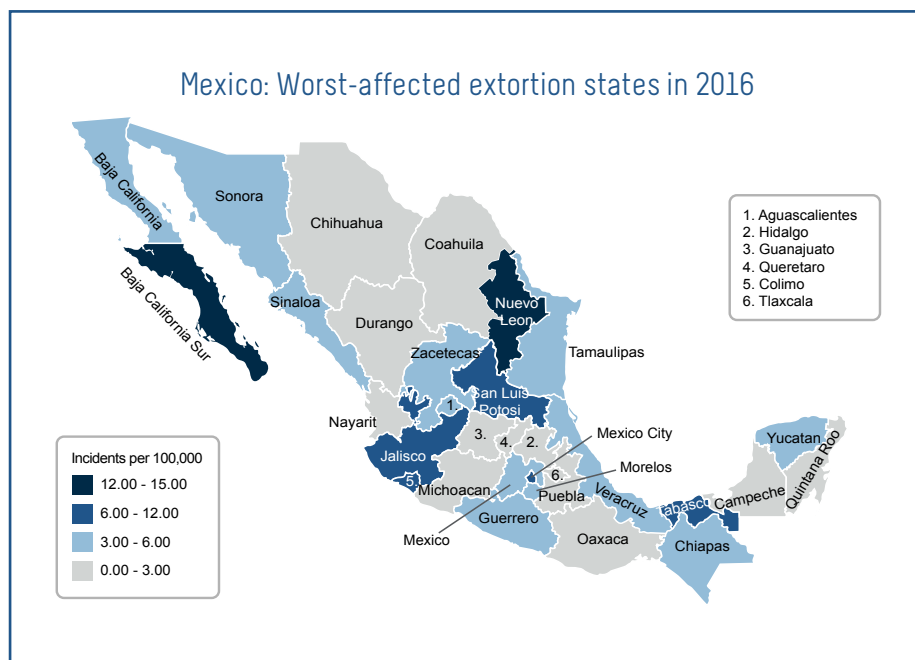
Extortion is endemic in Mexico, with reported incidents eclipsing kidnapping incidents over the last decade. In fact, of the total kidnapping and extortion incidents reported, approximately 20 percent comprise kidnappings and an overwhelming 80 percent are extortions. Mirroring kidnapping trends, official recorded extortion incidents increased from 5,127 in 2015, to 5,240 in 2016.

The extortion threat in Mexico is multifaceted, with DTOs, opportunistic criminals and TCOs all involved in extortive activity. Extortionists target a broad range of businesses and institutions, including family-owned businesses, insurance companies, banks, other financial institutions, mining companies, retail shops, refuelling



stations, transportation services, manufacturers, hotels, and ranches.

In many parts of the country, extortion, be it a once-off or an ongoing incident, poses a more credible threat to locals, foreign nationals and foreign businesses than traditional kidnapping for ransom. Statistics on the extent of the crime among foreign firms are difficult to obtain; this is largely due to the lack of reporting and undesirability of this becoming common knowledge. However, anecdotal and operational evidence suggests that foreign and multinational companies that were previously regarded as off limits no longer enjoy such immunity. Extortion may also present as an external threat, with disgruntled or malicious employees, suppliers and/or business associates regularly implicated in such incidents.



In one recent high-profile incident, global beverage company Coca-Cola was reportedly considering discontinuing its operations in Chilpancingo, Guerrero state, in February 2015, following the kidnapping of two of its local employees. Open source information indicated that the abduction was perpetrated by activist groups sympathetic to student protesters after they hijacked a Coca-Cola vehicle. Their subsequent arrests sparked protests, during which the offices of Coca-Cola were attacked and the two employees kidnapped. The protesters planned to use the hostages to orchestrate a prisoner swap with authorities, in order to obtain the release of the arrested students. Coca-Cola subsequently dropped charges against the perpetrators and the hostages were released.

Extortion is prevalent countrywide; however, there are a number of states which are disproportionately affected. In 2016, government figures indicated that incidence levels were elevated in the states of Baja California, Mexico, Mexico City, Jalisco, Tamaulipas, Guerrero, Tabasco, San Luis Potosi, Nuevo Leon, Colima, Michoacan, Morelos, Nuevo Leon, Veracruz and elsewhere.

In light of technological developments and national/transnational criminal activity, extortion in its online forms will continue to present as a growing concern in 2017, as criminal groups from both inside and outside the country find new ways to identify, observe and target potential victims online, including medium-sized businesses, multinational companies, media bodies and government interests. The use of technology in the planning and orchestrating of extortion in Mexico is anticipated to continue to grow in 2017, due to the reduced risk associated with these types of crimes.

Cyber extortion

In line with regional and global trends, the threat posed by cyber crime, including cyber extortion, in Mexico can no longer be ignored. This form of online extortion involves the threat or act of denying access to, or stealing or destroying of, data held on an electronic device unless a ransom is paid. In addition to the risk that cyber extortion poses to individuals and businesses in the form of the sharing of confidential or personal information or potentially sensitive/damaging data, falling victim to cyber extortion can result in significant loss in reputation for the victim, as well as increasing the possibility of being targeted again in the future.

The Mexican government has recognised the significant threat that cyber crime poses to public interests, the local population and potential international investment in the country. Since 2012, the government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing this threat by investing in technical personnel and creating agencies dedicated to the fight against cyber crime; these include a national coordination centre and specialised police cyber response units.

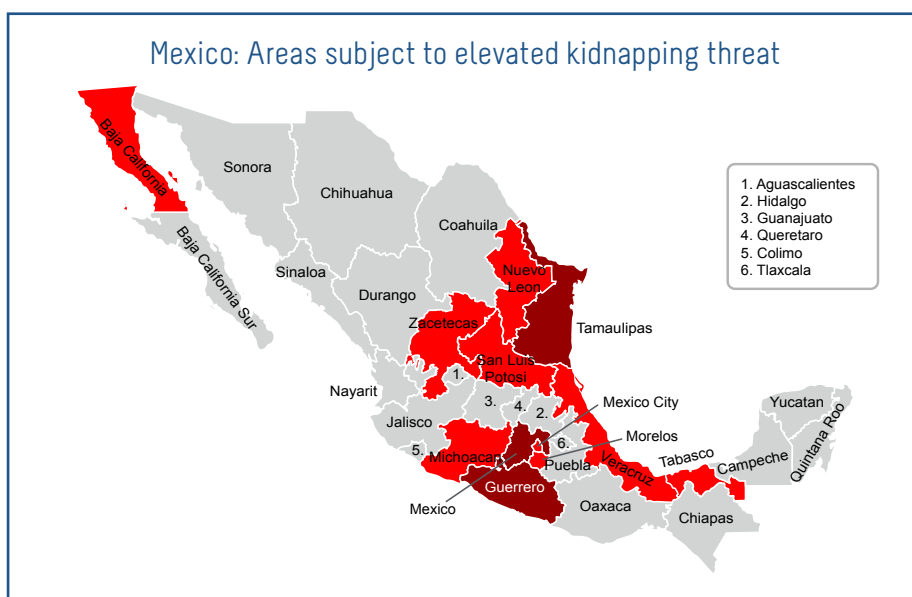
The possibility of drug cartels conducting cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure cannot be discounted; cartels regularly conduct physical attacks and thefts against oil infrastructure in the north of the country, and the possibility of a cyber extension of such illegal activity is not entirely without merit. Following a number of attacks against state and private interests in recent years, cyber extortion attacks by domestic and international cyber hacktivist groups will continue to pose a risk to the government's security and reputation; precedent suggests this type of attack may increase ahead of the 2018 election. Looking ahead, the government is likely to focus its cyber defence efforts on high-value targets such as public institutions and interests, as well as critical infrastructure such as telecommunications, financial institutions, oil and gas, and transportation.

Wrongful detention

Wrongful or unlawful detention by state or non-state groups poses a potential security risk in Mexico. Wrongful detentions can occur as a result of business or political/resource-related disputes; this type of detention poses an incidental threat during protest action and outbreaks of civil unrest. Furthermore, disgruntled communities who have an adverse view of foreign business activities may temporarily detain foreign staff and/or local employees of multinational companies; there have been several incidents of this nature involving mining, manufacturing and oil and gas employees over the past 24 months.

In one such example in January 2017, a tour group made up of Canadian, Swiss and American nationals was detained during an outbreak of violent unrest in Chiapas state. The group was travelling between San Cristobal de las Casas to Palenque when they were stopped at an unofficial road blockade in the town of Oxchuc. The blockade had been erected by demonstrators who had been protesting the administration of the local mayor, Maria Gloria Sanchez Gomez. The foreign tourists were held by unidentified masked men for several hours; they were subsequently released during police operations against the protest.

Finally, although Mexico's constitution prohibits the arrest or detention of an individual without a judicial order and provides for the accused to remain free while being tried, various NGOs focused on issues of human rights and unlawful detentions have indicated that wrongful detention by state entities is a concern in Mexico. The vast majority of incidents, however, affect politicians and activists in opposition perceived to be in opposition to the government.



Geographical spread

Mexico's high kidnapping threat extends countrywide; however, risk levels and incident rates are subject to significant location-specific variations. In broad terms, the risk of being kidnapped is highest in urban centres, with the vast majority of incidents taking place on the outskirts of major cities. Kidnappings do occur in rural areas; however, the risk is generally assessed to be lower in comparison to towns and cities. Geographically, there has been overall consistency between the states that recorded the highest number of kidnappings on an annual basis and the highest percentage of kidnappings per 100,000 people in recent years. The worst-affected states have consistently included Tamaulipas, Morelos, Tabasco, Guerrero, Mexico State and Michoacan. Additional higher-risk states include, but are not limited to Mexico City, San Luis Potosi, Nuevo Leon, Zacatecas and Veracruz.

A brief overview of geographical risk variations is provided below; for additional in-depth information regarding specific KRE threats by state or city, please contact us red24 Special Risks directly.

North western states

Escalating drug-cartel related violence and high levels of crime continued to contribute to instability in the north western states of Baja California, Chihuahua and Sonora in 2016. Traditionally a stronghold of the Sinaloa cartel, fighting factions of the Sinaloa cartel and between rival groups, including the Beltran Leyva Organisation (BLO), and the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), as well as between these groups and security forces, has fuelled an uptick in violence in the north west in recent months. The regional homicide rate for the period between September and December 2016 increased by approximately 16 percent from the third quarter. Although reported kidnappings remained lower than other violence-affected states, such as Guerrero, Michoacan and Tamaulipas, any area that is subject to a heavy cartel and criminal presence is also likely to experience elevated levels of corruption and complicity on the part of police and government officials. Thus, actual traditional KRE and short-term express kidnapping incidents in these three states are likely to have occurred more frequently, and pose a more serious security threat, than recorded figures imply. In addition, recent developments linked to Guzman's US extradition are expected to manifest in a deterioration in the security environment in Mexico's north western states in the coming year; this is likely to result in an uptick in violence and criminal activity, including kidnappings.

Central and south eastern states

In the central and south eastern states of Ciudad de Mexico and Puebla, KRE and short-term express kidnapping activity also present as security threats, albeit at varying levels. The threat will remain significant in Ciudad de Mexico, including Mexico City, and medium in Puebla; in both states, organised criminal entities will comprise the primary threat in urban

centres, with bandit groups engaging in carjacking and opportunistic kidnappings in the outlying areas. KRE activity by drug cartel members poses less of a threat in these states compared to many of their immediate neighbours, such as Guerrero, Mexico and Veracruz.

South western states

Kidnapping for ransom, express kidnapping and cartel-related violence remained a significant security concern in the high- and extreme-risk states of Guerrero, Jalisco and Michoacan in 2016. This is especially true of Guerrero and the interior areas of Jalisco and Michoacan. Regular and invasive violence occurred between rival cartels, namely La Familia Michoacana, Los Caballeros Templarios and CJNG (Michoacan); Los Caballeros Templarios and CJNG (Jalisco); and Los Ardillos, Los Rojos, BLO and Los Caballeros Templarios (Guerrero). The infighting between the above-mentioned cartels and battles for territorial and operational advantages, coupled with the current high crime, kidnapping and homicide rates, have served to facilitate insecure security environments in Guerrero, Jalisco and Michoacan, which are not expected to improve significantly in the coming year. It is within this context that both short-term express kidnapping and traditional KRE activity will remain pervasive in south western Mexico in the medium-term.

North eastern states

In the north east of Mexico, states that border the US, such as Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, as well as the more central Zacatecas state, continued to exhibit high levels of cartel-related violence, including significant homicide incidents, in 2016. Although reported KRE incidents were not especially high, and decreased in some areas in comparison to 2015, this is likely due to the deep penetration of cartels within these border states. Such penetration exerts an upward pressure on security force corruption, making it far less likely that abductions will be reported to the police. The high levels of corruption also mean that local and federal police may be actively or tacitly involved in abductions themselves. As such, traditional KRE and short-term express kidnappings, especially in prominent urban centres, are assessed to pose a key security threat to persons residing or undertaking business in these four states. Robust security measures are advised in order to mitigate the risk of being targeted. Tamaulipas is expected to remain the highest-risk state for kidnapping in the north eastern region in the medium-term; however, increasing incident rates in Zacatecas and Nuevo Leon may point to a growing threat.

red24 travel advisory for Mexico

Mexico is rated as a high-risk destination and operating environment; however, red24 does not advise against travel to the country. A high degree of caution is advised countrywide due to the threats of crime and kidnapping and the incidental risk of organised crime-related conflict. This is particularly relevant outside of all major cities and primary resort areas in the country, specifically in the states of Tamaulipas, Michoacan, Coahuila, Sinaloa, Nayarit and Guerrero.

Victims

The vast majority of kidnapping activity in Mexico (over 90 percent) affects locals. One major driving factor behind the abduction of locals is that kidnapped foreign nationals will draw far more attention and resources to the case than locals, and will thus bring more pressure to bear on the kidnappers. Locals are also more easily accessible (for surveillance and routine purposes). Further to this, in cases where a foreign national is kidnapped, law enforcement agencies of the victim's home country may also become involved in the investigation. Moreover, the logistical difficulties of conducting possibly lengthy cross-border negotiations and arranging ransom payments are markedly higher in the case of foreign nationals, where kidnapping syndicates seek a quick turnaround time between the initial abduction and the ransom payment. This is especially true of nationals of countries where ransom payments are expressly forbidden by law, which can further complicate the matter.

Within the local population, criminal gangs traditionally targeted high-profile and wealthy executives and industrialists, and their dependants. However, as has been the case elsewhere in Latin America in recent years, kidnappers have become increasingly indiscriminate when it comes to selecting their victim(s). In recent years, middle-income individuals and small business owners have been among the most frequently targeted groups; this is partly due to the perceived certainty of available funds and lack of protective measures. Even working class individuals and their dependants have become frequent targets of short-term kidnapping activity for low ransom amounts. It is believed that criminals rely on the emotions of the abducted children's parents to ensure payments are made in the shortest time possible.

Incident snapshot: Recent high-profile kidnappings of foreign nationals

- On 11 January 2017, one foreign national was killed and another kidnapped during an armed attack by at least four assailants at a restaurant in Zapopan, Jalisco state. The gunmen reportedly entered the restaurant and robbed the two foreign patrons; they then attempted to kidnap them. One of the victims, a Dutch national and

long-term resident in Mexico, was killed during the kidnapping attempt. The identity, nationality and status of the second victim remain unconfirmed.

- On 25 October 2016, a US national, O'Neil Patrick McGean, was kidnapped after leaving his residence to meet with an unidentified individual in Mazatlan, Sinaloa state. McGean, who had lived in Mazatlan since 2006 and owned several businesses in the city, is said to have been seized by three armed assailants. According to his banking information, the perpetrators probably held him hostage for several days as they forced him to make numerous cash withdrawals from his bank accounts. McGean's body was discovered buried in the garden of a residence in the Azteca area of Mazatlan on 4 November 2016; he is suspected to have died from injuries sustained during his time in captivity. Three suspects have since been arrested in connection with his abduction and murder, one of whom is believed to have been a close friend and colleague of the victim. According to reports, McGean was lured to a hotel where he was abducted by a new social media acquaintance; it was later discovered that this had been a setup by the perpetrators.
- On 15 October 2016, a Japanese national and senior executive of the Mazda auto manufacturing company was kidnapped by a group of criminals in Irapuato, located in the south central state of Guanajuato. The victim was reportedly released later on the same date in the neighbouring city of Salamanca, approximately 22km from where he was seized. Separate reports have stated that no kidnapping occurred and that the employee had rather been meeting someone in Salamanca and this was the reason he did not arrive at work.
- On 15 September 2016, the body of a 39-year old Spanish businesswoman and long-term resident of Mexico was found in Santiago Tianguistenco, Mexico State. The prosecutor's office subsequently identified the victim as Maria Villar Galaz, the niece of Angel Maria Villar, the head of the Spanish Football Federation and UEFA vice president. Galaz had been targeted in an express kidnapping incident after hailing a taxi in the affluent Santa Fe commercial area of Mexico City, in the neighbouring Distrito Federal, on 13 September. The victim was then forced to make several cash withdrawals from unidentified ATMs over the course of 13 September. The perpetrators subsequently demanded a ransom of US\$147,000 from the victim's family; according to unconfirmed reports, a ransom payment of US\$4,780 was made prior to the victim's death. Authorities have since arrested at least one suspect.
- On 13 April 2016, three US citizens were kidnapped by an unnamed criminal gang in Tamaulipas state. The victims, two women and a man, who were of Mexican descent, were abducted from their vehicle en route to the central San Luis Potosi state. All three victims were freed during a police operation on 3 May, which took place on the highway between Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas state, and Zaragoza, Coahuila state. Prior to their rescue, an undisclosed ransom demand was issued by the perpetrators.
- On 28 May 2016, a Mexican international football player, Alan Pulido, was kidnapped from his vehicle after leaving a party near his hometown of Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas state. Pulido was reportedly rescued by security forces on 29 May; it is unknown whether a ransom demand was issued before the abductee was rescued.
- On 20 November 2015, two Australian nationals, Dean Lucas and Adam Coleman, were reported missing shortly after arriving in Sinaloa state, via ferry, from Baja California state. Two bodies, believed to be those of the recreational travellers, were subsequently discovered in a fire-damaged vehicle in the Navolato area of Sinaloa state over the weekend of 28 and 29 November 2015.
- On 6 March 2015, four local employees of Canadian mining company, Goldcorp Inc., were kidnapped when returning home from work at the Los Filos gold mine in Guerrero state. The bodies of three of the victims were discovered in a mass grave in the same state on 13 March 2015; the fourth hostage was released under undisclosed circumstances. It is unclear whether the victims were specifically targeted because they were associated with the mining corporation or if the abduction was opportunistic and unrelated.

Foreign nationals (excluding US-bound immigrants from Central America) are estimated to comprise between three and seven percent of the total number of kidnapping cases. TCOs and organised kidnapping gangs are believed to be hesitant to explicitly target such individuals, as they provoke increased law enforcement and media attention, as well as a potentially greater risk of capture and higher penalties. Nonetheless, foreign nationals in Mexico still face an elevated threat, and are affected by kidnapping; the risk level is higher for dual US-Mexican nationals. It is estimated that over 200 US nationals alone are kidnapped in Mexico every year. Short-term, city-based foreign nationals are most likely to be targeted opportunistically in express kidnappings, on the basis of perceived wealth or ability to quickly raise a ransom. Persons with a longer-term presence in urban centres may be subject to an increased risk, stemming from organised crime syndicates, which are capable of conducting surveillance and planning sophisticated kidnapping operations.

Foreign-owned or run business operations are also at an elevated risk of being affected by both criminally and politically motivated KRE due to their often substantial local employee base. More specifically, locals employed in the construction, engineering, extractive, manufacturing and transportation industries face the highest risk. In addition, the higher local kidnapping rate presents a higher inherent risk to the employees of foreign companies being kidnapped, although this may not be as a consequence of being employed by this organisation.

Construction and extractive interests and personnel are considered high-value targets and the risk to these industries is particularly elevated in the states of Tamaulipas, Guerrero, Mexico State, Morelos and Veracruz. The kidnapping threat in

the Gulf of Mexico is elevated for personnel transiting urban centres en route to oil and gas infrastructure. Plants in northern Mexico can involve demands totalling in excess of US\$10,000 to US\$20,000 a month.

Extortion is a key concern to both the construction and extractive industries in many areas of Mexico. Numerous drug cartels/trafficking groups and criminal elements are known to conduct armed attacks against mining and oil and gas infrastructure, as well as threaten employees in efforts to extort money from organisations. Although the countrywide high kidnap risk rating extends to the construction industry, the kidnapping of local employees and transporters/goods should be viewed as a key concern.

An additional concern for foreign interests in Mexico stems from inadvertently becoming involved with an illegitimate business entity, be it a supplier, associate or distributor. Extortion runs deep in the business world in Mexico, with numerous companies solely set up to act as fronts for extortive activity. Foreign companies in or planning business operations in the country are advised to ensure that their business partners are thoroughly vetted in order to avoid becoming caught up in illegal activity and/or being extorted for protection monies - purportedly to protect their staff and/or product.

Ransom demands and settlements

The nature of the kidnapping, specifically information pertaining to the perpetrators and victims, more often than not determines the ransom details in each particular case. Experienced criminals who have conducted pre-operational surveillance, carried out intelligence-gathering operations and have the resources to hold victims for prolonged periods of time will demand substantial ransom payments, based on the information they have acquired regarding the victim's net-worth. More inexperienced and opportunistic kidnapers will focus on amounts they perceive to be attainable.

It has been established that initial ransom demands in Mexico vary significantly, and can range from US\$500 to US\$2 million; the average ransom demand for a higher-profile individual is approximately US\$250,000. Payment figures in Mexico are approximately 40 to 55 percent of the initial demand. Payments range from US\$800 to US\$1 million, with an average of between US\$50,000 and US\$75,000. These figures do not include outlier demands and payments that have characterised very high-profile abductions; in such cases, demands have been as large as US\$50 million and payments as high as US\$20 million.

Virtual kidnapping and extortion demands, often emanating from incarcerated individuals, can involve sums as low as US\$400. On the other hand, sophisticated extortion operations involving the country's TCOs and targeting manufacturing plants in northern Mexico can involve demands totalling in excess of US\$10,000 to US\$20,000 a month.

With the proliferation of criminal groups (in terms of number and geographical location) and their adoption of KRE as a modus operandi, a drop in ransom demands has been reported since 2015. This is largely due to the fact that many of these groups are only after 'fast money'; they do not have the means to hold the hostage, are inexperienced in negotiations, and demand and settle for what they can get. This, combined with virtual and express kidnapping and extortion, which are associated with reduced financial demands, have contributed to a reduction in ransoms and settlements stemming from unorganised criminal groups or individuals. This may have led to a perception that overall ransom demands in traditional kidnap for ransom incidents are dropping, when it is perhaps more a case of 'traditional', physical kidnappings becoming less desirable than their shorter-term variants. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there remain entities capable of carrying out longer-term kidnappings for substantial financial settlements.

Kidnapping durations and outcomes

The majority of kidnappings in Mexico are resolved within seven days; a high percentage of these are resolved within 2 days. According to a recent National Survey of Victimization and Perception on Public Security (ENVIPE), approximately 59.8 percent of kidnappings took less than 24 hours to resolve, with a further 23.2 percent of incidents concluding within 72 hours. Initial contact from the kidnapper is likely to occur within 24 hours, so a well-planned response strategy is key in responding to incidents in the country. Express kidnappings are likely to conclude within several hours, with some incidents occurring over several days as the kidnappers transport the victim to various ATMs and coerce him/her to withdraw funds. Although many victims are released without significant physical harm, there is high potential for violence during kidnappings in Mexico. Victims may be subject to violence, including torture, to expedite a ransom payment. Depending on the motivation for the kidnapping (political or financial), between 2 and 30 percent of incidents conclude with the death of the hostage, often despite a ransom payment. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence from non-governmental kidnapping watchdogs suggests that the percentage of kidnap victims killed in 2016 was higher than in recent years. Law enforcement rescues pose an additional risk to hostages; should a police rescue be initiated, which occurs fairly often, there is also a possibility that the hostage(s) may be affected by violence.

Outlook

The various political, economic and security challenges facing Mexico are significant and an imminent resolution to these challenges, which would result in a short- to medium-term improvement in the overall security environment, is not anticipated.

Frequent traditional kidnap for ransom incidents targeting locals are expected to continue in 2017, and sporadic incidents affecting foreign nationals should be anticipated.

Furthermore, and posing more of a credible security threat to foreign business and recreational travellers, regular short-term express and virtual kidnapping activity should be expected, particularly in urban centres. Extortion and associated crime forms, which include oil and cargo theft, will likely continue to impact local and foreign companies and their operations in higher-risk areas. Expect construction, manufacturing, mining, oil and gas, and transportation companies to be particularly targeted.

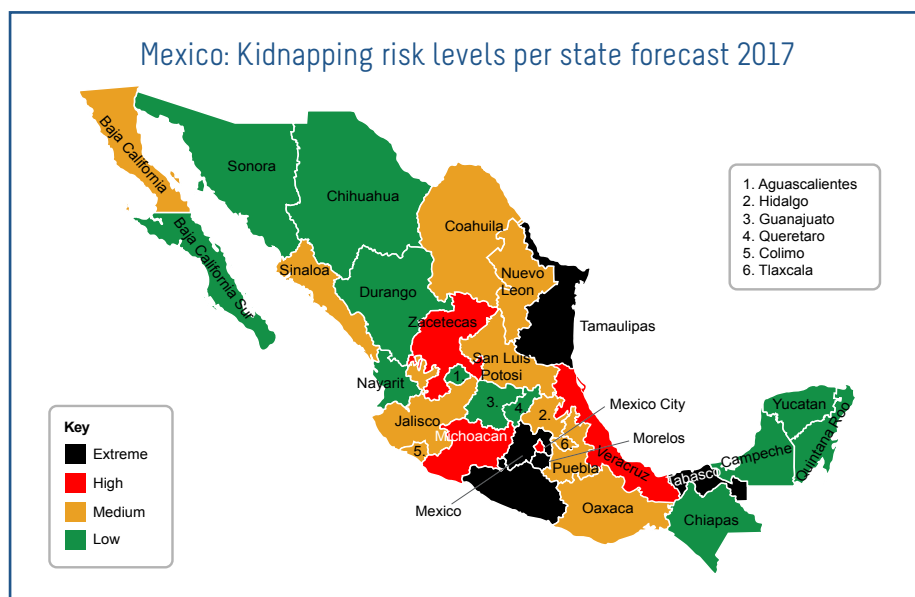
The continuous and often rapid evolution of all of the above threat types will present a challenge to risk mitigation efforts in the coming year. Although it is difficult to assess whether the reported uptick in kidnapping and homicide incidents in 2016 will translate into an upward lasting trend in 2017, there are several contributory factors present that suggest this may indeed be the case. These include, but are not limited to:

- The continued evolution in drug cartel dynamics and geographical strongholds. These include anticipated changes in the structure and modus operandi of drug cartels in response to government offensives against them, as well as the effects of growing inter-cartel rivalry.
- Continuing splintering of drug cartels into smaller units, some with poor leadership and experience. Potential formation of new alliances.
- The criminal syndication of the KRE industry and the growth in non-traditional kidnapping activity, such as express and virtual kidnapping. Broad changes in criminal KRE dynamics, in reaction to security and operational constraints.
- The impact of political and socio-economic developments.
- Political uncertainty ahead of the 2018 election.
- The potential for the new political dispensation to make changes to current security and anti-kidnapping strategies, particularly, the possible withdrawal of army units from kidnapping hotspots.

Please be advised that the above map refers only to kidnapping threat levels, and states identified as low risk for KRE may be subject to other security risks, such as high crime or cartel-related violence. The kidnapping threat levels assigned to each state on the map above are based on travellers with little or no security precautions in place. They represent the threat to the most vulnerable victim profile, and can be significantly reduced should individuals implement robust security measures. That being said, all persons/companies currently in or planning activities in Mexico are strongly encouraged to engage in risk mitigation and contingency planning. Comprehensive risk mitigation practices and robust security protocols will likely significantly decrease the possibility of individuals and businesses being affected by security threats, reducing potential physical, operational, financial and/or reputational risks.

red24 case study: Dependant kidnapped in Mexico

The son of a local businessman was kidnapped in northern Mexico by a well-organised, professional kidnapping group. Within hours the victim's family was contacted by the perpetrators, who demanded a significant ransom payment for the child's release. During the call it came to light that the perpetrators had also been responsible for victimising the family on a previous occasion. red24's Special Risks Team was alerted to the incident and deployed two experienced consultants, specialising in resolving cases in Mexico, to meet with the victim's family. In subsequent days, the consultants worked together with the family to build a strategy to interact with the kidnappers during future calls. A second member of the victim's family was given the task of communicator, and regular discussions were held with the consultant to develop scenarios for responding to the kidnappers' demands. At the same time the consultants dealt calmly with a distraught member of the family, giving them tasks that helped focus their thoughts and efforts on things other than the victim. The second consultant worked with the family so they could start collecting the money needed for the ransom, as well as the logistics of how, when and by whom the ransom would be paid. Based on the rehearsals with the consultant, the family member was able to deal effectively with the kidnappers and arranged for his safe release at a negotiated amount less than what was originally demanded.



Global Incidents Snapshot

Americas

Brazil, 26 December 2016: The Greek Ambassador to Brazil, Kyriakos Amiridis, was reported missing in Rio de Janeiro on 26 December 2016. The ambassador was last seen in the municipality of Nova Iguacu, located in the Greater Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area. Amiridis is said to have been travelling from the capital, Brasilia, to Rio de Janeiro when he went missing. Police later discovered the ambassador's charred remains in an abandoned burnt vehicle on a major highway near the Nova Iguacu area. On 30 December, local media reports announced the arrest of Amiridis' wife, together with two other locals, including a local police officer.

Colombia, 22 January and 16 March 2017: Suspected members and/or affiliates of leftist guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), have released several kidnap victims in recent months. On 22 January 2017, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced the release of a foreign hostage in Choco department. Arsen Voskanyan, a Russian national of Armenian descent, had reportedly been kidnapped on 18 October 2016 by members of ELN faction, the Resistance Front Cimarron ELN, while conducting independent travel in the outskirts of Puerto Pizarro, Choco department. Information pertaining to the conditions of his release is unavailable. In a separate incident, kidnapped local Octavio Figueroa was released in the Corregimiento de La Majayura rural area of Maicao, in La Guajira, located in close proximity to the Colombian-Venezuelan border. The 65-year-old businessman was kidnapped while travelling by road in the vicinity of La Guajira approximately ten months ago. According to a statement by a family member, a financial settlement was paid to facilitate Figueroa's release; however, the amount was not disclosed. The initial ransom demand was reportedly in the vicinity of US\$168,335 (500 million Colombian pesos).

Mexico/US, 22 December 2016: Local police, responding to reports of a shooting incident at a residence in San Antonio, Texas, discovered three Mexican nationals who were being held hostage in the home. According to reports, the victims had been kidnapped in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, on an undisclosed date in 2016 and transported across the US-Mexico border by their captors, some of whom were also Mexican citizens. While in captivity the victims were forced to call family members in Mexico to demand ransom payments to secure their release; it is unknown whether any settlements had been made prior to their discovery by police.

Mexico, 8 January 2017: A tour group made up of Canadian, Swiss and American nationals was detained during an outbreak of violent unrest in Chiapas state on 8 January 2017. The group was travelling from San Cristobal to Palenque when they were stopped at an unofficial road blockade in the town of Oxchuc. The blockade had been erected by demonstrators who had been protesting the administration of local mayor, Maria Gloria Sanchez Gomez. The foreign tourists were held by unidentified masked men for several hours; they were subsequently released during police operations against the protest.

Mexico, 11 January 2017: One foreign national was killed and another kidnapped during an armed attack at a restaurant in Zapopan, Jalisco state, on 11 January 2017. According to reports, at least four armed assailants entered the restaurant and robbed the two foreign patrons; they then attempted to kidnap them. One of the victims, a Dutch national and long-term resident in Mexico, was killed during the kidnapping attempt. The identity, nationality and status of the second victim remain unconfirmed.

Paraguay, 26 February 2017: A Mennonite youth, Frank Wiebe Boschman, who was kidnapped by suspected members of the leftist guerrilla group, Ejercito del Pueblo Paraguayo (EPP), on 27 July 2016, was released unharmed on 26 February 2017. Boschman was seized while working on a farm in the Rio Verde area of San Pedro department, in central Paraguay; his abductors were reportedly targeting the son of the wealthy farm owner but mistakenly abducted Boschman instead. Reports indicate that after failing to receive a ransom payment of US\$700,000 for Boschman's release, the EPP demanded that US\$100,000 worth of foodstuffs be distributed among poor communities in the area; according to official statements, this demand was met.

Trinidad and Tobago, 24 December 2016: A 15-year-old local, Jaavika George, was kidnapped in the capital, San Juan, on 24 December 2016. The victim was walking to a local shop when he was seized and forced into a vehicle by a group of assailants, who then transported him to an abandoned house in Lavantille. According to unconfirmed reports, a ransom of approximately US\$44,400 was demanded for his release. The boy was freed during a police operation; at least two suspects were arrested during the operation, including a local criminal gang member and a member of the victim's family.

Venezuela, 23 December 2016: The teenage son of prominent local musician and basketball player, Juan Manuare, was kidnapped from his grandmother's home in the San Agustin Del Sur area of the capital, Caracas, on 23 December 2016. The victim was reportedly abducted by at least two assailants who knocked on the door and asked the victim to come to their vehicle to collect some money for his father; once out of the house, they forced him into the vehicle and drove away. According to unverified reports, Manuare received a ransom demand of approximately US\$30 million from the kidnapers several days after the abduction; however, further communication with Manuare ceased shortly after. Several suspects were arrested, including the boyfriend of a member of the Manuare family, and on 15 February 2017, one of the suspects

led police to a forest in Chuspica, Miranda state, where the body of the teenage boy was discovered in a shallow grave. Chuspica is located near the city of Caucagua, which is located approximately 82km east of Caracas, where the initial kidnapping took place. Subsequent reports indicate that the kidnap victim was killed in early January.

Venezuela, 5 January 2017: Miguel Alvarez Gonzalez, a 74-year-old Venezuelan businessman who was kidnapped in the capital, Caracas, on 7 December 2016, was rescued by police on 5 January 2017. Gonzalez was abducted from the city's Sabana Grande area together with an Italian expat. The two victims were kidnapped from the Italian's car dealership by two men purporting to be police officers. The assailants requested the men accompany them to a police station; once in the vehicle, they abducted both men. A ransom demand of approximately US\$316,740 was reportedly made for both hostages; the Italian national was released several days later, reportedly to raise the settlement monies. Gonzalez, who was being held hostage in an abandoned residence in a forested area in Ocamare del Tuy, Miranda state, was accidentally discovered by police investigating an unrelated crime incident.

Venezuela, 6 February 2017: A Colombian national was reportedly kidnapped in the capital, Caracas, on 6 February. The long-term resident was reportedly abducted in the upscale Country Club area of the city by at least three armed assailants. The victim was subsequently released on the Francisco Fajardo Highway, near the Centro Comercial El Recreo, on 7 February. Although reports indicate no ransom was paid, further details relating to the incident remain unconfirmed.

Asia

Afghanistan, December 2016 to February 2017: Kidnappings of local nationals have continued unabated across Afghanistan in recent months, with the country's northern provinces of Balkh, Kunduz and Jawzjan and the southern province of Nangarhar particularly affected. This coincides with the growing insecurity in the north of the country due to fighting between Taliban and government forces, as well as the terrorist and kidnapping activities of various non-state armed groups, including the Taliban and Afghanistan's Islamic State (IS) affiliate, the Islamic State in Khorasan (ISIK). Local authorities announced the kidnapping of at least 14 locals, most of whom were teachers, in Haska Mena district of Nangarhar province on 15 January. An unspecified number of suspected militants are said to have abducted the teachers from a seminary school in the district's Shopli Ghazai Baba area. Fourteen hostages were released in the province's Haska Mina district under undisclosed circumstances on 4 March. Following this, at least five locals were released on 29 January; the victims had been abducted in the Pachir Agam district in December 2016. Local authorities in Nangarhar province have attributed a number of recent mass kidnappings of locals to ISIK militants. Although the majority of recent kidnappings have targeted locals, there remains an elevated kidnap threat to foreign nationals operating in Afghanistan. A mass abduction was reported in Jawzjan province on 15 February. Taliban militants kidnapped approximately 52 local farmers from the Darzab district as they were heading out to work their land. Subsequent reports indicated that an unconfirmed number of victims were released after paying a 'fine' to the kidnappers.

Afghanistan, 19 December 2016 and 8 February 2017: Several International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employees were kidnapped in Afghanistan's northern provinces in recent months. Juan Carlos, a Spanish national, was abducted in Balkh province on 19 December 2016; three local staff members were also kidnapped during this attack, which occurred while the group was travelling by road between Balkh and the neighbouring Kunduz province. The local residents were released immediately after the incident; Carlos was freed on 15 January 2017 following joint operations and negotiations between the ICRC, local officials and residents. In a separate incident on 8 February, at least six ICRC employees were killed during an armed attack on their convoy west of the city of Sheberghan, in Jawzjan province, which neighbours Balkh province to the west. An additional two ICRC employees were reported missing after the attack; their whereabouts remain unconfirmed and it is possible that they were kidnapped.

Afghanistan, 15 March 2017: According to media reports on 15 March, an Australian national who was kidnapped from the capital, Kabul, on 5 November 2016, was released. There are conflicting reports as to whether the victim was a dual Afghan-Australian national or an Australian national of Pakistani descent. The victim, employed by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) NGO, was abducted by unidentified gunmen in the Qala-e-Fatullah area of the city. The details pertaining to the timing and circumstances surrounding her release have yet to be released, as well as if a ransom was paid to secure her release.

China/Hong Kong, 27 January 2017: Chinese national and founder of the Beijing-based financial services and investment cooperation, Tomorrow Group, Xiao Jianhua, was reportedly kidnapped in Hong Kong on 27 January 2017. According to reports, Jianhua was seized from his hotel by several unidentified individuals. Subsequent reports have suggested that his assailants may have been Chinese security force personnel, who were detained in connection with a corruption (graft) investigation in mainland China. Investigations into Jianhua's disappearance are ongoing, with Hong Kong officials said to be in consultation with their Chinese counterparts regarding the incident. It should be noted that China has strict enforcement of state civil and criminal penal codes; lawful and unlawful detentions in relation to alleged contraventions of national laws or commercial disputes are a fairly common practice.

India, 13 January 2017: Five locals were kidnapped in the Malkangiri district of Odisha state, on 13 January 2017. The victims, reportedly district electoral officials, were abducted by suspected Maoist rebels in the district's Chittrakonda area.

While the motivation behind the kidnapping remains unknown, the incident comes amid elevated tensions in Odisha state, related to local elections. Local authorities are viewing the incident as a politically motivated intimidation tactic during the electoral cycle.

Myanmar, 21 January 2017: At least 40 Thai nationals were held hostage by unknown assailants in Kayin state, on 21 January. According to reports, the Thai tourists were attempting to cross the border into Thailand's Kanchanaburi state before being detained in an unspecified location. All of the hostages were released following negotiations between the assailants and Myanmar border committee. The incident was reportedly perpetrated in retaliation for the arrest of an ethnic Karen man by the Thai authorities on suspicion of human trafficking on 18 January. The captors demanded the release of the unnamed detainee; however, it remains unclear if these demands have been met. Further details regarding the exact location of the abduction and the assailants remain unknown. The incident underscores that the shared border area is a high-risk operating environment. Banditry and smuggling, particularly of narcotics, are common in the area, where law enforcement presence is weak and there are numerous drug-transit routes. Occasionally, security is heightened on the Thailand side of the border, and shooting incidents between suspected smugglers and security forces are reported. However, on the Myanmar side of the border, ethnic rebel groups, such as those located in the Kayin state, operate with near impunity and are believed to use profits from the narcotics trade to fund their operations, despite the presence of the Myanmar Border Guard Forces (BGF). Although related violence is usually localised and kidnapping is not believed to be prevalent in this area, the risk to those travelling near the shared border remains.

Philippines, 17 January 2017: According to media reports on 17 January, the South Korean Foreign Ministry confirmed the kidnapping and murder of a South Korean national in Angeles, located in Pampanga province. The long-term resident and businessman is said to have been abducted from his home in Angeles by at least four assailants, who have since been confirmed as law-enforcement officers and an ex-policeman, on 18 October 2016. The officers presented a forged arrest warrant to the victim, who was subsequently transported to an unknown location in an unmarked vehicle. The victim's family is believed to have paid a ransom of between US\$100,000 and US\$160,000 following a demand made by the perpetrators at least two weeks after the abduction. According to investigation reports, the victim is believed to have been strangled on the day of the abduction; however, authorities are unable to conduct an autopsy as the body is reported to have been cremated. At least one police officer suspected of involvement in the incident has been apprehended.

Thailand, 7 December 2016: The abduction of a US national, Alex Fairfield, was reported on 7 December. Fairfield is said to have been abducted while vacationing in an unspecified area of the country. It has been claimed that she was drugged and taken from a local bar to an unspecified locale where a suspected police official attempted to assault her; Fairfield subsequently managed to escape her captor(s) with minor injuries. The incident remains unconfirmed; US embassy officials have not commented on the incident, other than stating that they provided relocation assistance to a US national.

Europe and FSU

Greece, 29 December 2016: Police arrested a Bulgarian national, suspected to be part of an underground syndicate, in connection with the abduction of an Iraqi national and a Syrian national in Thessaloniki, on 28 December. The perpetrator, together with at least three other accomplices, are said to have held the victims for over a week in an unspecified locale in the Ampelokipoi area of the city before the arrest; the perpetrators had demanded US\$1,382 from the victims' families for their release. The victims were rescued unharmed following the police operation.

Russia, 20 December 2016: Authorities announced the attempted kidnapping of a foreign national in the capital, Moscow, on 20 December 2016. An unknown number of assailants are said to have taken the victim from a motor home in an unguarded parking zone near an apartment complex in the city. It is believed that the kidnapping occurred in the pursuance of the theft of the motorhome. The victim was later rescued following a tip-off from local residents who knew the victim as a long-term resident in the area. The nationality and identity of the victim and the assailant(s) remain unknown.

Russia, 10 and 17 January 2017: An Armenian national, Andrey Muradyan, is said to have been kidnapped and later murdered in Khabarovsk on 10 January. The victim, a long-term resident and son of a well-known businessman, was reportedly abducted by two unidentified assailants, one of whom is said to have been a classmate of the victim. The victim was lured to one of the two assailants' homes and held hostage in the garage. A ransom demand of US\$333,750 (20 million rubles) was made. Following several days of negotiations, the assailants killed the victim. Two suspected assailants have since been arrested. Similarly, an unidentified 16-year old Armenian girl was abducted in Solnechnogorsk on 17 January. The victim is suspected to have been taken by a business colleague of one of the victim's family members. The abductors made a ransom demand of an unspecified amount and currency. Investigations into the incident are ongoing; however, further details regarding the status of the victim are unknown.

Spain, 15 February 2017: Two assailants, only identified as Jesus TF and Benjamin RB, were arrested for the kidnapping of a 42-year-old man in Ourense on 15 February. The assailants are said to have abducted the victim along O Vigo Road under the pretence of assisting the victim. The assailants then held the victim at an unspecified location and demanded approximately US\$46,875 (43,650 euros) for his release. The victim was shortly rescued by local police following reports made by local neighbours; the victim incurred minor injuries during his period in captivity.

Turkey, 12 December 2016, 3 January and 6 March 2017: A series of kidnapping incidents targeting Pakistani nationals in recent months is indicative of the growing kidnap threat faced by migrant workers in the country. On 12 December 2016, two Pakistani nationals from Peshawar were abducted in Istanbul by unidentified assailants; the assailants reportedly demanded US\$47,696 (5 million rupees) from the victims' families. At the time of publishing, the status of the victims remains unknown. On 3 January 2017, four or five Pakistani nationals (originating from Gujranwala and Wazirabad) were abducted while travelling in an unspecified location in south eastern Turkey. The victims' families were contacted shortly after their abduction and a ransom demand of approximately US\$19,089 (2 million rupees) was made for each victim. The victims were rescued on 29 January, following the joint cooperation between Pakistani and Turkish authorities. It remains unclear whether the ransom demands were paid. In the most recent associated kidnapping in the capital, Ankara, three Pakistani nationals were abducted by unidentified assailants on 6 March, who have since demanded a US\$60,000 ransom for their release. The status of these victims currently remains unknown. In each of the aforementioned cases, the victims are said to have been abducted while attempting to gain access to Europe illegally with the aid of human smugglers. Unconfirmed reports indicate that Afghan and Turk human traffickers, and/or persons affiliated with Kurdish separatist groups, are likely involved. In communications with the victims' families, the victims are seen to have been subject to torture methods. Due to the alleged attractive employment prospects in the country, such incidents are expected to persist.

MENA

Iraq, 26 December 2016 and 24 January 2017: Local female journalist, Shawqi al-Qaisi, was kidnapped by gunmen purporting to be policemen from her residence in the capital, Baghdad, on 26 December 2016. Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, ordered security agencies to investigate the kidnapping. She was released unharmed on 3 January 2017 under undisclosed circumstances. On 23 January 2017, media reports indicate that at least 20 and possibly as many as 60 locals were abducted by assailants wearing military fatigues in the Tarmiyah and Taji (Salah ad Din governorate) areas located north of the capital, Baghdad. In a separate report on 23 January, a parliamentarian alleged that four locals were abducted in Bald Ruz (Diyala governorate). The kidnap risk in Iraq is considered high. The threat stems from criminal gangs, militias (acting independently and aligned to the state) and the military forces. Kidnappings can be motivated by financial demands, used as a political tactic and are often utilised to advance ongoing sectarian conflict, particularly between Sunnis and Shiites. Hundreds of people are also reported missing annually in sectarian-related incidents. The risk also extends to foreign nationals. Extrajudicial detention remains an additional concern; this risk extends to both locals and foreign nationals.

Iraq, 25 January 2017: At least five locals are said to have been kidnapped and murdered in Khanaqin, in northern Diyala governorate, on 25 January. Suspected Islamic State (IS) militants reportedly raided the headquarters of the state-owned construction works company, Hamorabi, abducted the victims and stole unspecified materials. The victims were reportedly part of the World Bank-financed road and bridge development project in the various cities in the governorate. The victims were later found dead in unspecified area near the company site.

Iraq, 7 March 2017: A Lebanese national was abducted by unidentified assailants in the southern city of Basra on 7 March. Media reports on 8 March, citing a local military official, indicated that the victim had been released and one suspect was arrested following an operation in central Basra.

Lebanon, 27 February 2017: A Lebanese national, Rakan al Maadrani, was kidnapped by unknown assailants in the eastern Bekaa governorate on 27 February. The victim was released under unknown circumstances on 28 February; it was reported that he had a head injury and that his assailants had also robbed him of approximately US\$15,000 and his vehicle.

Libya, 5 January 2017: According to recently released reports, a group of 15 Egyptian nationals was abducted in the vicinity of the town of Tarhuna, located approximately 70km south east of the capital, Tripoli, on 5 January. The victims are believed to be migrant workers who entered the country from Egypt in December 2016. The kidnapers have reportedly demanded US\$209,000 (approximately 300,000 Libyan dinars) to release the victims, who show signs of having been tortured. The Egyptian government has yet to confirm or comment on the incident. The exact circumstances of the kidnapping remain unclear and further details are currently unavailable.

Oman, 21 January 2017: The kidnapping of at least two foreign nationals was reported in Nizwa on 21 January. According to reports, two locals reportedly abducted the victims, said to be of Asian descent, while they were conducting business in the city. The son of one of the victims contacted officials after having received a call from the abductors demanding an unspecified ransom. Two people have since been arrested in connection with the incident.

Saudi Arabia, 14 December 2016: Authorities announced the suspected militant kidnapping of a prominent local court judge in the Qatif province on 14 December. The victim, Sheik Mohammad al-Jirani, also the chief of the Supreme Judicial Council, is said to have been abducted by an unconfirmed number of unidentified assailants outside his home on the province's Tarout Island. While there were no immediate claims of responsibility for the incident, local authorities have attributed it as being related to the victim's work and views expressed against militants in the country.

Syria, 10 January 2017: South African national, Shiraaz Mohamed, was reportedly kidnapped in the vicinity of the Syria-Turkey border area in Idlib governorate, on 10 January. The victim, a photojournalist from Johannesburg, was reportedly abducted by unidentified armed men while travelling with two other unidentified locals along Aljamilye Road, in the vicinity of al-Hilal Hospital in Darkush. According to reports, the victim was on his way to the Turkish border to leave Syria when he was abducted. The two local residents were released unharmed shortly after the abduction; the status of Mohamed remains unknown.

Syria, 25 January 2017: According to reports on 25 January, two Ukrainian nationals were reportedly released in Idlib on 25 January. The victims, a couple whose identity has been not been disclosed, are said to have been abducted by an unspecified armed group in 2013. The victims are said to have been taken due to the suspicion of them having been Russian nationals. While details regarding both their abduction and their release are limited, unconfirmed reports have indicated that their release was facilitated by the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 28 February/1 March 2017: Five employees of an international mining operation were kidnapped by unknown militia in the Kabambare territory of the Maniema province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) overnight on 28 February/1 March, according to statements by the company on 2 March. The victims, who include a French national, a Tanzanian national and three locals, were employed by the Banro Corporation at its Namoya gold mine, located approximately 10km south of the border between Maniema and Sud-Kivu province. A senior Banro official stated that local militia had recently been threatening the mine.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 12 March 2017: Six UN workers were kidnapped in Kasai Central province in the DRC on 12 March. The victims included a US national, a Swedish national and four locals. The UN workers were reportedly abducted by unknown assailants near Ngombe village.

Ethiopia, 10 to 12 March 2017: Reports indicate that as many as 28 people were killed and over 40 children kidnapped in the Gambela region, in a series of attacks by South Sudanese militia, between 10 and 12 March. The attacks and abductions occurred in the Gog and Jor areas, both located along the shared border with South Sudan. An Ethiopian official has attributed the attacks to members of the Murle tribe, who are present in the Jonglei state area in neighbouring South Sudan, as well as in south western Ethiopia. The motivation for the attacks and kidnappings remains unclear; however, communal violence within Gambela, including areas along the shared border with South Sudan, is often triggered by competition for natural resources or as a result of reprisal attacks. Although foreign nationals are not usually directly targeted, there remains an incidental risk to all persons in the vicinity of outbreaks of communal conflict.

Mali, 24 December 2016 and 7 February 2017: A dual French-Swiss national was kidnapped by unknown armed assailants in Mali's Gao region on 24 December 2016. The victim, identified as Sophie Petronin, who runs a non-governmental humanitarian group, was reportedly abducted by the assailants while visiting local community members in an undisclosed area of the city. There have been no claims of responsibility or associated demands. Subsequent to this, a Colombian national was reportedly kidnapped by armed assailants in the town of Karangasso, located in the southern Sikasso Region, on 7 February 2017. The victim, a nurse, was reportedly abducted from a local health centre where she worked. The assailants are also said to have stolen an ambulance.

Mozambique, 5 January 2016: A Lebanese national was kidnapped in Maputo on 5 January. The victim, a communications engineer named Hassan Ali Karim, was reportedly abducted by an armed gang while returning home from his place of work at a local supermarket. According to reports on 8 January, the victim has been released following a negotiation between the assailants and local and Lebanese authorities. The victim was released following an exchange of an undisclosed ransom payment.

Mozambique, 16 February 2017: A Kenyan national was kidnapped in the capital, Maputo, on 16 February. The victim, who owns a maize mill in the Machava area, in Matola, was kidnapped near his place of work. Armed assailants blocked the car in which he was driving, forced him into one of their vehicles and fled the scene. Further details pertaining to the victim's whereabouts, or whether a ransom demand has been made or received, remain unclear.

Nigeria, 24 December 2016 and 21 January 2017: Mercy Ugboma, wife of political chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alanza Ugboma, was reportedly kidnapped in Asaba, Delta State, on 24 January. Ugboma was abducted by at least six armed unidentified gunmen while travelling in the Okwe area of the city. Abductors made an estimated ransom demand of US\$82,000. The status of the victim remains unknown. In a separate incident, the traditional leader of the Rumualogu community in Obio-Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State, Prince Fortune Obumgbada, is said to have been kidnapped on 21 January, in Port Harcourt, Delta State. These incidents are indicative of the elevated kidnapping threat faced by prominent local leaders and their dependents.

Nigeria, 13 January 2017: At least three local students and five staff members, including two Turkish nationals and three locals, were kidnapped at the Turkish Tulip International School, located in the Isheri area of Ogun state, on 13 January.

According to officials, the victims were abducted at gunpoint on the school premises, located along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. Abductors are said to have contacted the family members of the victims and demanded an estimated US\$3.9 million. The victims were released unharmed. Unconfirmed reports indicated that a negotiated ransom was paid in exchange for the victims' release.

Nigeria, 22 February 2017: Two German nationals who were kidnapped in Kaduna state, in north western Nigeria on 22 February, were released late on 25 February. The two archaeologists were engaged in excavation work at the village of Jajela in the Kagarko local government area when they were kidnapped. The circumstances leading to their release are unknown; reports indicate that no ransom was paid. Authorities have made no arrests with regard to the incident.

Nigeria, 1 March 2017: A security increase has been reported in the Epe local government area in Lagos state, Nigeria, according to local media reports on 1 March. Additional security forces have been deployed to the area, to conduct patrols and man roadblocks, in response to an increase in kidnapping activities in recent months. A few recent incidents in the Epe area highlight the threat. On 21 February, armed men raided the Kodjo farm, located in Igboodu, and abducted eight local nationals. The police chased and released the victims following a confrontation with the armed gang. On 19 February, gunmen abducted two local nationals in Ibeju. On 14 February, five local farmers and two members of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) were abducted by approximately 15 gunmen in the Epe area, who are demanding a significant ransom. Locals claim that approximately 50 locals have been kidnapped for ransom in recent months. Many of these were involved in the agricultural sector. Local media reports have stated that a number of farms have had to cease operations due to the security environment, including farming investments made by US-based Nigerian expatriates.

South Africa, 6 December 2016 and 25 January 2017: According to reports on 6 December, a kidnapped Bangladeshi national was rescued after having been reported missing for 48 hours in Cape Town, Western Cape province. The victim, 38-year-old Mustapha Goolam, was found handcuffed and beaten in the low-income township of Khayelitsha. Goolam was reportedly abducted outside his business in the Grassy Park neighbourhood on 4 December. Abductors reportedly had made a random demand of approximately US\$822,000; the ransom is said to have been unpaid. Two Pakistani nationals and a local resident were subsequently arrested. In a separate incident, another kidnapped local businessman, Deshmukh Khan, was reported as having been released on 25 January. Khan was kidnapped in Athlone, located in Cape Town, late in October 2016; unidentified armed men are said to have taken Khan outside his business premises located in Hadji Ebrahim Crescent in the Belgravia area. The victim was released under undisclosed circumstances in Thornton.

South Sudan, 11 March 2017: Two Indian nationals were kidnapped from the Paloich oilfield complex in Melut county of Eastern Nile state, amid fighting between government soldiers, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO). The foreign nationals were reportedly employed as technicians for an international oil company. Indian media outlets reported that the kidnapping occurred after the two victims had driven to a location approximately 35km out of Paloich to conduct repairs, without an accompanying security detail.

South Sudan, 13 March 2017: According to reports, a group of approximately eight local aid workers affiliated with the US-based charity, Samaritan's Purse, were kidnapped by rebels in a village near Mayiandit county, located in Southern Liech state. An unspecified ransom amount was reportedly demanded by an unidentified rebel group. All eight detainees were released on 14 March under undisclosed circumstances.

South Sudan, 20 March 2017: According to reports released on 20 March, a Pakistani national was kidnapped from the capital, Juba, by unknown assailants approximately one week prior. Details surrounding the incident are minimal and unconfirmed; however, it has been reported that the victim was employed as an engineer by international oil company, DAR Petroleum Operating Company. Both South Sudan and Pakistan's governments have yet to issue a statement confirming the kidnapping.

Sudan, 27 November 2016: Three UN aid workers were released in Geneina, West Darfur state, on 20 December. The victims, two of whom are said to be Nepalese nationals, were reportedly abducted near the local UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office on 27 November. The aid workers were reportedly released following a successful joint security operation undertaken by the Sudanese government and the UN's hostage management team.

Piracy

Benin, 20 December 2016: Authorities announced the rescue of three Russian nationals who had previously been abducted off the port city of Cotonou on 20 December 2016. The victims, crew members of the Saronic Breeze, were taken by unidentified assailants on 27 November. Following a security operation by the Nigerian authorities, the victims were rescued unharmed.

Gulf of Aden, 1 January 2017: According to released reports on 3 January, the Chinese navy thwarted a hijack attempt on a Panama-flagged commercial vessel, Bob and Kate, in the Gulf of Aden. At least four suspected Somali pirate vessels reportedly surrounded the vessel; Chinese navy boats that were patrolling the area fired warning shots at the pirates and safely escorted it out of the area.

Nicaragua, 20 December 2016: Two foreign nationals travelling on a private yacht between Panama and Belize were reportedly hijacked in the Media Luna Caye seas, on 20 December 2016. Four unidentified men approached the yacht, requesting assistance. Once on board, the vessel was approached by another boat carrying an unconfirmed number of armed men. The assailants then temporarily held the victims hostage and raided the yacht. The victims were released unharmed and were permitted to continue on to Belize. The nationality of the victims remains unknown.

Nigeria, February and March 2017: Maritime insecurity persists in the Gulf of Guinea, as illustrated by several attempted and thwarted attacks between 7 and 9 February and 9 March. On 7 February, armed assailants boarded the MT Gaz Providence vessel near Bonny Island, off Nigeria's Rivers State. Assailants were confronted by the Nigerian army, who had responded to the distress call made by the vessel's crew members, on 8 February. The army managed to secure the vessel and rescue all 21 of the vessel's crew members; the vessel and its crew were unharmed. In the confrontations, the assailants were able to escape with a number of unspecified valuables. According to reports released on 9 February, naval authorities were able to successfully thwart an attack on the Rio Spirit 110 crude oil vessel off Akwa Ibom State. The vessel had been travelling with a security escort after it had loaded oil products from the Quo Ibo Terminal, when it was approached by armed assailants. Following two successive attacks on the vessel, naval authorities were able to repel the attacks and escort the vessel into safe waters. According to reports on 9 March, the crew of bulk carrier, Sofia, thwarted an attack by at least seven armed men off Brass, Nigeria. Similarly, an attack on the La Mancha Knutsen was thwarted by crew members. The vessel was attacked by armed assailants in waters in the vicinity of Port Harcourt. Eight crew members, seven Russians and one Ukrainian, of the BBC Caribbean were abducted in the vicinity of the Pennington Oil Terminal off the coast of Brass, Bayelsa state, on 5 February. Armed unidentified assailants are said to have boarded the vessel while it was en route from Douala, Cameroon to Tema, Ghana, abducted the victims and left the vessel abandoned. The victims were released on 6 March. While unconfirmed, the victims' release was secured following negotiations between the pirates and the vessel's owners, the German Briese Schiffahrts cargo company. It also remains unclear whether a ransom payment was made.

Philippines, 12 December 2016: Authorities confirmed the release of two Indonesian sailors in Indanan, Sulu province, on 12 December 2016. The sailors were part of the seven crew members who were abducted by suspected Abu Sayyaf militants while sailing in the Celebes Sea between Indonesia and the Philippines on 20 June. The victims are said to have been released unharmed following extended security operations in the province and negotiations with the group.

Philippines, 10 January 2017: At least eight fishermen were killed following a suspected pirate attack by unknown assailants in the Sulu Archipelago. A Filipino fishing boat with approximately 15 crew members was operating off the coast of Zamboanga City late on 9 January, when five armed men on a speedboat shot at and boarded the vessel. Seven of the other crew members survived the attack by abandoning the vessel during the attack.

Philippines, 14 and 18 January 2017: A South Korean national and a Filipino national were released in a remote area of the Sulu province by Abu Sayyaf militants on 14 January. The victims, Park Chung-Hung and Glenn Alindajao, crew members of South Korean vessel, Dong Bang Giant 2, were abducted while travelling in the Sibutu Passage by militants in October 2016. While the victims were released with minor injuries, they were subject to beatings while in captivity. Their release was facilitated by negotiations between militants and Filipino security forces. According to reports on 18 January, at least three Indonesian nationals are said to have been abducted off the island province of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu Archipelago. At least nine assailants, said to be Abu Sayyaf militants, are said to have boarded the Malaysian-flagged vessel travelling near the province's Taganak Island and abducted the victims.

Philippines, 20 February 2017: At least one Vietnamese national was killed and seven others abducted in a suspected piracy attack by unknown assailants in the Philippines' Sulu Archipelago. According to reports on 20 February, the MV Giang Hai was attacked by unknown assailants in the waters off Baguan Island in Tawi-Tawi province. Filipino coastguards reportedly rescued 17 crew members from the vessel, which was attacked late on 19 February.

Somalia, 13 February 2017: According to Ali Yar Mohammadi, an Iranian MP, eight Iranian sailors were freed from the captivity of pirates in Somalia on 13 February; negotiations continue for the release of the remaining captives. The lawmaker, who was speaking to a media outlet associated with Iranian state TV, disclosed that the head of consular officials at Iran's Foreign Ministry had confirmed the release of the sailors. The news of their release comes six months after the crew members of an Iranian fishing vessel, which fell prey to pirates in May 2016, managed to escape their kidnappers. Reports suggest that 12 other sailors, from a separate Iranian boat, remain in captivity. The pirates have demanded a large ransom for their release.

Somalia, 13 March 2017: A foreign oil tanker, that was hijacked together with eight Sri Lankan crew in waters off Somalia's autonomous Puntland region on 13 March, was released on 16 March. The MT Aris 13 was hijacked by Somali pirates while transporting oil between Djibouti and Mogadishu. The pirates then moved the vessel from Alula to Haabo. Local Somali authorities and clan elders were reportedly able to negotiate the release of the ship and its crew without any ransom payments; however, the release did follow an exchange of gunfire between members of the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) and men trying to ferry supplies to the pirates earlier in the day. At least two people were wounded during the clashes, which authorities suspect may have influenced the pirates' desire to find a more peaceful resolution to the situation. Conflicting reports indicate that the vessel was released without a ransom after the pirates discovered it had been hired by prominent Somali businesspeople.

Yemen, 30 January 2017: Militant Houthi vessels attacked a Saudi Arabian warship, thought to be an al-Madinah-class frigate, off Yemen's western coastline near the city of al-Hudaydah on 30 January. The attack left two Saudi crewmen dead and three others injured. The incident was confirmed by both sides; however, there were differences in reporting regarding the method used, with the Saudis suggesting it was a suicide-ramming attack and the Houthis stating that the Saudi ship was targeted by an anti-ship missile. The incident underscores the elevated threat of conflict spillover in the Red Sea, where Houthi attacks against Saudi-led coalition warships and support vessels (and US warships on occasion) have also increasingly been reported since late 2016. The violence in the Red Sea is concerning and poses a risk to commercial and private shipping interests navigating through this area.

Yemen, 14 February 2017: Somali pirates attempted to attack an Iranian cargo ship at the entrance of the Bab al-Mandeb strait, located in the vicinity of Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. According to Iranian media sources, 11 speedboats approached the cargo ship, but their advance was repelled by two Iranian military vessels that were in the vicinity of the attempted attack.

red24 Special Risks Locations

red24's retained Special Risks team is currently made up of 23 team members, who are based in Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, South America, Switzerland, Thailand, the UK and the US. Our multilingual team comprises some of the highest-calibre kidnap and extortion experts in the world. With an average of over 15 years' experience in this field, each expert has an in-depth understanding of ransom and extortion negotiation tactics and how they differ across different cultures and continents.



About us

red24's Special Risks advice, assistance and response services are retained by a number of insurance companies in the UK and US. In the event of a kidnap, hijack, extortion or wrongful detention incident covered by one of our partners, Insureds will receive expert practical advice and assistance from red24, who are always on call to provide whatever help the Insured requires. red24 not only helps Insureds achieve the possible release of the insured person, we also provide risk management and pre- and post-loss consultancy. As a policyholder, Insureds will have access to red24 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will be issued with a number to call in the event of an emergency.

red24

red24 is a leading crisis management specialist. Founded in 2000, red24 provides security information, advice, consultancy and assistance services to corporate entities, private clients and insurance providers across the world. Our team has an unparalleled reputation for providing a comprehensive range of risk management solutions, both to individuals wishing to protect themselves and their families and to companies wanting to minimise the risks to their personnel, operations, reputation and profitability. Our experienced, multi-disciplinary team of experts is ready to help you, your company and your employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week. red24 has operating experience in over 120 countries worldwide and the capability to physically support any organisation across the globe within 24 hours.

Our Special Risks team is led by Jack Cloonan, formerly of Clayton Consultants, and comprises a high-quality team of highly skilled professionals. Selected for their experience in crisis management, KRE response and negotiation, security management and implementation of risk mitigation strategies, team members have been drawn from various fields, including the military, law enforcement and the intelligence services, and each team member has approximately 15 years of experience in crisis handling.

The red24 Special Risks team is supported by red24's 24/7 Crisis Response Management (CRM) Centre and its multilingual team of analysts and security experts.

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