



The current version of the weekly brief will take a break from December 17.

Editor's Note, December 10, 2021

Militaries in West Africa's unstable Sahel region are being outmanoeuvred by tech-savvy militants, with access to new technological advances, Niger's president Mohamed Bazoum warned this week.

Among the factors making it hard to keep up are the use of satellite phones, advanced weaponry smuggled from fragile Libya, and the use of motorcycles for increased mobility, he said, giving militants the upper hand and requiring a new strategy to 'make the war less unbalanced'.

His comments are worrying.

Not because of the supposed high tech threat from militants in the Sahel, but because mobile phones and motorcycles are apparently enough to overwhelm the region's militaries.

This says more about the dysfunctional nature of the response to growing jihadist militancy, than their technological or strategic capabilities.

Despite years of regional and international efforts - including the establishment of a joint task force in 2017 - insecurity has soared. At least 2,400 civilians were killed in Mali, Niger and Chad in 2020 - the deadliest year on record, and more than 2m people have been internally displaced in the region, a four-fold increase in just two years.

There are legitimate fears that instability could spread to coastal economies, from Senegal to

Nigeria.

This is symptomatic of poor coordination and training, as well as a lack of funding and limited political will. France, which has been at the forefront of international efforts to beef up security in the Sahel, is [drawing down its operations](#), leading some countries in the region to turn to contentious mercenary and military cooperation [deals with Russia](#).

Niger's president is right to warn about the need for a new - hopefully better - military strategy in the Sahel, but the failure to date really can't be blamed on tech-savvy militants.

This week's Picks

From The Continent

Mali has indefinitely suspended the export of maize, rice, and other grain to shore up the country's food supply. This comes amid spiking hunger levels in West Africa, amplified by climate change, conflict, and the pandemic. **More:** [Nasdaq](#)

Tunisia's president Kais Saied on Thursday said the country's current constitution was no longer valid, and has helped to cause its ongoing political crisis. Saied dismissed the government and suspended parliament in July - a move criticised by his opponents -blaming corruption and saying the country is in need of a reset. **More:** [Reuters](#)

THE WEEKLY STAT

1,000,000

The number of coronavirus vaccines estimated to have expired in Nigeria in November without being used, due to a lack of capacity. More: [Reuters](#)

The Global Perspective

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a \$276m three-year loan for Niger, aimed at supporting efforts to counter insecurity - part of the wider Sahel crisis. It's the latest deal on a lending spree for the IMF during the covid pandemic, which has hit already stretched finances in many African countries. **More:** [Reuters](#)

Fundraising by African tech startups could exceed \$5bn in 2021, a new record, as international investors increasingly turn to the continent for opportunities. Leading the charge is fintech, which accounts for the majority of capital deployed in the region. **More:** [Bloomberg](#)