



Special Contingency Risks Ltd

## Kidnap & Ransom Report

1 July 2016 - 1 August 2016



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AEGIS Response  
by **GARDAWORLD**



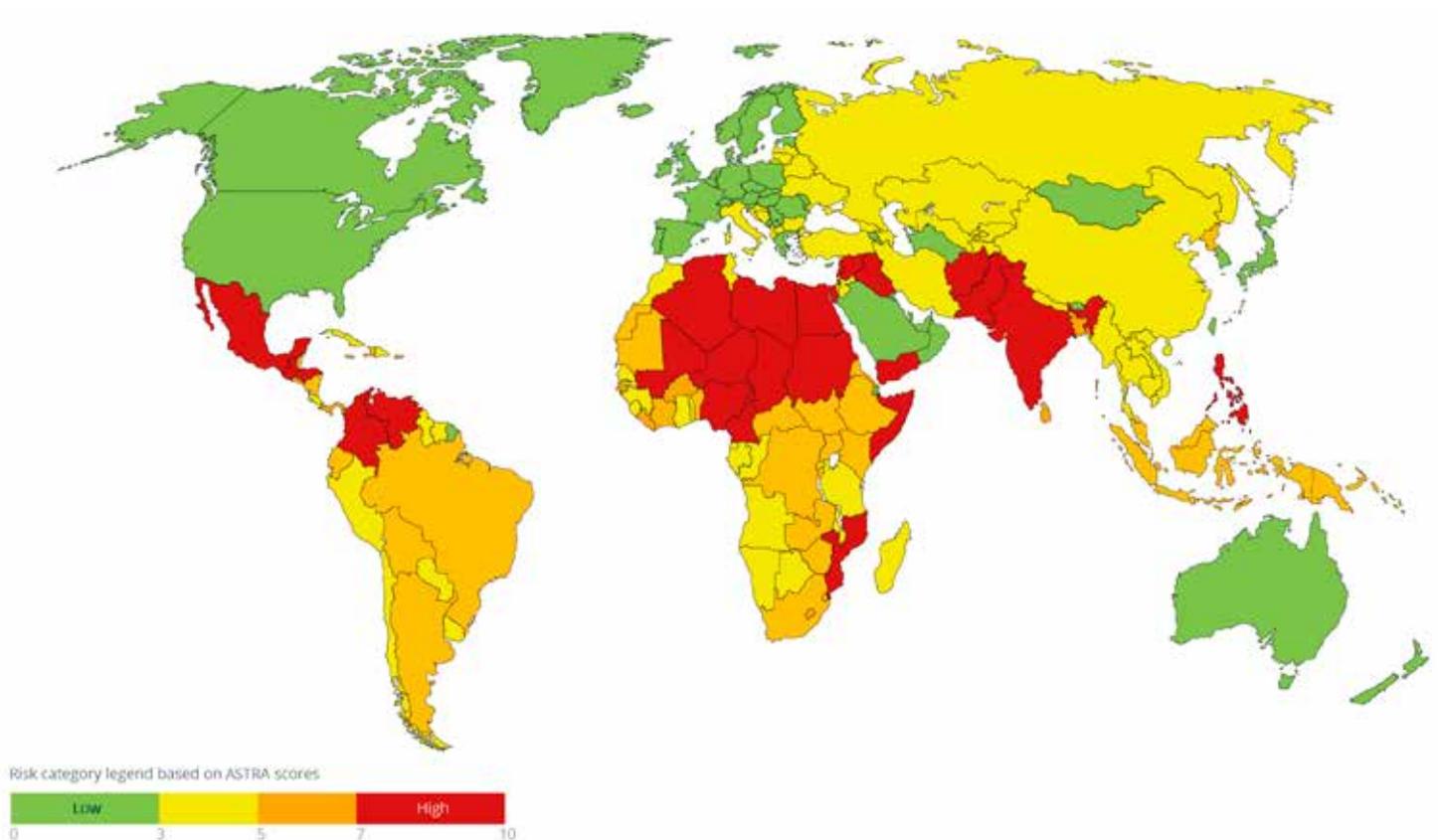
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Please email [info@aegisresponse.com](mailto:info@aegisresponse.com) for a print copy of Aegis Response's Q2 2016 Global Kidnap Risk Map

# Global Kidnap Risk Heat Map



The Aegis Strategic Risk Assessment (ASTRA) model is a risk profiling methodology that quantifies risk levels by examining a broad range of factors. ASTRA, which covers more than 130 countries, is constantly updated by Aegis Advisory analysts in London and around the world. This map, quantified in conjunction with Aegis Response Limited, displays the degree of kidnap risk globally.

# Global Overview

## **BRAZIL** | Page 5

On 26 July the mother-in-law of Bernie Ecclestone was abducted from her home in São Paulo. The kidnapers demanded a ransom of \$46.5 million however the captive was freed in a police operation. This was not the only kidnapping incident in the month prior to the Olympic Games in Rio.

## **MEXICO** | Page 6

On 19 July a Chilean journalist was kidnapped in Chiapas whilst on holiday with her granddaughter. The final settlement figure stood at \$25,000.

## **COLOMBIA** | Page 7

On 12 July the ELN kidnapped a 76 year-old Colombian farmer in the northern region of Cesar.

## **VENEZUELA** | Page 8

Kidnappings have increased by over 170% in the first quarter of 2016. A video published on 21 July shows the typical strategies used by criminal gangs during express kidnappings in Venezuela.

## **NIGERIA** | Page 9

On 1 July the High Commissioner of Sierra Leone to Nigeria was kidnapped on the highway between Abuja and Kaduna. The kidnapers demanded a ransom of \$150,000 but authorities claim that the diplomat's release on 5 July was the product of 'quiet diplomacy'.

## **SOUTH SUDAN** | Page 10

On 24 July 15 construction workers were kidnapped by gunmen at the Yei-Lasuroad in South Sudan.

## **IRAQ** | Page 11

Thirty kidnapping incidents of local nationals were recorded by GardaWorld's in-country risk analysis team this month. There were no reported abductions of foreign nationals.

## **AFGHANISTAN** | Page 12

On 7 August an American and an Australian lecturer at the American University of Afghanistan were kidnapped in Kabul by unknown gunmen.

## **THE PHILIPPINES** | Page 13

It was reported on 4 July that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) agreed temporarily to stay the execution of Norwegian hostage Kjartan Sekkingstad.

## **MARITIME KIDNAP** | Page 14

Two incidents of hijack for maritime kidnap were reported this month in Southeast Asia.

Aegis Response has been working to assist with risks associated with cyber security. Please contact [info@aegisreponse.com](mailto:info@aegisreponse.com) should you seek additional information. Please note the average number of kidnappings, time in captivity and ransom settlement figures in this report apply to expatriates unless otherwise stated.



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## Brazil | Latin America

On 26 July, Aparecida Schunck, a Brazilian national and the mother-in-law of British motor racing tycoon Bernie Ecclestone, was abducted when two gunmen broke into her house by tricking an employee into thinking that they were delivery men. Schunck was forced into her car, which was later driven by the kidnappers from the Interlagos neighborhood to a motorway 25 miles west of São Paulo. The car was abandoned on the highway and the kidnappers made their way to a safe house in another vehicle. The kidnappers had planned the abduction meticulously, and a ransom of \$46.5 million was demanded, the highest ever demanded by a Brazilian criminal group. The complexity of the operation and the techniques used by the kidnappers initially led the authorities to believe that it was very likely that there had been a larger criminal organization behind the operation. However, the kidnappers ended up committing amateur mistakes, allowing the authorities to trace emails and phone calls. After arresting a suspect, the authorities received confirmation of Schunck's whereabouts and conducted a successful rescue operation on 31 July. Confessions by the two arrested suspects and evidence recovered at the safe house indicated that the orchestrator of the operation was Jorge Eurico Da Silva; Ecclestone's former helicopter pilot.

An express kidnapping incident occurred during the night of 23 July when Jason Lee, a ju jitsu fighter from New Zealand, reported that he had been briefly kidnapped with his girlfriend by a group of military officers. Lee was forced to withdraw money from a cash machine to pay for the demanded ransom. Following the incident, Lee reported that military officers visited his apartment three

times in order to intimidate him. In a similar incident, three Swedish tourists were abducted at gunpoint when they got out of their Uber taxi to take a picture in the proximity of a favela. The tourists were released unharmed the next morning. The number of K&R incidents in Brazil has decreased significantly since the early 2000s. Kidnappings stopped being a scourge in Brazil largely due to the country's high economic growth and the establishment of an efficient anti-kidnap division.

However, tensions have grown in recent months, with the country experiencing the worst recession and political crisis for decades. Athletes and tourists travelling to Brazil for the Olympic Games have been targeted by criminal gangs. The three incidents described in this report suggest a general escalation in K&R, including more sophisticated high profile kidnappings and express kidnappings. Over the next month and throughout the Olympics, the risk of kidnap in Brazil will remain moderate to high.



## Mexico | Latin America

On 1 July, 27 year-old José Miguel Aguirre Moreno, the son of a former mayoral candidate for the municipality of Chiautla, was kidnapped in Temamatla, a suburb of Mexico City. Moreno was a medical student at the Tecnológico de Monterrey and was completing his community service hours at Chiautla's health centre when he was kidnapped. Following the abduction, the kidnappers demanded a ransom of 5 million pesos, or around \$275,000. However, the money was not delivered on time. The victim's father sought help from the local government but the authorities were unable to assist and Moreno's body was recovered two days later with evidence of torture. The Attorney General of the State of Mexico remarked that initial investigations signalled that the police forces of Chiautla and Papalotla were the primary suspects. On 19 July, Mónica González, the Director of the Investigation Centre for Journalists in Chile (CIPER) was kidnapped "virtually" at her hotel in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas. The abduction began when Gonzalez received a phone call from individuals that claimed to speak on behalf of the Zetas cartel and demanded that the journalist turn herself in. The kidnappers ordered the journalist to move into a discrete hotel where they used her phone to make ransom demands to her family and friends abroad. After three days in captivity, González decided to leave the hotel where she had been kept as a 'virtual' hostage. The Mexican police rescued her once she reached her original hotel and she was later reunited with the Chilean diplomatic corps.

These cases are evidence of the involvement of various criminal groups in K&R and the variety of strategies used during these operations. The

kidnapping of Aguirre Moreno shows that due to the high returns and the relatively low risk associated with the kidnapping industry in Mexico, police officers are routinely considered suspected perpetrators by the authorities. Mexican crime statistics demonstrate that the National Police System (NPS) is responsible for committing up to 0.60 kidnappings per 100,000 inhabitants in Mexico, making the organization the seventh largest in Mexico. The territory of Tamaulipas and the regions bordering the US have the highest number of kidnappings in the country; however, this is a national

rather than a regional phenomenon. The kidnapping cases in July are further evidence that politicians, journalists and local businessmen are the most popular targets for K&R in Mexico. Finally, lower-level criminals are able to capitalize on the wider fear of organizations such as the Zetas which has resulted in an increase in the number of successful virtual kidnappings. The abduction of Gonzalez was unique in that unlike other virtual schemes, the strategies used by the criminals combined elements of standard and virtual kidnappings.



## Colombia | Latin America

On 12 July, Luis Eduardo Zarate, a 76-year old Colombian farmer, was abducted in the northern region of Cesar. He was taken from his farm at 0600 by three unknown gunmen. The kidnapers were dressed in dark clothes and claimed to be members of the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN). Immediately after the abduction, Zarate's son reported the incident to the authorities and demanded that the kidnapers release his father. An anti-kidnapping team of the police (GAULA) commenced the search and was later joined by the Colombian military, which mounted a full-scale rescue operation. The authorities concluded that the kidnapers had walked towards the Venezuelan border, an area traditionally under FARC control. The Minister of Defence, Luis Carlos Villegas, ordered the military and the police to carry out joint air and ground operations. On 14 July, fearful of the proximity of the Colombian forces, the kidnapers abandoned their captive. Zarate was found in a school playground, unharmed except for injuries caused by the long distance he had been forced to travel on foot.

Despite the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas de Colombia (FARC) reaching a historic agreement in July, in which both sides agreed to a ceasefire, the complexity of the Colombian conflict will hinder the achievement of a stable peace because of the various actors involved in the conflict. In contrast to the recent accord with the FARC, the negotiations between the government and the ELN have stagnated for years. Even though President Santos' administration has been pushing towards reaching compromises with these two guerrilla organizations, there has been no progress in the talks with the ELN

since May. K&R incidents in Colombia are particularly common in the jungle-covered region that borders Venezuela, and the perpetrators have varied from drug traffickers and paramilitaries to guerrilla groups and independent criminal bands.



# Venezuela | Latin America

Although there were no reported kidnapping incidents of foreign nationals in July, there has been a dramatic increase in the overall number of K&R incidents in the country. According to the University of Santa Maria's institute of criminal science and criminology, the number of kidnappings in Venezuela increased by 170% in the first quarter of 2016. This rapid growth reflects the recent exponential growth in simple and indiscriminate express kidnappings. The statistics have a large margin of error, however: the low levels of confidence in the Venezuelan authorities mean that more than 80% of the kidnap victims do not report the crimes they have suffered.

On 21 July, the radio station Raimi Ríos released a video showing the strategies used by criminals to abduct people during express kidnappings. The footage shows the way in which a car parked outside Residencias Villas Miravila, a gated community, is intercepted by another vehicle. Immediately after intercepting the car, three gunmen run towards the vehicle and force the driver to move into the back seat. The criminals drive the hostage to a cash machine, force him to pay a ransom, and finally steal the car. Over the next month, the risk of kidnap in Venezuela will remain high.

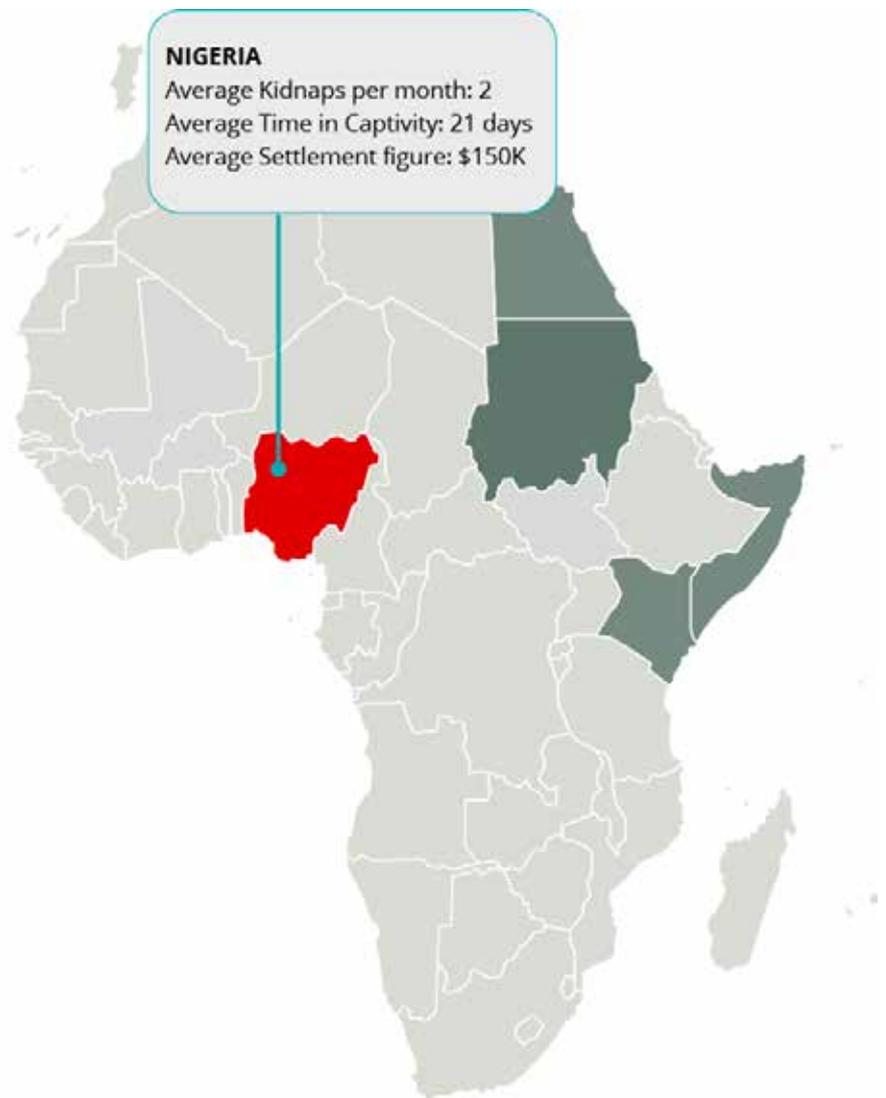


# Nigeria | Africa

On 1 July, Alfred Nelson-Williams, Sierra Leone's Deputy High Commissioner to Nigeria and his driver were abducted. The diplomat had previously served as the head of the army and had planned a trip to the northern region of Nigeria to attend a military commemoration event. Nelson-Williams' car was stopped by gunmen on the highway between Abuja and Kaduna. The kidnapers wore military uniforms and were therefore able to mount road blocks convincingly; a tactic commonly used by criminal organizations in Nigeria. After reaching their base, the kidnapers called the embassy's accountant and demanded a ransom of \$150,000. On 5 July, after 96 hours in captivity, Nelson-Williams and his driver were released unharmed. The police reported that the outcome of the kidnapping "was a result of quiet diplomacy" and that a ransom had not been paid. A 74-year old Nigerian tribal leader, Oba Yushau Goriola Oseni, the Oniba of Ibaland, was kidnapped on 16 July at 2330 hours. He was abducted by a group of 16 militants belonging to the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), a group who publicly announced their formation in March 2016. The armed men stormed his palace in a violent operation that left four men dead. One of the leader's wives suffered a gunshot wound as she confronted the kidnapers. The tribal leader agreed to obey the kidnapers' commands and boarded a speedboat with his captors. Four days after the abduction, the kidnapers demanded a ransom of \$1.6 million. The tribal leader was released on 6 August after his family and the Lagos State Council of Obas allegedly paid a ransom of \$50,000. The Nigerian authorities have not officially confirmed whether a ransom was paid, but claim to have captured General Duba of the NDA militant group.

Historically, K&R has been a common criminal activity in Nigeria's oil-rich south, where the primary targets have been affluent local and expatriate businessmen. However, there has recently been a significant increase in kidnappings for ransom in the northern part of the country. The proliferation of kidnappings is not only a result of Boko Haram's expansion; it has also been stimulated by the

recent emergence of smaller criminal gangs formed by suspected former cattle rustlers. The persistent high rate of unemployment and the poor prosecution rates in the north could see an increase in the current rate of K&R. It is notable that the length of time spent in captivity by the tribal leader and the diplomat is below the average of 30 days, perhaps a result of the high profile nature of these cases.



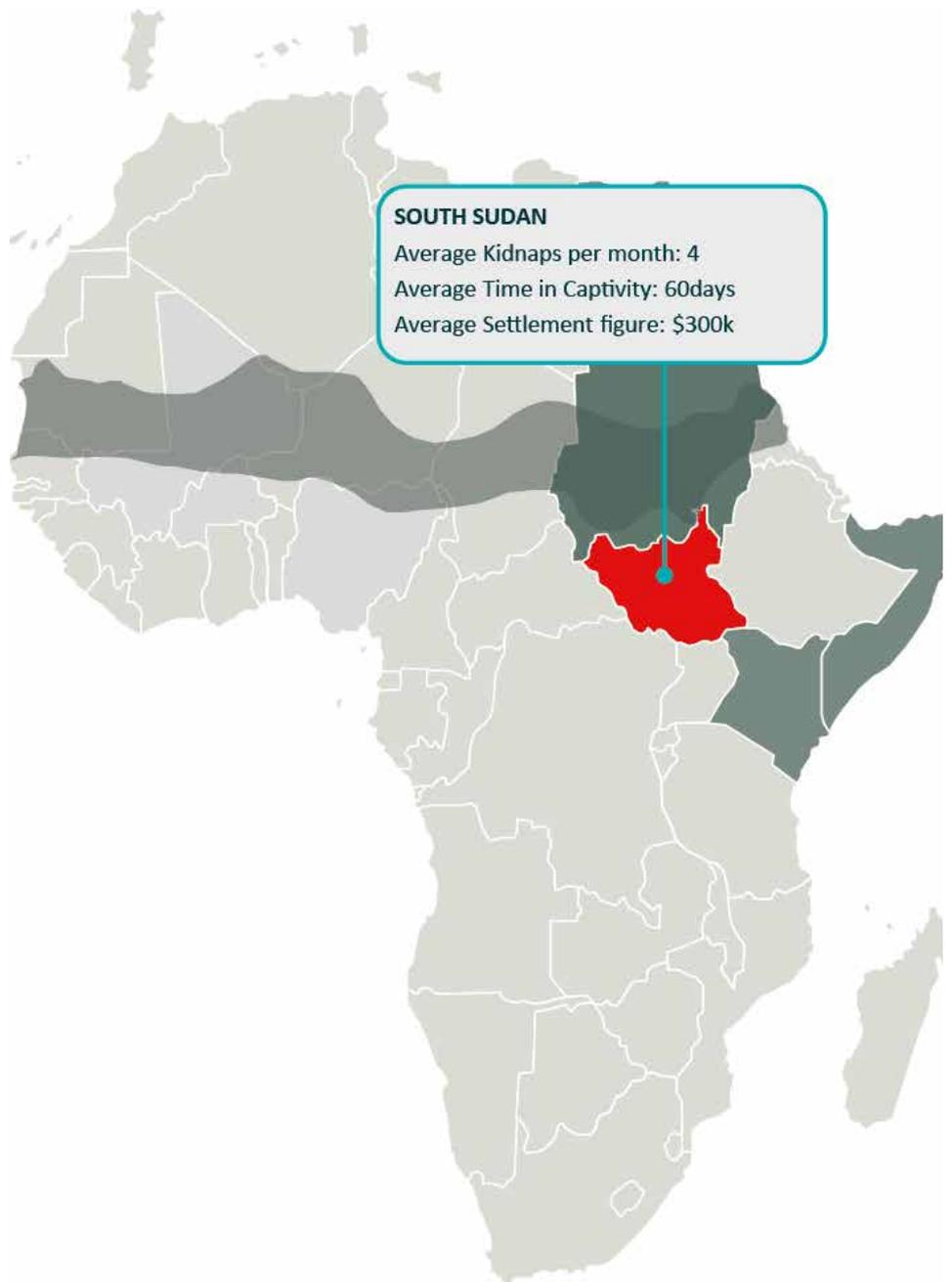
# South Sudan | Africa

On 24 July, unknown gunmen abducted 15 employees of the Rhino Star Construction Company while they were working on the construction of the Ayisa Bridge, an infrastructure project that will connect South Sudan's western province of Yei River State with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Due to the threat of kidnap and escalating levels of violence in the region, the company has since suspended construction indefinitely. Immediately after the abduction, the kidnapers released seven of the 15 employees. The remaining victims were driven to the kidnapers' safe house, where they were given food and water, but also subjected to physical and psychological torture. It remains unclear whether the company or the government paid a ransom, but the employees were released safely on 9 August. The authorities have said that they do not know the identity of the criminal group responsible for the abduction.

After a two-year civil war, South Sudan has been struggling to recover and implement the peace accords agreed upon in August 2015. The war-torn country has been affected by the current economic conditions, which have led demobilized troops to turn to violence and criminality. Furthermore, the government's credibility has been harmed due to its alleged involvement in extra-judicial executions and its war against freedom of the press. Even if the identity of the kidnapers remains unclear, given the location of the Yei River State, it is reasonable to believe that the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was responsible for the abduction of the Rhino Star employees. The DRC and South Sudan have a limited military presence in the region surrounding the borders between the two countries, which has encouraged

the growth of dozens of armed groups in recent years. The LRA was displaced from Uganda after a number of military defeats and currently operates in DRC, South Sudan and the Central African

Republic. K&R has increased particularly in the eastern region of DRC, where criminal groups, including the LRA, have indiscriminately abducted local civilians.



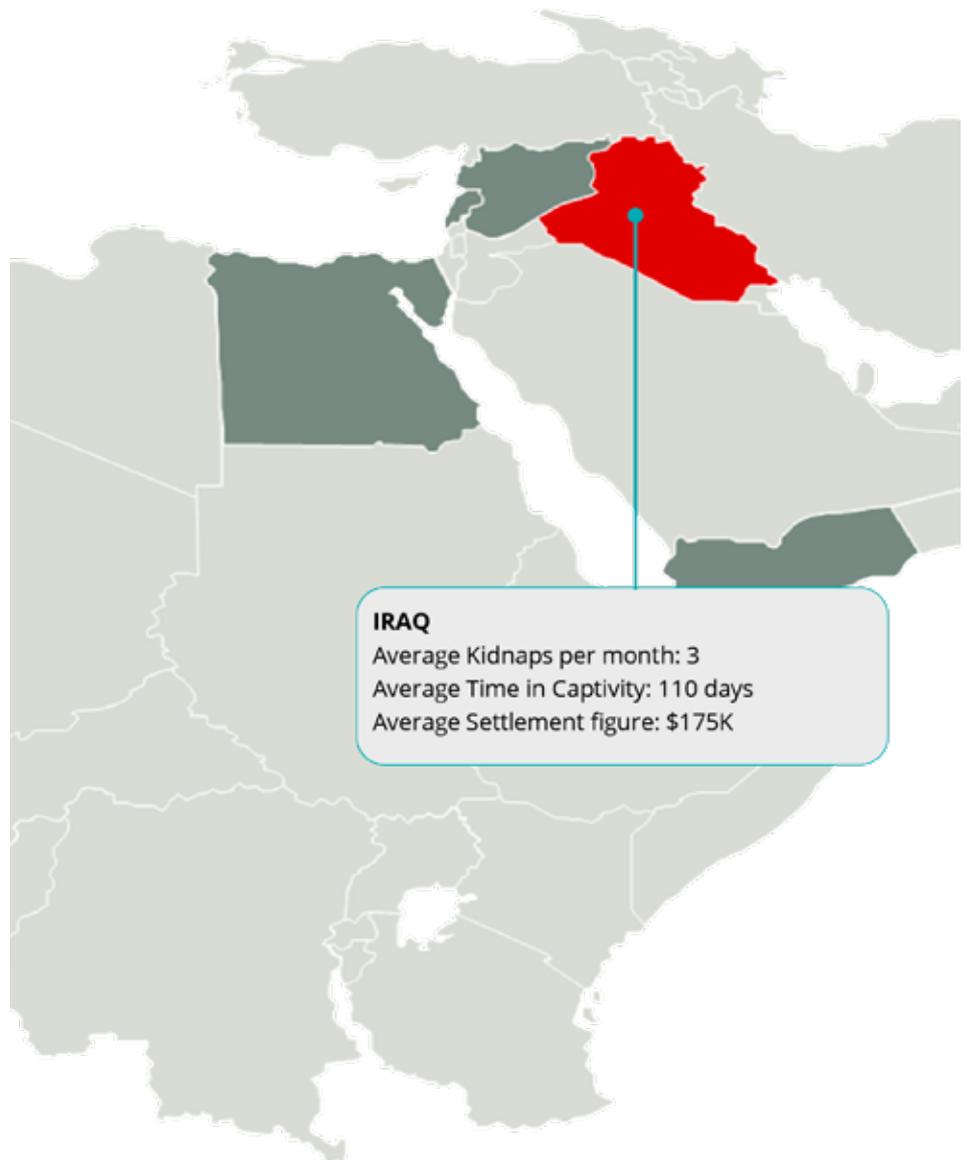
## Iraq | Middle East

Thirty kidnapping incidents of local nationals were recorded by GardaWorld's in-country risk analysis team during July, marking a significant statistical decline in comparison to the previous month. This decline is primarily attributed to a decrease in kidnappings in Diyala province, possibly as a result of a stabilization in the political situation which was assessed to have driven hostile activity in the past few months. Kidnappings also declined in the southern areas, notably in Basra province. Extreme temperatures are a potential explanation as heatwaves generally lead to subdued levels of activity during daytime. Kidnappings in the province are still carried out in the main for financial motives with ransoms usually paid quickly after the abduction. Statistics from the contested areas of the north and west (notably Anbar and Nineveh province) remain affected by severe disruptions in reporting lines, so the actual number of kidnappings is likely to be significantly higher. While a decline in activity was noted in Baghdad (from 19 to 12 incidents), the security situation remains essentially unchanged, as does the current threat level; kidnappings remain typically motivated by localized, intra-Shia disputes and financially motivated criminal activity.

The risk of mass-kidnappings of foreigners remains, as evidenced by the abduction of a group of Qatari hunters in Muthanna in December 2015, or Turkish construction workers in Sadr City in September 2015. These are usually carried out in response to larger political events (such as perceived Turkish interference in Iraq). It is also GardaWorld's assessment that a long-term increase in the influence of Shia militias is likely to drive criminally and politically motivated kidnappings,

especially in the southern provinces. The vast majority of incidents remain focused on the local population and are opportunistic and local in nature. While instances of westerners being kidnapped are uncommon, it is essential that foreign staff maintain an adequate security detail at all times when operating in the country. The

last known kidnapping of western civilians took place on 14 January when a group comprising three US passport holders (two dual Iraqi/US citizens, one Egyptian/US citizen) were kidnapped from the al-Dorah district in south western Baghdad. The risk of kidnap for ransom in Iraq will continue to be very high over the next month.



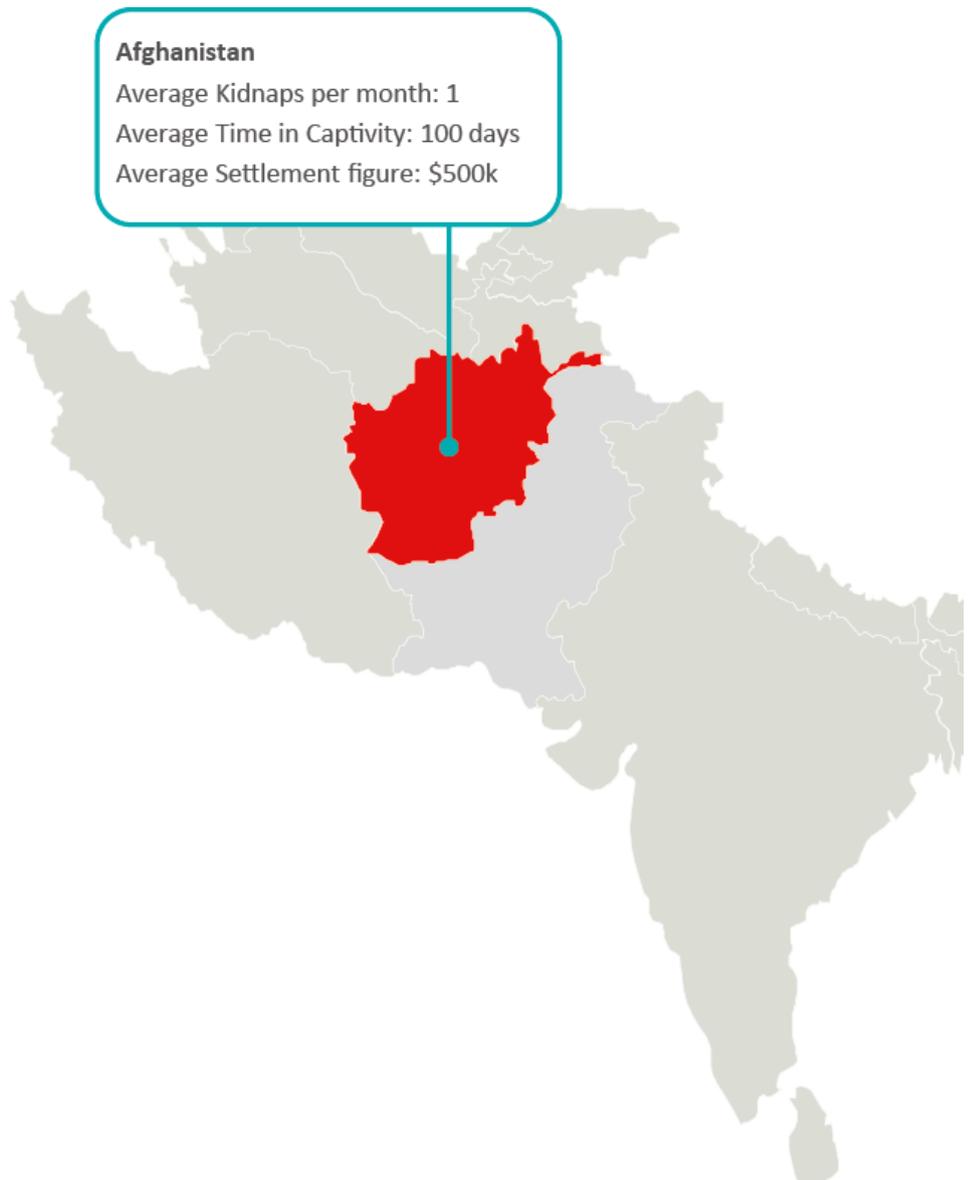
# Afghanistan | Asia

On 7 August, two foreign lecturers at the American University of Afghanistan were kidnapped at gunpoint as they left the university at 2030 hours. The Australian and US nationals were inside their car, accompanied by their driver and bodyguard, when a group of criminals disguised as National Security forces smashed the passenger window and coerced them away from their vehicle at gunpoint. The driver and the bodyguard were left unharmed. At the request of the authorities, the American University suspended its campus operations and assisted in a detailed investigation. Nevertheless, the fate of the foreign nationals remains unknown. American and Australian Embassy sources have not indicated whether the kidnappers are members of the Taliban or another criminal group. At the time of writing, the abductors have not made a demand and their motives remain unclear.

This was the second attack on foreign nationals in Afghanistan in less than a week. On 4 August, a bus, on which eight Britons, three US nationals and a German national were travelling, was ambushed by the Taliban in the Chesht-e-Sharif district. Although moving with an Afghan army convoy, Taliban fighters managed to hit the van with a rocket. A spokesman said that the attackers had used small arms fire during the attack, as well as improvised explosive devices, injuring six of the passengers. In response to the growing threat of kidnappings in Afghanistan, a number of countries are advising their citizens not to travel to Afghanistan under any circumstances: tourists are not only vulnerable to kidnappings or attacks from the Taliban but are also exposed to the growing menace of emerging organized criminal bands in Kabul. The criminal

bands alternate between operating independently and on-selling victims to the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Furthermore, as shown by the attack on 4 August, travel on Afghanistan's main roads increases

the likelihood of tourists encountering with the Taliban. It is on these highways that the Taliban frequently conduct militant attacks and kidnapping. Over the next month, the risk of kidnap in Afghanistan will remain extremely high.



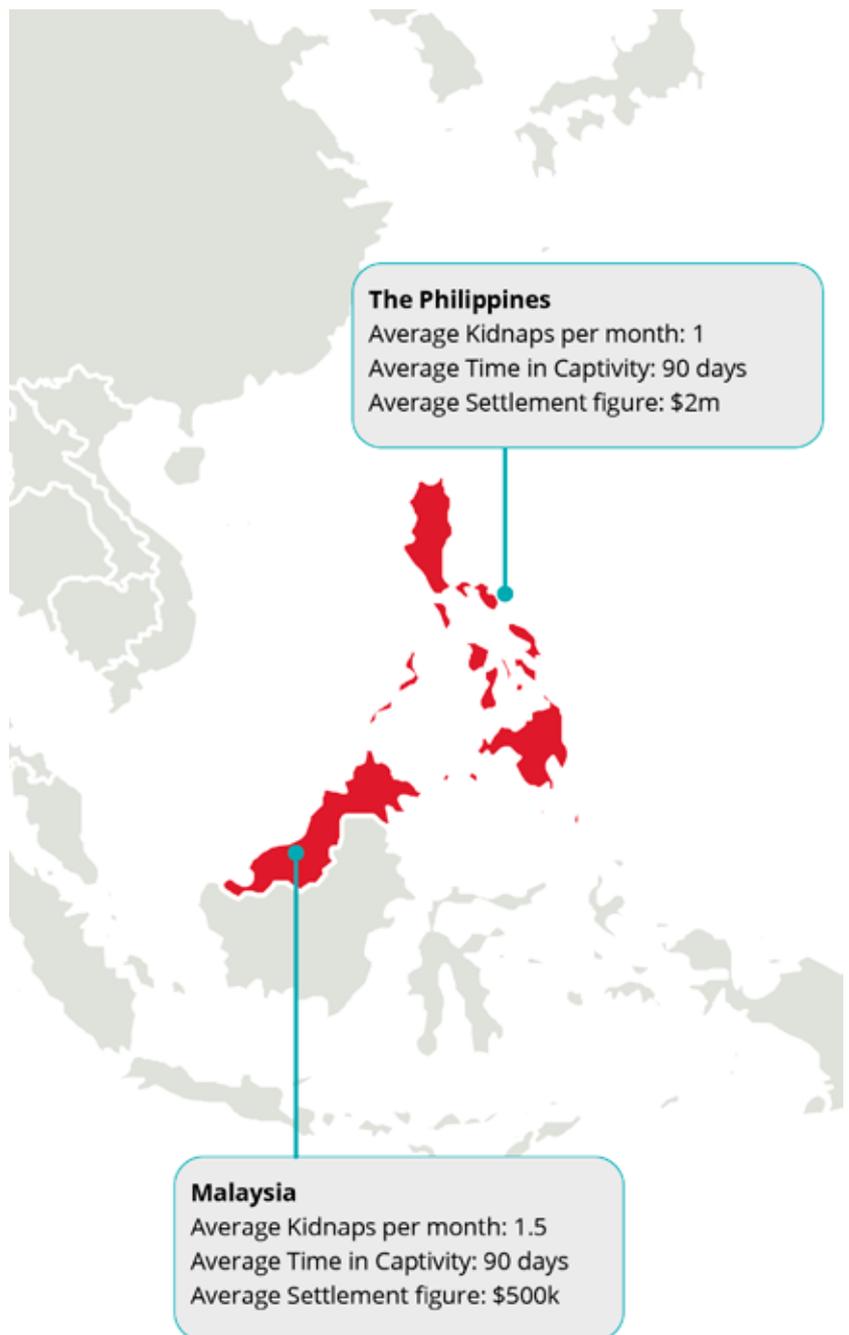
# Malaysia & The Philippines | Asia

It was reported on 4 July that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) agreed temporarily to stay the execution of Norwegian hostage Kjartan Sekkingstad following a request by the Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza. ASG spokesperson, Abu Rami, later stated “we will execute him anytime we want, and this time, we will hide the head”. ASG is demanding \$650,000 in ransom for Sekkingstad, who was taken with three other victims in September 2015 in the Island Garden City of Samal. Rami also announced that he was aware that a ransom was already set for delivery and that ASG was waiting for the ransom drop.

On 24 June, Marites Flor, the Filipina kidnapped with Sekkingstad and two Canadian nationals, was released following the reported payment of a \$425,000 ransom. She was left outside the residence of Sulu Governor Abdusakur Tan. ASG had previously demanded over \$100 million for the release of the two Canadians, the Norwegian and the Filipina. On 25 April Canadian hostage John Ridsdel, was beheaded after the first deadline for ransom payment passed. On 13 June, the other Canadian hostage, Robert Hall, Flor’s fiancé, was also beheaded after the second deadline passed. Philippines military sources told the press that efforts to rescue Sekkingstad were continuing, with 10 battalions—5,000 troops—deployed to the island province and all military resources “from land, sea and air” made available for the Sulu operations. The group is holding around 15 foreign nationals, including four Malaysians and a Dutch birdwatcher kidnapped in 2012. Not only does the Philippines see the highest ransom figures for foreign nationals in Asia, but these figures are also steadily

increasing. Moreover, cross-border kidnap between Malaysia and the Philippines is predicted to increase in frequency in the coming months, as ransom settlements are rising and as ASG’s network in the region

develops. The risk of kidnap for both local and foreign nationals, in the Philippines and to a lesser extent in neighbouring east Malaysia, is forecast to remain high over the next month.



# Maritime Kidnap | Southeast Asia

## Southeast Asia

Two incidents of hijack for maritime kidnap occurred in July, both in Southeast Asian waters. The first took place on 9 July when armed pirates attacked a fishing trawler in the waters off the northeast coast of Borneo. They stole crew belongings and then abducted three crew members, all Indonesian nationals. Within 24 hours the vessel owner had been contacted with a ransom demand for the release of the crew. The second incident took place on 18 July, when pirates intercepted a tugboat and barge, again, off the northeast coast off Borneo. The pirates abducted five Malaysian crew from the vessel. Allegedly one of the crew was forced to then contact the vessel owner and make a demand of US\$4 million for their release. Sources were conflicted with regards to who was responsible for the kidnapping, with some claiming that it was the work of ASG and others saying that the Muktadir brothers had conducted the abduction.

## Response comment

The territory in which the kidnappings took place is further evidence of the increasing propensity for criminal cross-border maritime operations in this area. Furthermore, the involvement of the Muktadir brothers in the second incident confirms the entry of new kidnap for ransom groups in the area and their close connection to ASG. These incidents share the hallmarks of what has become a typical hijack for maritime kidnap in this area. The

pirates chose relatively “soft” targets, travelling slowly, with low freeboards. They struck in the waters off the Sulu Archipelago, Philippines, where ASG is known to have bases. After boarding the vessel, they robbed crew of valuables and documentation before abducting crew. As mentioned in previous reports, 2016 has seen a huge increase in hijacks for maritime kidnap in these waters and this is likely to continue over coming months.



- Maritime Kidnap
- Suspicious Approach/Activity
- Vessel Boarded and Robbed
- Vessel Fired Upon



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## AEGIS Response by **GARDAWORLD**

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