— BRIEFING / 029 · SEPTEMBER 2026

WHEN KIDNAP BECOMES AN INDUSTRY

A year of data on Nigeria's kidnap economy shows what the category looks like when it stops being a crime pattern and becomes a market with revenue, reinvestment, and expansion plans. Organizations with regional exposure should read it as a duty-of-care document.

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— 01 / THE NUMBERS

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SBM Intelligence's latest report, published in late August under the title The Capture of the Kidnap Economy, compiles twelve months of incident data: 1,713 recorded kidnap incidents between July 2025 and June 2026, 7,825 people abducted, and more than 1,140 people killed in connection with these incidents. Ransom payments over the period total approximately 7.8 billion naira. Complementary conflict-tracking data records over 400 kidnappings in the northwest in the first half of 2026 alone, and documents the activity's migration into previously quieter southwestern states. As with every dataset in this category, the recorded figures represent a floor.

1,713 RECORDED INCIDENTS, JULY 2025 TO JUNE 2026

7,825 PEOPLE ABDUCTED

NGN 7.8B APPROXIMATE RANSOM PAYMENTS OVER THE PERIOD

— 02 / REVENUE AS AN INPUT

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The report's central argument is economic, and it is the reason the word industry fits. Ransom revenue at this scale does not merely reflect insecurity; it finances it. Payments fund weapons, recruitment, camps, informant networks, and logistics, which expand operational capacity, which generates more incidents and more revenue. This feedback loop explains both the volume and the geographic spread: an enterprise reinvesting earnings seeks new markets, and the migration into the southwest is exactly that behavior. It also explains why the problem resists episodic enforcement. Removing a cell does not remove the balance sheet.

— 03 / THE DUTY-OF-CARE FRAME

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For multinationals, investors, NGOs, and their boards, an industrialized kidnap market is not a headline category; it is a legal and moral obligation category. Duty of care attaches to employees, and in most credible readings to contractors and dependents in scope of work. When the threat geography moves annually and the adversary's capacity compounds, an exposure map built on last year's country score is a liability document. The assessment cycle has to match the market's speed.

— 04 / WHERE PROGRAMS ACTUALLY LEAK

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Three gaps recur in ERS reviews of regional programs. First, journey management: intake in this market happens overwhelmingly on roads, yet programs concentrate spend on site security while movement between sites runs on habit. Route planning, timing discipline, communication schedules, and vetted transport are the controls that address the actual exposure. Second, local staff: nationals face the highest incident rates and are most often outside the protective program entirely, a gap that ethics and liability both argue for closing. Third, response architecture: an industrialized adversary brings experienced negotiation infrastructure to an incident, and an organization improvising its first response meets that counterparty at maximum disadvantage. Arrangements, insurance, retained response, decision authority, family liaison, must predate any incident.

— 05 / THE READ

THE READ

The report's title is the analysis: the kidnap economy has been captured by actors who run it as a business. Organizations exposed to it should respond in kind, with current maps, movement discipline, inclusive coverage, and pre-built response. Pricing last year's market is how this year's cases happen.

— 06 / SOURCES AND METHOD

SOURCES AND METHOD

This briefing draws on SBM Intelligence's August 2026 report as covered by Nigerian business press, with conflict-tracking context from ACLED. Figures are aggregates used at systemic level. We narrate no incidents and publish no resolution guidance. The restraint is the method.