

March Monthly Incident Bulletin

Featured Countries: Afghanistan, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Philippines and Piracy

Afghanistan



14 February 2010 – Proof of Life video released by the Taliban

A proof-of-life video of two French journalists, kidnapped in December, was released by the Taliban on 14 February. In the video, the journalists were shown sitting on the floor of a dark room, with a flowered sheet hung behind them. Both were unshaven and appeared tired. They pleaded for their release and urged French President Nicolas Sarkozy to negotiate with their captors. The journalists were kidnapped along with three Afghan nationals in the Shinkai district of Kapisa province on 30 December 2009. The kidnappers had demanded the release of a militant commander held by the US and an undisclosed cash ransom in exchange for the victims, according to an Afghan security official quoted by Reuters on 16 January. The victims' fate remains unknown.

Haiti



20 February 2010 - NGO worker and chemical engineer kidnapped, released in Nord Est department

An NGO worker and a chemical engineer, were kidnapped on 20 February 2010 in Ouanaminthe (Nord Est department), near the Dominican border. The kidnappers demanded US\$100,000 for their safe release and threatened to kill the victims if the money was not paid. They indicated that the NGO worker had been tortured. An official with the NGO with which the worker is affiliated said that the kidnappers had given a small timeframe for the collection of the ransom money. Local press reports indicated that US\$50,000 was paid for their release on 23 February and that the victims were released on the same day.

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Honduras



University student seized in the capital

A University student, aged 21, was kidnapped on 28 January 2010 in Tegucigalpa (Francisco Morazán department). She was seized as she left her house at 06.30 to make her way to university. The kidnappers contacted the victim's family and made a ransom demand of 10m lempiras (US\$529,000). The victim was rescued by police on 30 January. Officers arrested three people and three others escaped and no ransom was paid. The victim had been held in a house and was blindfolded throughout. The kidnappers were not aggressive but repeated over and over again that she should not escape or report the incident to police.

Student seized for US\$3m ransom

An Engineering student, aged 25, was kidnapped on the evening of 25 January 2010 in Tegucigalpa (Francisco Morazán department). The victim is the son of a businessman who owns a restaurant and a factory which manufactures car batteries. He was leaving a recreation centre after playing football with friends when five armed men got out of two cars. They bundled him into a car and shot and killed his bodyguard as he attempted to stop the abduction. The kidnappers contacted the victim's father using the victim's mobile (cellular) telephone and made a ransom demand of US\$3m. This demand was subsequently reduced to 3m lempiras (US\$159,000) following initial negotiations. The fate of the victim remains unknown.

India



Former sales manager uses bank records to target high-value victims

Two children of a company director, aged eight and six, were kidnapped as they travelled to school in Gurgaon (Haryana state) on 2 February 2010. Youths in three cars intercepted the family vehicle and abducted the children and their mother as the chauffeur refilled the car. The mother was released immediately, after the kidnappers demanded a 10m rupee (US\$216,000) ransom for the children. Local police launched a rescue operation and recovered the victims within five hours of their abduction and arrested the kidnappers. It later emerged that the six-member kidnapping gang had received instructions from a former sales manager of an International Bank who had used his access to asset and deposit records to target victims.

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Mali



23 February 2010 – French National released in Mali

Five gunmen on 25 November 2009 kidnapped a French national from a hotel in the north-eastern town of Ménaka (Gao region), near the border with Niger. The victim heads a friendship organization that pairs the French town of Gerardmer with the Malian town of Tidarmene close to Ménaka. His kidnappers were believed to be members of a local criminal network who then sold the victim on to a branch of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (QIM) headed by Abdul-Hamid Abu Zeid. During the course of the abduction, he was tied up and thrown in the back of a van which then travelled through the night to take him towards QIM's northern bases.

The victim was released in an unspecified location on 23 February. The French government denied that it paid any form of financial ransom. He described his captors as young fanatics who were devoted to a cause of converting the world to the Salafist interpretation of Islam. He said that he was kept outside in the extreme heat and fed disgusting food and water during his time in captivity.

Nigeria



Criminals kidnap university student in Akure (Ondo state)

The daughter of the Ondo state Commissioner for Works was kidnapped by a criminal gang in Akure on 7 February 2010. The victim is a student at the university of Cairo and had recently returned from Egypt on holiday. The kidnappers contacted the victim's father and demanded a ransom of 30m naira (US\$199,000). The victim was released on 10 February following the reported payment of a ransom of 10m naira (US\$66,000).

Eight-month-old child of oil worker kidnapped in Port Harcourt (Rivers state)

Unidentified criminals kidnapped eight-month-old, the child of an oil worker, from her home in Port Harcourt (Rivers state) on 4 February 2010. The kidnappers reportedly broke into the house demanding money from the child's mother. When she was unable to provide large sums, they kidnapped the child and demanded a ransom of 5m naira (US\$33,000), setting an ultimatum of 8 February for the payment. The fate of the victim remains unknown.

Bank official kidnapped in the capital Abuja

A Bank employee was kidnapped from his apartment in Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) on 30 January 2010. The kidnappers contacted the victim's family and demanded a ransom of 30m naira (US\$198,000). The fate of the victim remains unknown.

Armed convoy attacked, four foreign workers kidnapped on border between Aba and Rivers state
Approximately 30 unidentified gunmen attacked an armed convoy at the Imo River bridge on the Port Harcourt-Aba highway and kidnapped three UK nationals and a Colombian national on the morning of 12 January 2010.

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There were 4 victims. A fifth foreign national travelling in the convoy reportedly managed to evade capture. The men were working as contractors for a Dutch-Nigerian venture and were travelling to work at the Afam power plant at the time of the attack. Media reports indicated that a driver and a police escort were shot and killed during the attack. No ransom demand was immediately reported. Nigerian authorities announced a 2m naira (US\$13,000) reward for any local resident who was able to provide information leading to the rescue of the victims and the arrest of the kidnappers. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) denied any involvement in the incident. Local press sources reported on 15 January that the kidnappers had threatened to kill the victims if a ransom of 300m naira (US\$2m) was not paid promptly. Security forces claimed that the victims were being held in a forested region near Owaza (Abia state) and had cordoned off parts of the forest in a bid to trace the kidnappers. The victims were released on the evening of 18 January. It was not clear whether a ransom was paid to secure their release.

Philippines



Construction workers kidnapped in Sulu

Two workers on a US-funded road project, were kidnapped in Maimbung (Sulu province) on 8 February 2010. One was released by his captors at approximately on 10 February. The other was released at approximately on 12 February. No ransom demand was reported and the identity of the kidnappers remains unknown.

Yemeni national kidnapped in Marawi city

A Yemeni NGO worker was kidnapped by a seven-man criminal gang as he walked back to his hotel in Marawi city (Lanao del Sur province) on 29 January 2010. The victim was in the country working on projects for the World Assembly of Muslim Youth organisation. Local press reports suggested the kidnappers demanded a US\$1m ransom. The victim was released on 8 February following negotiations

between the gang and local politicians. A local congresswoman claimed no ransom was paid for his release.

Piracy

Somalia & the Gulf of Aden

28 February 2010

The Panama-flagged bulk carrier, the Navios Apollon was released on 28 February 2010 following an undisclosed ransom payment. A Greek captain and 18 Filipino nationals were on board. The carrier was hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden on 28 December 2009, as it was transporting a cargo of fertilizer to India.

26 February 2010

The Singapore-flagged tanker, the Pramoni was released on 26 February following the payment of a reported US\$3.7m ransom. The Pramoni was hijacked while transiting the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden on 1 January 2010. The 19,998 deadweight-tonne vessel, with a crew of 24, was travelling from Genoa, Italy, to Kandla, India, when taken.

25 February 2010 - Somali pirates hijack five UN trucks and kidnap drivers

A gang of Somali pirates hijacked five trucks contracted by the UN World Food Programme to deliver food aid in Somalia, kidnapping nine unidentified occupants on 25 February 2010. The trucks had delivered food in the Galkayo area (Mudug region) of Puntland and were returning to the port of Berbera (Woqooyi Galbeed region) in Somaliland. The precise location of the hijack is not known though it was thought to have occurred in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. The kidnappers took the trucks and their occupants to their base in Garaad (Sanaag region) in Puntland. They demanded the release of fellow pirates who had been arrested by Somaliland authorities. The fate of the victims remains unknown.


4 February 2010

A North Korea-flagged general cargo vessel identified as the MV Rim was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden on 4 February 2010. The 4,800 deadweight tonne vessel has a 17-man crew consisting of Romanian and Libyan nationals and is owned by White Sea Shipping of Libya. The attack occurred north of the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC). No ransom demand was immediately reported and the fate of vessel and crew remains unknown.

1 February 2010

An Indian dhow identified as the Faize Osamani was released late on 1 February after the pirates holding it boarded another hijacked vessel, the Asian Glory. The Faize Osamani and its crew were recovered by the Danish Navy. The vessel was hijacked by Somali pirates approximately 150 nautical miles east of Socotra in January 2010. Fourteen Indian nationals were on board.

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Information in the bulletin is also drawn from our daily online political and security risk analysis service Country Risk Forecast (www.crg-online.com) and the International Kidnap Online Service. Information is also courtesy of AKE, Ltd. a security risk management company.

For additional information please feel free to contact Richard Scurrill on +44 (0)20 7088 9121, scurrellr@scr-ltd.co.uk or Michael Hill on +44 (0)20 7088 9115, hillmt@scr-ltd.co.uk