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Despite military progress, it's not going well in Northern Benin

The Government of Benin has shown a remarkably strong commitment to stopping the spread of violent extremism. It has invested in its military and its relations with the population and has largely been able to stand its ground against Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs). Yet, from July 2022 onwards levels of violence in the region have increased by more than four times compared to the year before. And worse, they continue to show an upward trend.

This policy brief makes three contributions. First, it shows that three distinct fronts have opened up, each with different social demographics. In these fronts VEOs target different constituencies and tailor their socio-political and religious message accordingly. A second contribution is a warning that the conflict is transforming from an outside problem into a localized insurgency. More and more, village infiltration takes place and VEOs develop deep ties with the population. This is dangerous.

The final contribution is advice to the Government of Benin and its partners to develop a new and flexible response mechanism to directly follow up to VEO visits, identify social tensions and have flexible funding available to address peoples real and immediate needs.

Two years ago, violent extremists attacked the Beninese village of Porga. Since then larger attacks – such as those on Monsey in April 2022 and Kaobagou in May 2023 – have attracted occasional media attention.¹ Between November 2021 and June 2022, Northern Benin experienced increasingly high levels of violence, averaging five reported incidents per month. From July 2022 onwards, levels of violence in the region have

increased by more than four times and continue to show an upward trend (see figure below).²

The Government of Benin has shown a remarkably strong commitment to stopping the spread of violent extremism, in the face of this increase. Militarily, the largely unprepared Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (FDS) evolved into a better-equipped and more organized outfit, and continued recruitment is ongoing.³ Specialized units – the National Guard, the

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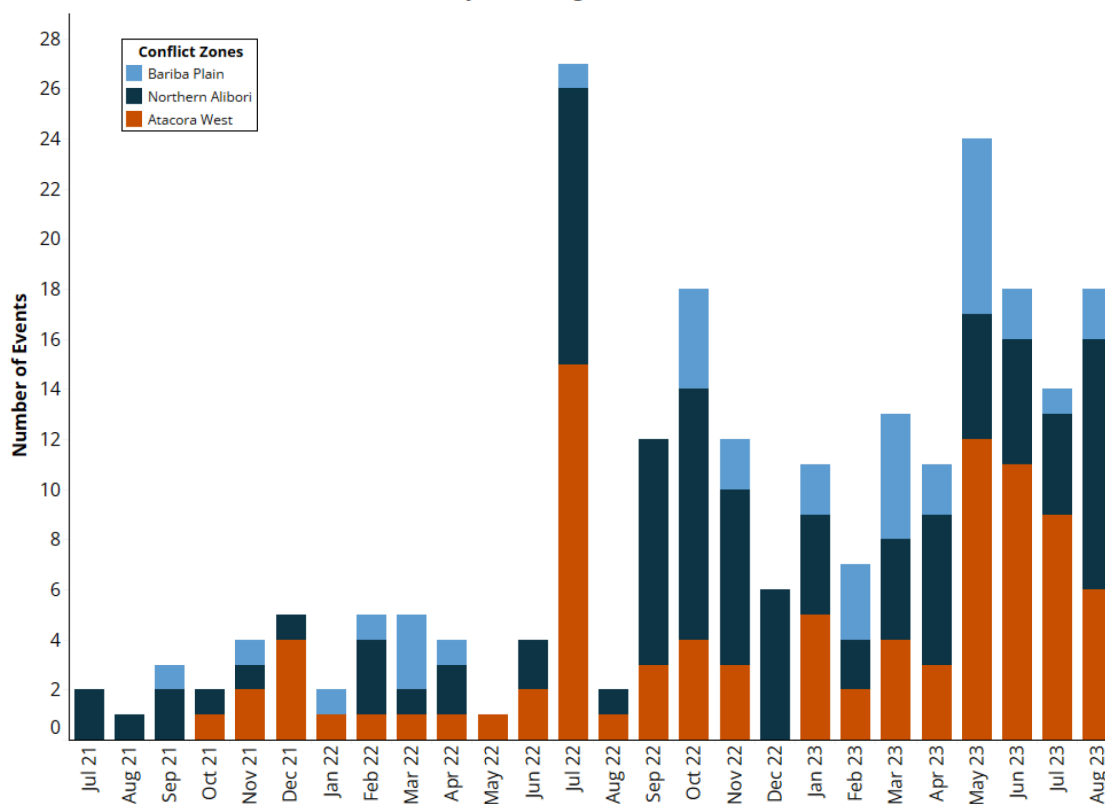
1 RFI, '[Bénin : un policier tué lors d'une attaque visant un commissariat dans le nord du pays](#),' 26 April 2022; Pierre Lepildi, '[Le nord du Bénin touché par deux nouvelles attaques meurtrières en deux jours](#),' Le Monde, 4 May 2023.

2 This trend is in part due to improved reporting, but also coincides with more permanent violent extremist presence in Park W.

3 RFI, '[Bénin: l'armée recrute pour sécuriser ses frontières](#),' 12 June 2023; RFI, '[Qui sont les partenaires des Béninois dans la lutte contre les terroristes?](#)' 25 September 2023.

Political Violence and Disorder in Northern Benin

July 2021-August 2023



First Commando Parachute Battalion, and the First Armored Group – were established. New equipment and outside logistical support allow the FDS to successfully respond to Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs).⁴ The Beninese Agency for the Integrated Management of Border Areas has also developed stronger ties with communities in Benin’s most peripheral areas.⁵

But despite all the efforts, Northern Benin is moving dangerously close to a civil conflict. The FDS confront VEOs on three distinct fronts with distinct social demographics. VEOs target different constituencies in each area. A particularly pressing issue is societal infiltration in all three areas: VEOs are developing deep ties

with specific parts of the population. At least 15 distinct villages across Northern Benin are regularly visited by VEOs.

This policy brief considers how the contest for Northern Benin has progressed over the past two years relying on data from a consortium led by the Clingendael Institute and shared with ACLED. The proliferation of violent extremism in coastal West Africa is often captured under the term ‘spillover.’ This term implies accidental diffusion. In contrast, VEO activity in these coastal states has been very deliberate, well- planned, and clearly strategized.⁶

4 Pierre Lepidi, ‘Au nord-ouest du Bénin, le combat de l’armée contre les groupes terroristes,’ Le Monde, 20 September 2023; RFI, ‘Au nord-ouest du Bénin, le combat de l’armée contre les groupes terroristes,’ RFI, 6 July 2023.

5 Magali Lagrange, ‘Comment le Bénin répond depuis 2022 aux activités terroristes au nord de son territoire,’ RFI, 14 September 2023.

6 When VEOs operated on the border between Mali and Burkina Faso they remained in Mali until they decided to expand into Burkina Faso. Likewise, VEOs were right at the Beninese border for three years, until they struck in 2021. Furthermore, within Benin VEOs made deliberate decisions where to expand, what zones to open up and what message to propagate. Even attacks in Togo were in part related to JNIMs assessments that entry into Benin from the Nadiagou-Porga axis was difficult and instead was better accomplished via Togo and into Benin.

Northern Benin: a nascent civil conflict?

Public evidence present an uncomfortable reality: Northern Benin is dangerously close to meeting definitions of a ‘civil conflict’. Common elements of such definitions are a measure of lethality, a dispute over government or territory and a degree of organization among armed groups from the same country.⁷ ACLEDs new conflict index qualifies Benin as a turbulent conflict that is worsening.⁸

Since January 2021, ACLED has recorded 211 reported fatalities in Northern Benin related to events that can be attributed to VEOs.⁹ Of these, 88 were battle-related deaths – meaning soldiers or militants. In 2022, Northern Benin for the first time reached the threshold for a civil conflict (46 battle-related deaths). The first eight months of 2023 have already seen this number matched with 34 battle-related deaths.

A second element is whether the parties contest a ‘government’ or ‘territory’. VEOs in Benin have not explicitly sought to replace the government (although they have strongly advocated against it), but they do contest territory. Since mid-2022, VEOs have sought refuge in Park W and operate in Benin from W.

Hence, the real question is: are we dealing with an invasion by a foreign-based insurgent group or has this invasion turned into a localized insurgency? It is certainly both, and developments in Niger and Burkina Faso continue to set the pace of the activity in Northern Benin. Yet, since early 2023, there have

been increasing indications of localization and endogenization of violent extremism.

Consider some pieces of evidence that point to a localization of the insurgency. First, there are indications that Beninese militants are in leadership positions of VEOs. Examples include a group of Beninese militants tasked to lead activities in western Atacora.¹⁰ Later, prominent Beninese individuals – some of them previously involved in fuel smuggling, banditry, and poaching – have reportedly linked up with VEOs.¹¹ Another piece of evidence is a public audio message from Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM); it was broadcasted in Bariba, the language of a large ethnic group in Northern Benin. It points to the longer-term ambitions of JNIM in Benin.¹²

Information on messaging of VEOs in Northern Beninese villages shows that their message is increasingly endogenized.¹³ Before 2021, JNIM recruited among a disgruntled Fulbe community in Atacora.¹⁴ Since early 2023, other local linkages have mushroomed. For example, the ethnic Gourtmanche-Fulbe strife from Burkina Faso’s Est region is beginning to spread to some Beninese villages displaying a similar ethnic make-up, such as in Kaobagou (a Gourtmanche village bordering Pendjari Park). Localized messaging is also evident in JNIM’s recruitment efforts. In February 2023 the group told the population in Kaobagou and Firou “to

7 For more on the definitions of this term, see Stathis N. Kalyvas and Paul D. Kenny, ‘Civil Wars,’ *International Studies*, 1 March 2010, Nicholas Sambanis, ‘What is What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,’ *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No.6, December 2004, pp. 814-58 and UCDP.

8 [ACLED Conflict Index](#).

9 Civilians are increasingly becoming victims of the violence; 35 civilians have already been killed in 2023, which marks more than the total recorded number for the whole of 2022.

10 The leader was killed by the Armed Forces of Benin (FAB) on October 12, 2022 in Nouari; undisclosed interview November 2022. There are unconfirmed reports that certain Burkinabe have recently taken over leadership positions.

11 E.g. on 16 November 2022 a famous smuggler worked with VEOs and was spotted in Bogo-Bogo and Antonio Sampaio, et al., ‘[Reserve Assets: Armed groups and conflict economies in the national parks of Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin](#),’ Global Initiative on Transnational Crime, 9 May 2023.

12 On 2 May 2022, an unverified audio recording had JNIM ‘claim’ responsibility for 12 and 26 April 2022 attacks on Monsey; Twitter @MENASTREAM, 2 May 2022.

13 Information on VEO messaging comes from a separate research activity in Benin’s northern provinces.

14 Fulani is the English name for Fulbe (in the Fulfude language) or Peulh (French).

rise up against those who grab their land, enrich themselves and benefit on the back of their efforts” and that JNIM was “in the area to offer assistance so that justice could be granted, so that God’s order would be respected.” Since June 2023, anti-farming messaging has appeared in multiple villages of Northern Alibori.¹⁵

If no longer only a foreign-based insurgency; how widespread and localized is the conflict?

Going Local: Inside Northern Benin

Research on the driving forces of disorder in Benin points to tensions between farmers and herders, conflict over land, clashing interests in managing the W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) Complex and particularly the relationship between organized crime and VEOs.¹⁶

Yet, this strong focus on the illicit activities of VEOs, risks criminalizing, de-legitimizing, and de-politicizing violent extremism.¹⁷ In fact, evidence collected in 2023 on the messaging of VEOs in Northern Benin reveals a complementary picture. This messaging is openly religious, with explicit calls for religious conversion and obedience (e.g. on drinking alcohol, smoking and consuming pork) and using religious doctrine to respond to specific social problems (e.g. around marriage).¹⁸

The approach of VEOs seems to be tailored to the specific social context in which it operates in Northern Benin. To see this we match three distinct social-geographic areas with VEOs’ mode of operations. These are western Atacora, northern Alibori and finally the Banikoara and Kerou/Kounade communes (see map below).

Western Atacora

The first zone – western Atacora – is situated in the tri-border area between Togo, Burkina Faso, and Benin, in which militants staged the November 2021 attack in Porga. Western Atacora is an ethnic melting pot. The area is home to a multitude of ethnic groups, including the Berba, Ditamari, Natemba, Yende (sometimes together called Somba), Gourtmanche, and pockets of different types of endogenous Fulani groups (Sombabe, Gurumabe, and the transhumant Mombabe). From the end of 2021 to July 2022, VEOs openly sought to expand in this area.¹⁹

It is clear that JNIM in this area sought to speak to specific segments of the population.²⁰ For some, these ties were facilitated via “radicalizing Peuhl pastoralists,” including offers to young women to be free from marriage.²¹ Other research pointed to links with hunting groups and fuel smugglers in this area.²² While a VEO presence has certainly endured in this area, government activity such as security postures, armed clashes, arrests, and building intelligence relations with civilians has been somewhat successful in keeping a lid on the violence and prevented strong JNIM expansion.

15 E.g. on October 3, September 12, August 23, August 22, August 21, August 1, June 27, June 20 all in 2023.

16 Kars de Bruijne, ‘[Laws of Attraction: Northern Benin and risk of violent extremist spillover](#),’ Clingendael, June 2021; United States Agency for International Development, ‘[An Assessment of the Experiences and Vulnerabilities of Pastoralists and At-Risk Groups in the Atakora Department of Benin Executive Summary](#),’ January 2023; Antonio Sampaio, et al., ‘[Reserve Assets: Armed groups and conflict economies in the national parks of Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin](#),’ Global Initiative on Transnational Crime, 9 May 2023; International Crisis Group ‘[Containing Militancy in West Africa’s Park W](#),’ 26 January 2023; Jeannine Ella Abatan and William Assanvo, ‘[Links between violent extremism and illicit activities in Benin](#),’ Institute for Security Studies, June 2023.

17 To be clear, most reports on illicit economies also suggest a political message underpinning illicit VEO activities.

18 Interviews during July–October 2023, Clingendael Institute.

19 Activity seems to be picking up since October 2023.

20 United States Agency for International Development, ‘[An Assessment of the Experiences and Vulnerabilities of Pastoralists and At-Risk Groups in the Atakora Department of Benin Analytical report](#),’ January 2023.

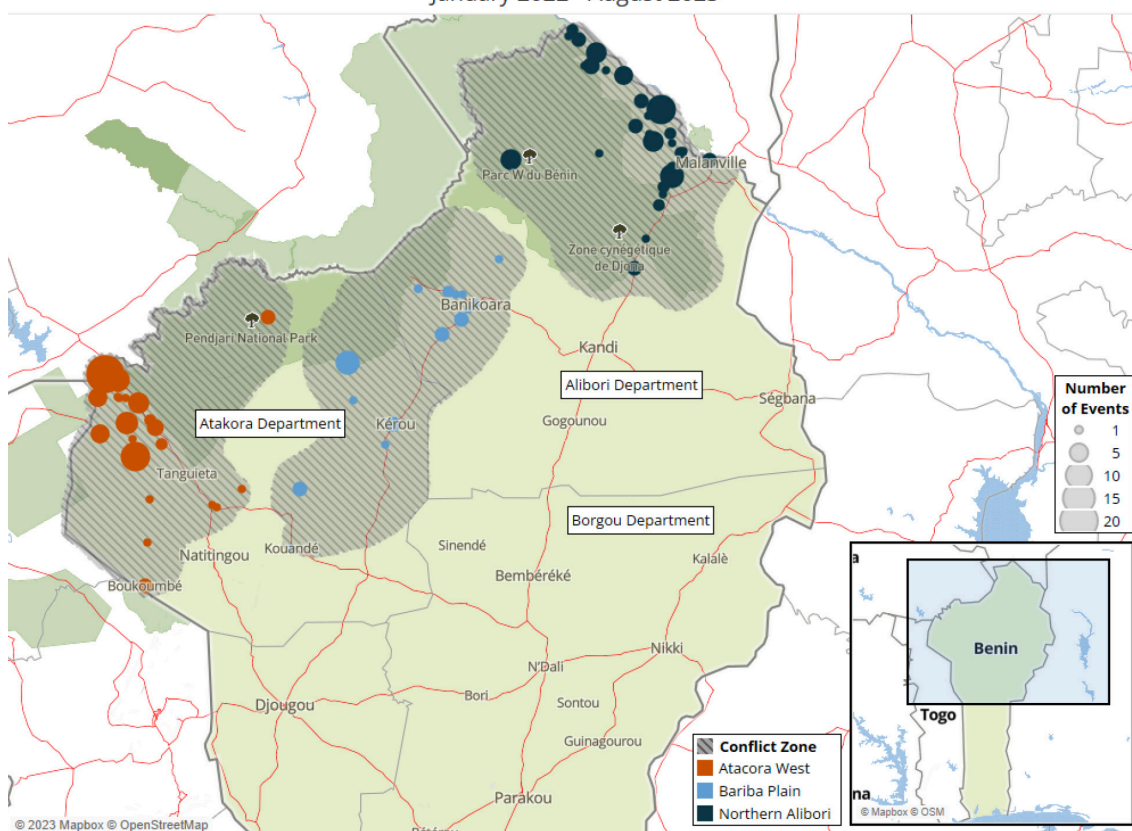
21 United States Agency for International Development, ‘[An Assessment of the Experiences and Vulnerabilities of Pastoralists and At-Risk Groups in the Atakora Department of Benin Analytical report](#),’ January 2023.

It is not specified what specific Fulbe sub-group would be involved.

22 Note, for hunting groups there is only evidence until 2021, see Jeannine Ella Abatan and William Assanvo, ‘[Links between violent extremism and illicit activities in Benin](#),’ Institute for Security Studies, June 2023.

Political Violence and Disorder in Northern Benin Related to VEOs

January 2022 - August 2023



Where known, VEO narratives since 2022 have involved warnings not to collaborate with the authorities rather than openly addressing deep social tensions.²³

Northern Alibori

VEOs have taken a very different approach in a second area: northern Alibori. The relevant areas in northern Alibori are a strip of land between Niger and Benin (from Petchinga to Malanville) and the areas down from Malanville to the military bases in Alfakoara. The ethnic make-up of the area is different with a predominantly Dendi, Hausa population and more pronounced pockets of Fulbe settlements (e.g. Monsey, Kangara Fulbe, Djermahe, but also Torobe – a

subgroup of Gurumabe from Torodi) and some Zarma. This zone became active in July 2022.

Initially VEOs likely forged ties with smugglers, traffickers, and local populations well before the first wave of attacks.²⁴ In September 2022 and after some small-scale violent incidents, JNIM forcefully entered northern Alibori. The specific JNIM group came from the border between Niger and Burkina Faso, near the border town of Torodi, and likely sought to counter the claims of a presence by militants of the Sahel province of the Islamic State around Guene.²⁵ Because it rushed in, the JNIM activity

23 Not well understood are the politics of the extremely complex ethnic relations in the area (e.g. richer 'foreign' ethnicity with political aspirations), the ethnic politics of land and pastoralism and the degree to which VEOs seek to tap into these divides.

24 In the words of the Global Initiatives on Transnational Organized Crime, this was an "alternative system of governance," see Antonio Sampaio, et al., 'Reserve Assets: Armed groups and conflict economies in the national parks of Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin,' Global Initiative on Transnational Crime, 9 May 2023.

25 Caleb Weiss, 'Islamic State claims first attacks inside Benin,' FDD's Long War Journal, 17 September 2022.

was hasty, violent towards the population, not relying on established networks and without a clear social message (e.g. the group used kidnapping for information). From November 2022 onwards, the FDS successfully pushed back this JNIM Katibat with significant military force. In February 2023, the FDS zoned in on Park W, with some VEOs fleeing.

However, from early 2023, infiltration by JNIM resurfaced where the movement sought to exploit the specific social make-up. From January to May 2023, northern Alibori saw various non-violent recruitment drives, taxation attempts and requests for food. Moreover, JNIM elements engaged in explicit religious messaging throughout the year, regularly appearing in mosques.²⁶ In this period it is also evident that deep ties have been established with segments of the population, as evidenced by dozens of procurement links – including fuel, dairy, meat, and other foodstuffs.²⁷

It is these links that have enabled a new offensive by VEOs in northern Alibori during the second half of 2023. This time, however, the offensive does build on established relationships and is clearly more localized. For example, there is a nascent narrative: anti-farming messages and seeking solutions to land ownership tensions that resonate with the key problems faced by segments of the population. For example, in August 2023, VEOs ordered farmers to leave their land in Kangara Peuhl, Guene, and Soumbeby Gourou with similar incidents in Doumille and Deroubounarou, in the Malanville and Banikoara communes respectively. These messages are accompanied by an increase in the direct targeting of farmers by VEOs – up from five between March and July 2023 to nine in August alone.²⁸

26 Specific incidents in this section come from a consortium led by the Clingendael Institute.

27 Underscoring the depth of these links is that the FAB arrested individuals in Karimama commune on June 30, 2023 who were reportedly paid 600,000 CFA per month by the armed group.

28 And the [highest levels of violence against civilians by VEOs](#) since the outbreak of the violence.

Bariba plain: Banikoara, Kerou and Kouande Communes

VEOs targeted a third zone by early 2023 after the failed attempt to control northern Alibori; the Banikoara commune. VEOs infiltrated the area by the end of 2022, then started with threats directed at local schools, and finally with open clashes with the FDS from early 2023. Initially, the FDS had less control over this zone but progressively deployed in the area during the first six months of 2023.

Again it is important to see how VEOs have skillfully adapted to the context. These communes form part of an ethnic Bariba area with smaller groups such as Gourtmanche and Fulbe settlements on the fringes. The Bariba are arguably the most important group in this area, mainly drawing from a legacy of the Bariba Empire that stretched into these communes.²⁹ Significantly, the position of Fulbe in Bariba areas is different from other zones, since the two groups enjoy cordial relationships including shared land use in some cases. These Fulbe have settled in Benin for centuries and are generally more integrated into the social make-up.³⁰

This social composition has had consequences for JNIM entry points and its messaging.³¹ VEOs have tried a distinct message on land ownership and access to the Parks (both W and Pendjari). For example, the people in Firou village in Gourtmanche were the target of a message to take back control of the Parks in August 2022.

29 The last empire in the region that resisted colonial rule. The heart of this empire was located in the Borgou (the Bariba king resides in Nikki) and the empire stretches into Nigeria (until New Bussa). In Atacora the seat of the Bariba king is in Kouande. There is internal Bariba competition between Nikki and Kouande.

30 There are exceptions however, e.g. around Kouande where the Fulbe have more tense relationships with the Bariba.

31 Previous research has in passing pointed to links between VEOs and those operating illicit markets. Elva collected data in Kouande. Global Initiative in the Banikoara commune (but in 'far-off' Fonogou). The ISS engaged in data collection in Keremou and Mekrou but before any significant infiltration. For more on the illicit link for this area, see Kars de Bruijne, ['Under the microscope: Inside the attacks on Porga and Keremou'](#), Clingendael, 22 December 2021.

In February 2023, a recruitment campaign used a narrative of “land disputes” and in April 2023 recruitment focused on a message of “park access” and a promise that the people could return to their “lands” (drawing on local perceptions that increased conservation efforts had forced people out). In Kaobagou, another Gourtmanche village and a JNIM entry point for Pendjari, VEOs openly recruited in January 2023, telling people to “rise up against those who grab their land, enrich themselves, and benefit on the back of their efforts.” A month later, the group asked residents about the details of ongoing land disputes. In another village in Brignamaro, VEOs may have intervened in a localized dispute over land in April 2023. By the end of August 2023, suspected VEOs demanded that farmers vacate their land in Deroubannou and Fowema.

Where the present response falters

In short, violent extremism in Northern Benin is evidently localizing and VEOs tailor their message to the distinct social composition of the geographic zone that they are targeting.

But this escalation should not be taken as evidence of a lackluster response by the Benin government. Despite the political risks, there have been major investments in the army, multiple recruitment rounds, increasing procurement, better training for the FDS, and investments in international partnerships. Unlike some other West African countries, Benin’s military posture has also been resolute and resolved in specific operations, including operations around Karimama in November 2022, Park W in January 2023, and a new push by *Operation Mirador* (now with logistical support from partners) that have generated military success. While military actions alone are not the only solution, they are nevertheless a significant and crucial part of the response.

Challenges remain, off course. The FDS generally engages in violent interactions with VEOs and the arrests of civilians suspected of colluding

with VEOs.³² The problem as documented elsewhere is that the FDS has sometimes carried out arrests arbitrarily, targeting ethnic minorities disproportionately – including the ethnic Fulbe – and has used deadly violence.³³ This risks eroding trust in the security forces.

But the real problem is that there is no effective strategy against deep infiltration and attempts to localize as particularly the escalating situation in northern Alibori illustrates. To demonstrate this, we supplemented ACLED data with information on the movement of suspected VEOs in Benin as these incidents often do not match ACLED thresholds. Figure 3 distinguishes between sightings and the passing by of villages (the movement of forces) and forms of direct VEO engagement with the population (non-violent activities).³⁴ VEOs have been spotted in and have interacted with many villages, not only on the fringes of the parks but often deeper into Beninese territory and in all three zones.

It is this situation that challenges the government and its partners and allows VEOs to expand. The present common response has been to arrest suspected individuals when VEOs are seen to visit an area. However, table 1 makes it clear that this strategy has not been successful. The table displays the most visited villages by suspected VEOs in each zone over the last year.³⁵ After arrests are made these visits

32 Although it is hard to fully comprehend, it seems that improved relationships with communities and a better follow-up to see something/hear something campaigns have partly enabled the FDS to make more targeted arrests.

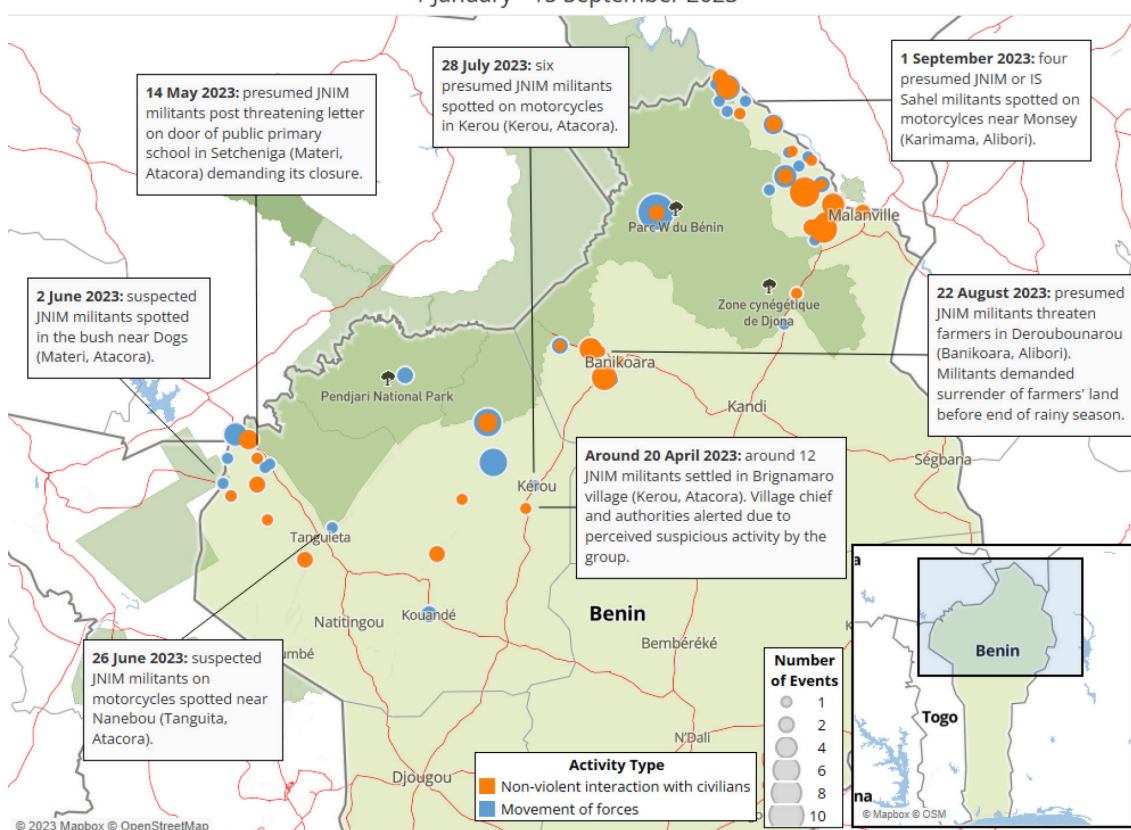
33 Lief Brottem, ‘[Benin’s Approach to Fighting Jihadists Is Fueling the Cycle of Violence](#),’ *World Politics Review*, 16 June 2023. There is a clear drop in arrests involving Fulbe since October 2023, which appears to signal a change in strategy.

34 Despite significant vetting and conservative coding, there may be some events that misinterpret groups for violent extremists.

35 To avoid stigmatization the village, village names have been anonymized. Visits come in various forms: some are visits to threaten ‘government collaborators’; other visits involve scouting operations where VEOs explicitly seek to obtain information on social tensions, some are procurement operations.

Suspected VEO Movement in Northern Benin

1 January - 15 September 2023



continue. The uncomfortable reality is that networks of VEO support continue to exist in the communities. Making more arrests will not change that.

What can be done against deep VEO infiltration?

In short, there is a need to develop a more effective policy. And given the localized nature of VEO expansion, the response should also localize more and become village-based. Specifically, the Government of Benin and its partners could consider three things to stem the tide.

First, building better intelligence collaboration with communities and on that basis make more deliberate arrests. However, stronger intelligence collaboration should start to more strongly consider how to avoid painting a target on people's back. VEOs move into village to threaten those who collaborate and are known to have

kidnapped those as punishment.³⁶ There is similar scope to improve strategic communication to highlight the positive contribution that the Government of Benin makes.

Second, there has to be recognition among decision-makers in Benin that it is not going well. The challenge is not merely criminal or coming from the outside but is localized. An effective response can only be developed when there is a sufficient acceptance that VEO expansion is driven by social and political problems that find their origin in the history of Benin and policies that have been pursued over the last 20 years.

Third and more practically, the Government of Benin should develop a new response mechanism to VEO 'visits' in villages. It is often clear what the tensions exist in these villages (e.g. between

36 For more consider an upcoming report by the Global Initiative on Kidnapping in Northern Benin.

Table 1 Suspected repeat VEO movements in villages (July 2022-September 2023)

	Commune	Location	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	Total
Atacora West	Materi	Village I	4	3	5	10	8	30
		Village II	4	1	5	3	4	17
		Village III	1	2	3	4	1	11
		Village IV	3		1	5		9
Bariba Plain	Kerou	Village V		2	6	12	2	22
		Village VI	1		5	2	2	10
	Banikoara	Village VII			6	3	2	11
		Village VIII			3	2	3	8
		Village IX	1	1	1	3		6
	Kouande	Village X			2	1	3	6
Northern Alibori	Karimama	Village XI	3	2	8	4	6	23
		Village XII	4	3	3	2	5	17
		Village XIII		6	3	1	2	12
		Village XIV		3	2	1	3	9
		Village XV	2	1	1	2	2	8
	Malanville	Village XVI	5	3	7	6	4	25
		Village XVII			1	1	4	6
		Village XIX				4	2	6
		Village XX	1		1	1	2	5

ethnic groups, conflict over land, farmer-herder tensions) or when they are not fully clear, these tensions can be deduced with village and town meetings. The Government of Benin could consider have a specific fund at its disposal to directly address these villages concerns and the needs of specific social groups. Rather than taking people away government should given away resources to its people. To do this, there should be a flexible fund to respond to direct needs and locally developed programs to speak to longer term needs. To enable this, donors have to be prepared to give more flexible funding to the Government of Benin.

But this comes with a catch: it might compromise existing policy and there should be greater willingness to compromise over absolute policies. Prohibiting across- and within-country transhumance, sticking to formalized land management where it leads to tensions, not

opening up economic corridors to allow people to go to markets safely, preventing people to trade risk items (e.g. fertilizer) and non-risk items (e.g. soy, fuel), exclude groups that are politically non-aligned and ban hunting groups, are all policies that in the short-run might render areas safer but also lead to tensions in villages. Better calibration of these policies and a willingness to compromise will help stem infiltration.

Looking ahead

The final thing to consider is that the Government of Benin should look further ahead.

A real concern is VEO expansion into the Borgou, a region below Alibori that borders Nigeria. Our data suggest that since 2023 there is more activity in this region with increasing kidnapping for ransom, procurement activities, occasional violent incidents, and some accounts

of recruitment.³⁷ Interestingly, the evidence suggests that the threat comes from Nigeria with information on violent extremist resting places in the Kanji Lake Forest (in Nigeria) and Nigerian activity the Forêt de Trois Rivières (in Benin).³⁸ Moreover, bandit and violent extremist activity has recently been reported on the Nigerian side of the Borgou.³⁹

Indeed, it's not going well in Northern Benin.

37 There is a small rise from September 2022 followed by a clear increase in activity from March 2023 onward. For example, in June 2023 in Kalale commune some young men allegedly stated that they had been recruited for 400,000 West African CFA Francs (about US\$650) per month; or overnight on 6 July 2023, a communal militia comprising Fulbe from Benin and Nigeria abducted an individual in Sakabansi (Nikki, Borgou). The victim was a well-known farmer.

38 Sahara Reporters, ['ISWAP Terrorists Want To Establish Caliphate In Niger, Claim They Were Sent By God – Official](#), 23 November 2021.

39 James Barnett and Murtala Ahmed, ['A "Sahelian" or a "Littoral" Crisis? Examining the Widening of Nigeria's Boko Haram Conflict](#), Hudson Institute, 5 April 2023.

