STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE DAILY

Region: Somalia-Democratic Republic of the Congo-Nigeria-Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso-Benin
Date: 24 March 2026
Scope: Security |Diplomacy | Defence
Classification: Client Confidential

Executive Assessment

Escalation patterns remain concentrated in Mali, eastern DRC and Somalia, while Niger and Nigeria saw parallel security diplomacy and internal security actions. In Mali, sustained army operations in Gao, Sikasso and Ségou point to continued offensive pressure against armed groups, although the dispute over the drones near Gao underscores persistent information contestation around FLA activity. In eastern DRC, AFC/M23 remains operationally active despite a reported setback in Masisi, with force consolidation in Walikale indicating continued intent to hold and expand its positions. In Somalia, tensions between the federal government and Southwest State remain politically and militarily significant, though the reported agreement to reopen flights and hold talks in Baidoa suggests a narrow opening for de-escalation. In Niger and Nigeria, high-level external engagement with Algeria and the EU respectively coincided with ongoing internal security measures, reflecting efforts to reinforce both regional diplomacy and domestic counterterrorism capacity.

MALI

• In Mali, pro-government sources reported that the army seized and destroyed several drones near Gao that were allegedly linked to the FLA, while the FLA denied ownership of the drones.

• The Malian army announced that it neutralized a large number of terrorists in an ambush targeting an armed group in the Tabakoro area of Kléla district in the Sikasso region.

• The Malian army stated that more than a dozen terrorists were neutralized in an airstrike on the town of Dioura in the Ségou region.

NIGER

• Algeria’s prime minister paid a working visit to Niger, where Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine, accompanied by a 16-member ministerial delegation, received his Algerian counterpart at Diori Hamani International Airport in Niamey.

• In Niamey, Niger's Minister of State for the Interior, Public Security and Territorial Administration, Major General Mohamed Toumba, held a working meeting with his Algerian counterpart Said Sayoud, during which the two sides discussed reviving bilateral cooperation in security, migration, cross-border cooperation, training and various socio-economic fields.

NIGERIA

• EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas met Nigerian President Bola Tinubu at the presidential residence in Lagos, where the two sides discussed strengthening security and trade ties despite global economic volatility; National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu and Minister of Budget and National Planning Abubakar Atiku Bagudu also attended the meeting.

• Troops arrested a suspect in Gombi, Adamawa State, for allegedly acting as an informant for ISWAP.

• Troops and CJTF personnel arrested a suspect in Borno State for allegedly recruiting militants for Boko Haram.

SOMALIA

• A total of 136 members of Somalia's Federal Parliament called on President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to halt what they described as ongoing military operations in Southwest State, while condemning the use of national armed forces for political purposes.

• Southwest State warned the federal government that it would shoot down helicopters if it continued using Somali airspace against civilians.

• Traditional elders from Southwest State said at a press conference in Mogadishu that both sides had agreed to hold talks in Baidoa and reopen flights.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

• AFC/M23's attack in Masisi territory in North Kivu was reportedly repelled by the army and Wazalendo militias after heavy clashes.

• AFC/M23 was reported to be reinforcing its positions in Walikale territory in North Kivu.