Executive Summary

Laikipia and Baringo Counties have experienced a significant increase in the threat posed to expatriate personnel over the past month, following a surge in inter-communal attacks, cattle rustling and invasions of private ranches and conservancies by armed herders.

In the unstable northern territories of Kenya, where most communities are pastoralists, political tensions have also contributed to direct incitement of violence as momentum for the August 2017 elections builds.

Supply of illegal arms to the herders from neighbouring countries has also contributed to an increased risk of small arms fire incidents (SAF), particularly while drought conditions persist in northern and central territories.

Commercial organizations are advised to limit all movements beyond major urban centres and secure facilities in northern Laikipia and Baringo, particularly in border areas where the risk of banditry remains heightened.

Security Overview

Laikipia constituency, which hosts a number of ranches and conservancy farms, has since the last quarter of 2016 witnessed a surge in the level of attacks against commercial properties, primarily linked to the invasion of pastoralist communities into the Samburu, Isiolo, Baringo and West Pokot territories in search of pasture for their cattle. Invading communities, mostly Samburu and Pokots, have in many cases entered the fields forcefully by cutting through fences to access scarce water and grazing reserves, a situation which has been aggravated by the prolonged drought affecting north-western areas of the country.

Although primarily economic in motivation, recent invasions to ranches and conservancies have seen tribesmen use illegal firearms when confronted, resulting in rare cases of casualties among conservancy staff and in some instances fatalities. Tourist lodges have also been looted and in extreme cases razed to the ground during these raids.

Notably on Sunday 05 March, armed bandits shot and killed Sosian Ranch co-owner and UK National, Tristan Voorspuy, who is understood to have been fired upon by raiders, along with his horse. A helicopter search later identified the body of the victim, although initial attempts to recover Voorspuy’s remains were prevented by the risk of further attacks by Pokot and Samburu herders in the
area. Efforts at night were also blocked after members of the victim’s family came under fire from pastoralists during an attempt to locate the scene of the attack in a pickup truck. Police managed to retrieve the body on Monday which was transported to Nairobi on the same day.

Regional Impact of Crisis

Cattle rustling and herder invasions are an established practice in the northern region of Kenya, although rarely do such attacks extend to non-rural areas. Recent weeks have nonetheless seen a number of significant attacks even affecting motorists and security personnel. In the past two months, three police officers have been shot and injured in different SAF incidents and clashes with bandits in Laikipia. While the epicentre of such violence was initially confined to Laikipia North, the impact of communal unrest has now spilled to Laikipia East and West.

In Baringo county, killings have also been reported during cattle rustling incidents and inter-communal clashes and counter attacks, with Pokot tribesmen frequently singled out as the aggressors by local residents. Such challenges have undermined the availability of humanitarian support in the areas which are marred with drought, poverty and marginalization. On Sunday 25 January, the Kenya Red Cross suspended its humanitarian activities in the central region following harassment of its staff and volunteers at Kambi Samaki two days earlier. During the incident, local Tugen residents blocked a convoy of seven KRCS vehicles carrying relief food meant for the Pokot community and forced them back to Marigat. The locals accused the KRCS of supporting the Pokots who they claimed were responsible for the majority of violence in Baringo County. Many locals have been forced to flee their homes as bandit attacks intensify in the County and take refuge in schools and churches. Notably, more than thirty schools have also been closed in recent months due to persistent attacks by armed Pokot bandits.

Government Response

On Friday 24 February, the Deputy President, (DP) William Ruto visited Bartabwa, Baringo North Sub-County in a bid to reassure the residents of the government’s commitment to provide security to affected areas. During Ruto’s visit, an area chief was shot and killed in an armed clash between security officers and bandits. The incident even prevented the DP from taking off in his helicopter. The level of insecurity prompted the DP to issue a shoot-to-kill order on the suspected cattle rustlers. The move was opposed by Pokot Leaders who alleged that it would lead to widespread killing of innocent people.

On 28 February, police launched a security operation in Baringo with an addition of 255 National Police Reservists (NPRs) deployed to combat the increased incidents of banditry, cattle rustling and communal clashes. The police reservists were expected to work with 400 officers drawn from regular police, anti-stock theft units and general service units. 268 additional NPRs were also

An Injured police officer in Baringo being airlifted to hospital

DP Ruto with security officers during his visit to Baringo
deployed in Elgeyo Marakwet. Areas targeted in the operation included Kagir, Ng’aratuko, Yatya, Chepkesin and Kinyach areas in Baringo North and Chebinyiny, Arabal, Noosukro, Rugus, Mukutani and Ng’elecha in Baringo South and followed the announcement by Interior CS Joseph Nkaissery of 19 administrative areas at high risk of further violence. As of 06 March, police had arrested 379 illegal grazers in Laikipia and removed herders from 16 ranches.

On Sunday 05 March, Inspector General (IG) of Police flew to Suiyan Ranch in Laikipia, Rugus in Baringo County and Kerio Valley in Elgeyo Marakwet County to assess the progress of the ongoing security operation. During his visit, he met with the county and operation commanders and other officers involved in the restoration of peace such as the NPRs. While leaving Sosian ranch aboard his helicopter, the IG was shot at twice.

On Tuesday 07 March, the DP visited Laikipia County to assess the security situation in the area following an upsurge of insecurity. At the same time Laikipia North MP, Mathews Lempurkel, was arrested in Nairobi over links to the recent invasions in ranches and conservancies in Laikipia.

Recent notable incidents

✦ 06 March: Arrest – More than 400 illegal herdsmen were arrested and 16 ranches secured in the ongoing security operation in Laikipia County.

✦ 05 Mar: Banditry - Armed bandits shot and killed Sosian ranch co-owner and UK National, Tristan Voorspuy, while he was investigating a security breach by pastoralist groups.

✦ 05 Mar: Shooting - A newly recruited NPR was shot and injured by Pokot bandits in the ongoing security operation in Kerio Valley, Baringo County. The attackers fled towards Chepkererat, one of the 19 areas stated by authorities as being highly unstable in the County.

✦ 24 Feb: Cattle Rustling - At around 1230hrs, about 30 suspected Pokot cattle thieves attacked Chepkew village, Baringo North, and stole an unknown number of animals. NPR were ambushed and a local security officer killed while in pursuit of the attackers.

✦ 23 Feb: Banditry attack - At around 0900hrs, a National Youth Service (NYS) truck was attacked by armed bandits at the Yatya area, Baringo County, while transporting food to displaced persons. No one was injured during the attack in which the bandits forced the servicemen to offload the entire consignment.

✦ 23 Feb: Civil disorder - Baringo County residents held a demonstration against escalating insecurity in Kabarnet, Margat and Baringo towns.

✦ 22 Feb: Banditry - Several people were reportedly killed after suspected Pokot raiders ambushed a vehicle heading to Tot, Marakwet East Sub-County at around Kampi ya Samaki, Marigat. The attack was linked to the ongoing inter-tribal clashes being experienced in the vast Baringo and Elgeyo-Marakwet Counties.

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18 Feb: **Shooting** - At around 0300hrs, an aspiring MP for the Tiaty Constituency, and an MCA of Loyamorock ward, Tiaty, were shot and killed in Mariagat town. The two, in the company of six friends, were at a night club when armed assailants with face masks opened fire, killing them while leaving their friends unhurt.

02 Jan: **Banditry** - A group of men believed to be Pokot tribesmen attacked a family of Dutch tourists travelling through Laikipia nature conservancy.

**Recommendations**

1) Laikipia and Baringo counties remain at a **HIGH** security threat risk for expatriate operations, meaning that further attacks against security forces and private residences are highly likely. For the coming week, Constellis advises against all travel to Chepkererat, Laikipia North, the Kerio Valley and Baringo North.

2) Limit travel to only essential journeys for visits to remote rural areas of Laikipia and Baringo, and consider the option of armed security escorts, particularly in areas subject to ongoing government security operations.

3) Ensure that all staff, including off duty personnel, are accounted for in central Kenya and implement effective journey management tracking for all movements beyond major cities.

4) If you are an ELMS/T-Fix subscriber, send regular updates to the OG Kenya OPSCEN so that we can track your movement and react quickly to alert you, should you be close to an incident.
Map showing recorded security incidents in the Laikipia and Baringo areas from Sept 2016 to March 2017

Graph showing recorded security incidents in Laikipia County from 01 May 2016 - 06 March 2017
Constellis’ intelligence analysts and security consultants produce bespoke political and security reports, threat assessments and security risk assessments to inform decisions and to protect people and assets across Kenya and Africa.

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