

11
August
2023



World Risk Register

ALERT

SUB SAHARAN AFRICA DESK

NIGER

#REFINEDINSIGHT

INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF ECOWAS INTERVENTION WILL COMPOUND RISK OF DOMESTIC CLASHES

EVENT

Late on 10 August, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced the activation of a standby force for a possible deployment to Niger to re-instate deposed President Mohamed Bazoum.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Niger's military government has repeatedly rejected ECOWAS' demands to re-instate Bazoum, who is currently detained at the Presidential Palace in the capital Niamey; ECOWAS' standby force likely consists of around 25,000 troops primarily drawn from **Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal**.
- General Abdourahamane (Omar) Tchiani's control over Niger's military remains highly tenuous; while the National Army declared its support for the coup to 'avoid bloodshed', the National Guard reportedly remains loyal to Bazoum.
- Public support for the military government remains highly divided; while the junta enjoys moderate support in Niamey, it has struggled to consolidate a broader support base, particularly among rural communities and Niger's Tuareg population.

FORECAST

Negotiations between ECOWAS and Niger's junta are unlikely to resolve tensions, increasing the likelihood of the former's intervention. While it will likely take between five and seven days to assemble the standby force (a timeframe which will provide the opportunity for further negotiations), the junta continues to reject diplomatic engagements from ECOWAS and the African Union (AU). As such, additional negotiations are unlikely to resolve tensions over the coup and Bazoum's continued detention, increasing the likelihood of an ECOWAS deployment.

Deployment preparations will elevate the disruption risks for the overland movement of personnel. The junta will almost certainly adopt an elevated security posture in Niamey in the coming days, increasing the number of checkpoints and diversions. Access to Niger's major roads, particularly Highways 1 and 6, will likely be restricted, elevating the likelihood of disruption to movement out of Niamey and increasing the risks for evacuation operations.

The continued threat of an ECOWAS intervention will likely strain Tchiani's tenuous control over elements of the National Guard and the Armed Forces, increasing the threat of domestic clashes, including between military factions. The Council of Resistance for the Republic, an anti-junta, predominantly Tuareg movement, will possibly also mobilise rebel networks in Agadez and Tahoua to undermine Tchiani's standing, further increasing the likelihood of clashes.

An ECOWAS intervention would almost certainly trigger an armed conflict, significantly elevating risks to staff and assets. The junta would almost certainly resist an ECOWAS deployment with military force, triggering fighting in Niamey, the junta's stronghold. Clashes would likely be concentrated near the Presidential Palace in Goudeland and in the military quarter in Gamkale (see Figure 1). If ECOWAS intervenes, there would also be a realistic possibility of clashes along Niger's borders with **Nigeria and Benin** near primary border crossings (see Figure 2). As such, incidental risks to bystanders and assets in these areas would be heightened, though targeted violence towards civilians would be unlikely.

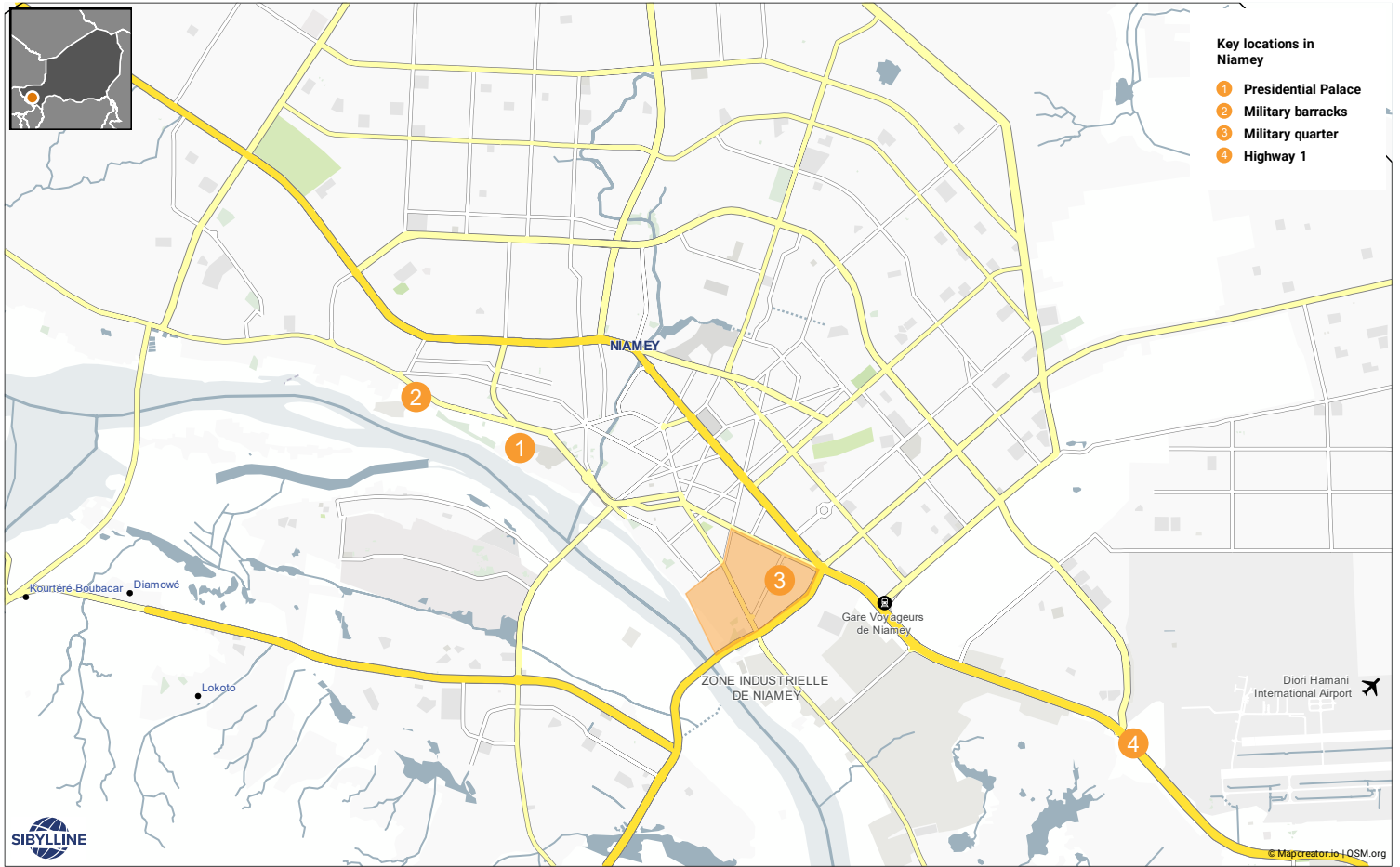


Figure 1: Map of the capital Niamey, highlighting locations where clashes would be most likely

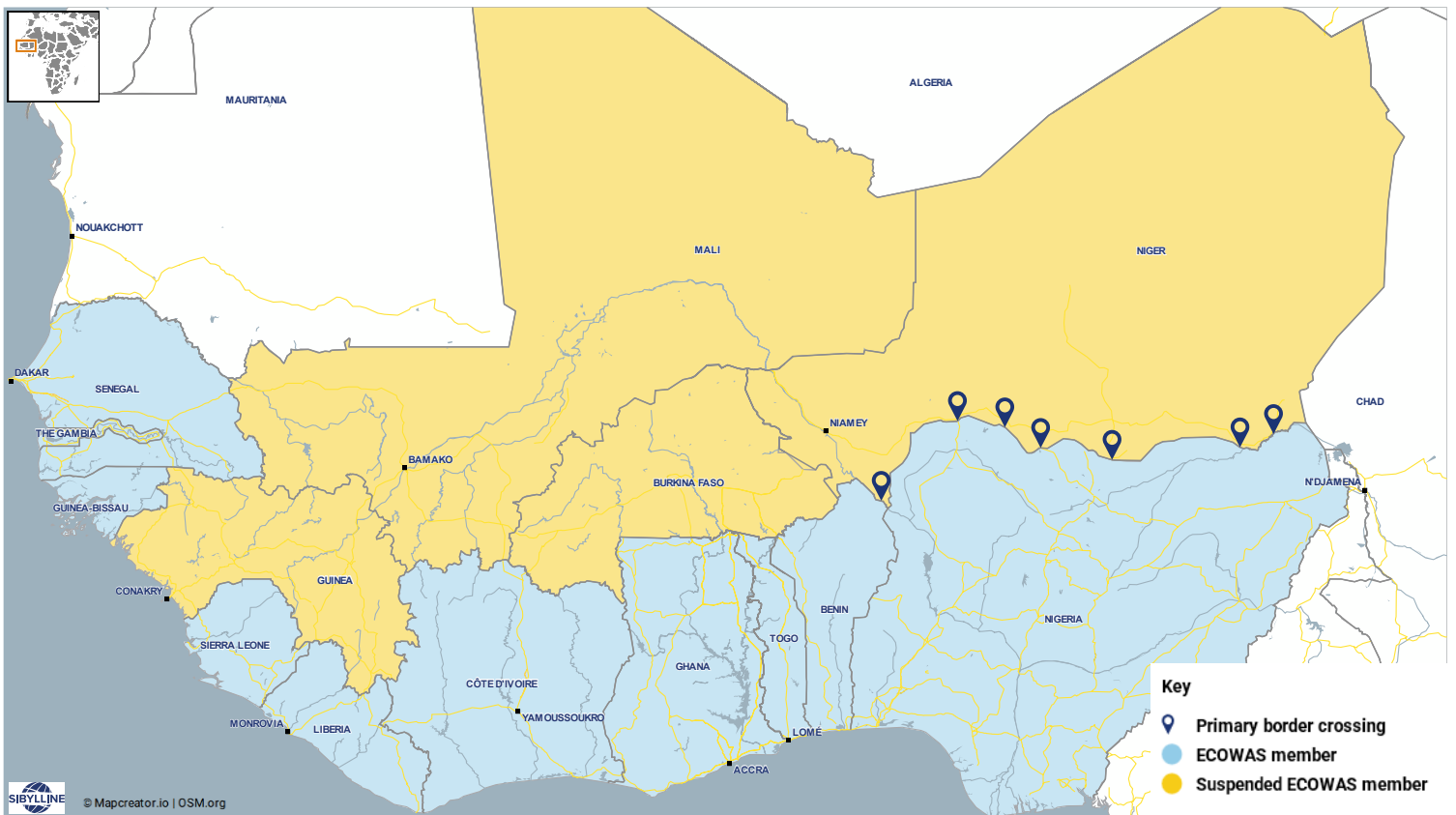


Figure 2: Map highlighting primary border crossings into Niger

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|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Remote chance 0-5% | Highly unlikely 10-20% | Unlikely 25-35% | Realistic possibility 40-50% | Likely or probable 55-75% | Highly likely 80-90% | Almost certain 95-100% |
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The World Risk Register

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