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Reported Kidnapping Cases Recorded by the Plateau State Criminal Investigation Department, 2022 to 2025: A Descriptive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping as an organised crime has become an entrenched security and economic threat in Nigeria, with North-Central Nigeria, including Plateau State, increasingly implicated as a secondary hotspot alongside the historically dominant North-West. Existing scholarship on Plateau-specific kidnapping relies predominantly on qualitative institutional assessments and victim accounts, leaving a gap in systematic, longitudinal evidence drawn from official records. This study addresses that gap by analysing the reported kidnapping cases recorded by the Plateau State Criminal Investigation Department, 2022 to 2025, using total enumeration of administrative records held by the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Jos. The study is anchored in the macro-level formulation of Routine Activity Theory, complemented by Social Disorganisation Theory and its collective-efficacy elaboration, to interpret observed trends. A quantitative descriptive longitudinal design was adopted. Findings reveal a total of 10 recorded cases: remaining stable at two per year in 2022 and 2023, rising to four in 2024, and reverting to two in 2025, producing a compound annual growth rate of 0.0% against a net four-year change of zero. Goodness-of-fit testing confirms annual counts are consistent with a constant recording level. The marked gap between SCID figures and broader regional estimates underscores the dark figure of crime. The primary limitation of this study is its reliance on a small, single-department administrative record. Recommendations include enhanced police recording protocols and multi-agency data triangulation.

Keywords: Kidnapping; Plateau State; Routine Activity Theory; Administrative Crime Data; Dark Figure of Crime

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Introduction

Security is essential for the survival and development of societies, providing the foundation for social cohesion and economic activity. Its absence breeds systemic insecurity, which erodes human potential and community well-being. Among organised criminal activities, kidnapping has emerged as a major global challenge, disrupting public order and instilling widespread fear. In Nigeria, kidnapping has evolved into a pervasive threat to public safety and socioeconomic stability (Okoli & Agada, 2014; Rufa'i, 2021).

Criminological scholarship documents two distinct historical phases in the evolution of kidnapping in Nigeria. The first phase, during the mid-2000s, was historically rooted in localised, politically motivated agitation and hostage-taking against foreign oil multinationals in the Niger Delta (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011). The second phase emerged later in the North-West, where armed banditry groups transformed the practice into a commercialised criminal enterprise focused primarily on financial ransom (Enemuwe et al., 2025).

In North-Central Nigeria, kidnapping manifests alongside ethno-religious tensions and farmer–herder conflicts, compounded by the southward and westward spillover of criminal networks originating in the North-West. ACAPS (2025) documents that banditry networks based in Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and

Sokoto extended operations into Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau states. Within Plateau State specifically, Olomitutu and Ojakorotu (2026) link this spillover to rural banditry and population displacement. Regional macro-level tracking by Pulse Nigeria (2025) highlights North-Central states, including Plateau as an emerging secondary hotspot. Furthermore, survey evidence from Shendam Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau state indicates that travellers and high-net-worth individuals are targeted (Gongs et al., 2021). However, existing studies focus either on macro-regional indicators or localised single-LGA survey perceptions, leaving systematic administrative evidence tracking Plateau State's specific incident volume sparse.

State security responses in Plateau are led by Operation Safe Haven (OPSH) and specialised police anti-kidnapping units (Dasam & Olasupo, 2023). Yet, empirical research analysing official police records remains limited. While studies using police crime logs exist, such as James and Ann (2025), who analysed official kidnapping logs along the Abuja–Kaduna expressway, state-level longitudinal administrative studies in North-Central Nigeria remain scarce. A systematic literature search across Google Scholar, Scopus, and African Journals Online (AJOL) using terms such as ″kidnapping" and "Plateau State" and "police records" (2010–2025) yielded predominantly qualitative analyses, survey-based evaluations of security personnel (e.g., Dasam & Olasupo, 2023), media-based tracking, or localised victim studies (e.g., Yahaya et al., 2025). This study addresses this empirical gap by evaluating official administrative records held by the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Jos, establishing an empirical baseline for state policy and academic reference.

The overall aim of this study is to analyse officially reported kidnapping cases in Plateau State between 2022 and 2025, using administrative records from the SCID, Jos. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the annual volume, temporal trajectory, and monthly distribution of officially recorded kidnapping cases in Plateau State from 2022 to 2025.
2. To identify the spatial distribution of recorded kidnapping cases across local government areas (LGAs) within Plateau State over the four-year period.
3. To profile case-level attributes extracted from SCID files, including victim characteristics, ransom demands, and judicial outcomes.

To guide the analysis, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the annual volume, temporal trajectory, and monthly distribution of reported kidnapping cases in Plateau State between 2022 and 2025?
2. How officially recorded kidnapping incidents are geographically distributed across LGAs in Plateau State?
3. What are the victim characteristics, financial ransom dynamics, and legal-investigative outcomes of recorded kidnapping cases in the state?

Literature Review

Scholarly and institutional literature on kidnapping in Nigeria traces its evolution from localised, politically motivated agitation in the Niger Delta during the mid-2000s into a nationally distributed criminal enterprise (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011). Academic evaluations distinguish a second phase characterised by armed banditry in the North-West, which subsequently diffused across contiguous state boundaries (Enemuwe et al., 2025). Investigations into the structural roots of this second phase point to the post-2011 proliferation of armed non-state actors resulting from localised resource conflicts and governance deficits across under-monitored forested corridors (Rufa'i, 2021; Enemuwe et al., 2025).

At the national level, formal institutional reports provide empirical documentation of crisis scale. Data published directly by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2025) indicate thousands of recorded abductions nationwide. Concurrently, security risk consultancies such as SBM Intelligence (2025) estimate national victim counts and ransom flows, noting that North-West zones constitute the primary incident epicentre, while North-Central states including Plateau, Niger, Kogi, and Benue represent an expanding secondary zone (Okpuvwie, 2026). Regional analyses by Okpuvwie (2026) confirm that a significant share of recorded nationwide incidents concentrates within the North-Central sub-region.

Furthermore, household-level victimisation benchmarks, such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) Crime Experience and Security Perception Survey, provide macro-level estimates of household exposure to criminal victimisation and quantify the proportion of victims who formally report incidents to law enforcement agencies

Focusing on Plateau State, scholarship documents the intersection of long-standing ethno-religious conflict, community displacement, agrarian disputes, and the southward spillover of regional banditry networks (ACAPS, 2025; Olomitutu & Ojakorotu, 2026). Human Rights Watch (2025, p. 42) documents significant violent events in Plateau State during the review period, including approximately 140 fatalities resulting from coordinated community attacks on Christmas Day 2023, and over 30 fatalities alongside 100 injuries during January 2024 violence in Mangu Local Government Area. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch (2025, p. 44) reports that cumulative regional tensions across affected states resulted in an estimated 865 reported fatalities and over 15,000 internally displaced persons by February 2024. While these reports primarily classify such events under communal violence and displacement rather than strict legal kidnapping categories, security analysts observe that armed groups operating in North-Central Nigeria frequently employ mass-casualty raids alongside ransom abduction as complementary tactical operations (ACAPS, 2025, p. 14). At the micro-community level, localised survey research in Plateau State indicates that specific demographic segments experience heightened perceived vulnerability (Gongs et al., 2021).

Any longitudinal analysis utilising official crime statistics must engage with the methodological literature concerning police-recorded crime and its limitations. Seminal foundational works by Biderman and Reiss (1967) and Skogan (1977) establish that official police records capture only a fraction of true criminal victimisation, a discrepancy conceptualised as the dark figure of crime. Skogan (1977) demonstrates that the magnitude of underreporting varies systematically across offence categories, victim-offender relationships, and public confidence in law enforcement. Within the Nigerian policing context, victim non-reporting is exacerbated by informal family mechanisms, where victims' relatives frequently engage in direct, private ransom negotiations with perpetrators rather than involving formal police authorities (Enemuwe et al., 2025; Asiama & Zhong, 2022). Applying a rational choice framework to crime reporting (Asiama & Zhong, 2022), victim non-reporting in the Nigerian context is heavily exacerbated by informal family dynamics, where victims' relatives frequently engage in direct, private ransom negotiations with abductors to secure a victim's release rather than involving formal police authorities (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011; Enemuwe et al., 2025).

Despite these recognised limitations, official police records remain the primary legal and administrative benchmark against which institutional performance, resource allocation, and state security policy are formally evaluated. What remains absent from current criminological scholarship is a systematic, state-wide longitudinal analysis of officially recorded kidnapping cases in Plateau State over a multi-year administrative window.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an interpretive theoretical framework combining the macro-level formulation of Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) with Social Disorganization Theory and its collective efficacy elaboration (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson et al., 1997).

Under the macro-level formulation of Routine Activity Theory, aggregate crime rates fluctuate as a function of the spatiotemporal convergence of three structural elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardianship. Rather than treating these elements as statistically measured variables within the present descriptive design, the framework is applied interpretively to hypothesise why officially recorded kidnapping incidents exhibited a temporary peak in 2024. Specifically, acute community displacement and operational strain on security forces can be understood as a temporary reduction in capable guardianship and an increase in vulnerable target exposure.

To account for the localised structural conditions weakening guardianship in Plateau State, the study integrates Social Disorganization Theory and collective efficacy (Sampson et al., 1997). While Shaw and

McKay originally formulated these concepts within urban neighbourhood units, their core mechanisms namely, the disruption of informal social control, social networks, and community cohesion resulting from collective violence and displacement provide a conceptual expressions for interpreting how Plateau State's conflict environment creates structural vulnerability. As this study relies on a total enumeration of four annual administrative counts from a single state command, the theoretical framework is strictly interpretive. It does not empirically test individual offender motivations or measure neighbourhood-level guardianship as quantitative operational variables. For future empirical research, investigators seeking to test these frameworks should operationalise measurable indicators, such as spatial displacement counts, police-to-population ratios, and the density of rural security outposts across local government areas.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive longitudinal trend design based on retrospective secondary analysis of administrative crime records. The administrative scope of this study is specifically defined by the official case registers of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Jos, Plateau State Police Command, covering the four-year period from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2025. Within the structural hierarchy of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Divisional Police Headquarters and Area Commands across Plateau State route major felony cases, including kidnapping, hostage-taking, and armed abduction to the SCID for specialised investigation, prosecution, and centralised archiving. While primary reports may initially be lodged at divisional stations or responded to by military/joint task forces such as Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), or the Department of State Services (DSS), the SCID register serves as the central administrative state repository for formally registered criminal investigations. Consequently, total enumeration as used in this study refers strictly to the complete census of all eligible cases recorded within the SCID central database during the specified timeframe.

To ensure data consistency, the operational parameters and counting rules were defined as follows: The primary unit of count is an officially registered case or incident, defined as a distinct, formally catalogued criminal report involving one or more abducted victims originating from a single criminal event. Cases were selected if catalogued under statutory offence codes corresponding to kidnapping, armed abduction, hostage-taking, or attempted kidnapping, and cases were recorded by the date of official report and registration at the SCID rather than the alleged date of incident occurrence. Duplicate entries, administrative transfers between divisions, and cross-referenced multi-jurisdictional files were cross-checked using unique police case file numbers to prevent double counting. All 10 identified case files were fully legible and accessible, with zero missing or unreadable files within the SCID register.

Data were extracted using a standardised, researcher designed Abstraction Sheet (*see Appendix A*). The instrument captured four main analytical categories: temporal variables (Year, month, and date of formal report), spatial variables (local government area (LGA) of occurrence, case-level attributes **(**number of case and victims per incident, demographic profile, and reported financial ransom dynamics), and investigative outcomes (status of investigation,).

Data extraction was conducted directly at the SCID Headquarters in Jos by two trained researchers. To ensure data accuracy and inter-rater reliability, an independent double-extraction audit was performed: a secondary investigator re-extracted the case files. Zero discrepancies were found between the primary abstraction sheet and the audit verify sheet, confirming inter-rater agreement. Extracted data were compiled and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28.0) and Microsoft Excel. The analytical procedures included: Descriptive statistics: (annual frequencies, monthly disaggregation (N = 48 months across the four-year window), and percentage distributions relative to the four-year total. Population-Adjusted Incident Rates**:** To provide standard criminological metrics, annual incident rates per 100,000 inhabitants were calculated. Population figures for Plateau State were derived from official National Population Commission (NPC) projections. Based on the 2006 Census baseline (3,206,531), NPC annual growth rate projections (3.2 %) yielded state population estimates of approximately 5,120,000 (2022), 5,283,000 (2023), 5,452,000 (2024), and 5,626,000 (2025). The annual rate per 100,000 was computed as:

Incident rate per 100,000 = (Annual SCID recorded cases ÷ Projected annual population) × 100,000

Trend & Percentage Change Calculations: Period-to-period percentage changes were computed using standard arithmetic formulas: [(Cases t – Cases t-1) /Cases t-1] X 100.

Formal ethical approval and administrative research clearance were granted by the Department of Sociology and Criminology Ethics Committee at University of Jos (Ref: UJ/SOC/ETH/2022/041]). Official written authorisation for data access was issued by the Commissioner of Police, Plateau State Police Command, Jos, dated January 15, 2026 (Ref No: CB:4101/PLS/DRP/VOL.40/309). Strict protocols were implemented to protect privacy and confidentiality: No personally identifiable information (PII). To prevent secondary re-identification of victims in small communities, spatial and temporal variables are presented in aggregated formats (LGA level and monthly/annual totals) without linking specific names or micro-street locations to particular dates.

Results

Table 1. Annual Frequency, Absolute Change, and Population-Adjusted Rates of Officially Recorded Kidnapping Incidents, Plateau State (2022–2025)

Year	Frequency (n)	Absolute Change	Projected Population	Incident Rate per 100,000
2022	2	—	5,120,000	0.039
2023	2	0	5,283,000	0.038
2024	4	+2	5,452,000	0.073
2025	2	−2	5,626,000	0.036
Total / Net	10	0.0 (Net)	—	—

As presented in Table 1, the total enumeration of officially recorded kidnapping cases at the SCID Jos yielded exactly 10 cases, resulting in a total of 22 victims across the four-year observation window (2022–2025). Annual frequencies remained static at two cases in 2022 and 2023, increased by an absolute count of two cases to reach four in 2024, and returned to two cases in 2025. Over the full four-year period, the net change in absolute case frequency is zero, producing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.0%. When adjusted for annual population growth using NPC projections, incident rates remained extremely low, ranging from 0.036 to 0.073 per 100,000 inhabitants.

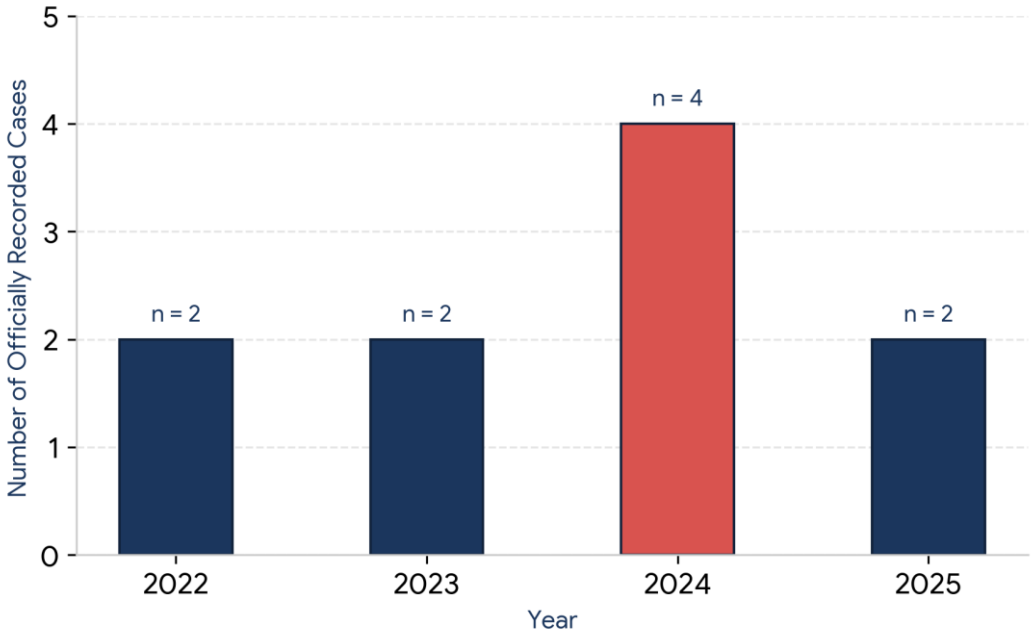

Figure 1. Annual Frequency of Officially Recorded Kidnapping Incidents in Plateau State (2022–2025)

Bar chart illustrating the annual absolute frequency of officially recorded kidnapping cases from the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Jos, Plateau State (N = 10).

To evaluate whether annual variations deviated significantly from a random distribution, statistical tests were performed. A Chi-Square goodness-of-fit test comparing the four annual counts against a constant expected rate of 2.5 cases per year yielded $\chi^2(3) = 1.20$, $p = .75$. Furthermore, an exact binomial test comparing the 2024 count (n = 4) against the 2023 count (n = 2) yielded $p = .69$. These results indicate that the observed annual fluctuations are entirely consistent with a stable, constant level of police recording over time; consequently, the numerical increase in 2024 does not represent a statistically significant upward departure from baseline recording levels. Analysis of the 10 case files (encompassing the 22 total victims) extracted from SCID registers provides further administrative detail: Disaggregation across the 48 monthly intervals revealed that the four cases recorded in 2024 occurred in February (n = 1), May (n = 1), August (n = 1), and November (n = 1). Because the Christmas Day 2023 mass-casualty events fell entirely within December 2023 (during which zero kidnapping cases were recorded in SCID logs), and the January 2024 Mangu attacks occurred outside the months of the 2024 kidnapping entries, there is no direct temporal overlap between major communal violence peaks and the recording dates of specific kidnapping files. Geographically, all 10 recorded cases originated from urban, semi-urban, and rural local government areas. Across the files, victims comprised adult commercial traders, civil servants, businessmen, farmers, and passengers. In all 10 instances, case files were officially classified as "under investigation" with zero formal court convictions or concluded prosecutions recorded within the SCID register during the four-year window. Information regarding ransom demands or payments was absent from formal police charge sheets.

Discussion of Findings

The total enumeration of SCID records reveals a low-volume, highly stable administrative record: two cases in 2022, two in 2023, four in 2024, and a return to two in 2025. With a net four-year change of zero and a compound annual growth rate of 0.0%, the empirical data demonstrate no sustained upward or downward trajectory. Statistical testing ($\chi^2(3) = 1.20$, $p = .75$) confirms that annual variations are statistically indistinguishable from a constant rate.

Interpreting the localised increase in 2024 requires caution. While theoretical frameworks such as Routine Activity Theory and Social Disorganization Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Sampson et al., 1997) provide a useful conceptual expressions for hypothesising how community displacement or security strain might alter opportunity structures, the data do not permit definitive causal attribution. Specifically, temporal

analysis shows that the major mass-casualty events cited in regional literature (such as the December 2023 attacks and January 2024 Mangu incidents) did not co-occur temporally with the specific months in which 2024 kidnapping cases were logged. Furthermore, because administrative crime classification protocols frequently route abductions occurring during communal clashes under communal-violence or homicide case codes rather than dedicated kidnapping statutes (ACAPS, 2025), SCID registers capture a specialised subset of events. The premise that the 2025 return to baseline reflects strengthened post-crisis security postures or shifts in victim reporting behaviour remains speculative; these propositions are more appropriately framed as hypotheses for future empirical investigation rather than definitive explanations of the current dataset.

The most striking empirical finding of this study is its macro-level scale: exactly 10 recorded cases across four years in a state with a population exceeding 5 million. This contrasts sharply with national estimates reported by non-governmental monitoring bodies, such as SBM Intelligence (2025) or national human rights tracking (NHRC, 2025). This divergence highlights three non-exclusive methodological realities: Plateau State experiences lower absolute volumes of formal police-recorded kidnapping compared to primary North-West epicentres like Zamfara or Katsina. The official police registers are heavily influenced by the dark figure of crime (Biderman & Reiss, 1967; Skogan, 1977). Because victims' families frequently engage in direct, private ransom negotiations without notifying law enforcement (Asiama & Zhong, 2022), SCID logs undercount actual community victimisation. Variations in police recording protocols and statutory offence categorisation mean that abductions tied to broader communal conflicts may be coded under alternative criminal statutes.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study must be interpreted within the context of several methodological limitations:

i. **Single-Department Scope:** Data were extracted exclusively from the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Jos, omitting decentralised records held at auxiliary security agencies (e.g., Operation Safe Haven, NSCDC, DSS).
ii. **Small Sample Size:** The small absolute count (N = 10 cases) precludes multivariate statistical modelling, advanced spatial regression, or robust subgroup comparisons.
iii. **Absence of Victim-Level Detail:** Due to administrative redactions and incomplete reporting in police case files, granular variables regarding exact ransom amounts paid and perpetrator identities could not be systematically analysed.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the longitudinal trajectory of officially recorded kidnapping incidents in Plateau State, Nigeria, from 2022 to 2025, utilising total enumeration of administrative case logs from the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Jos. The findings reveal a total of 10 recorded cases across the four-year period, with annual frequencies of two in 2022, two in 2023, four in 2024, and two in 2025. Statistical goodness-of-fit testing confirms that these annual variations show no statistically significant departure from a constant rate ($p = .75$), yielding a net four-year change of zero and a compound annual growth rate of 0.0%.

While macro-level security reports highlight Plateau State as part of an emerging North-Central secondary hotspot, official administrative records reflect an extremely low absolute volume of formal police cases. This stark divergence underscores the profound impact of the dark figure of crime and administrative classification practices. Consequently, while SCID records serve as an essential administrative benchmark for institutional resource allocation, they must be interpreted as a measure of police-processed caseloads rather than an exhaustive census of all community-level kidnapping events.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following administrative and research recommendations are proposed:

1. The Nigeria Police Force should transition from manual paper registers to a centralised digital database at the SCID and divisional levels to improve data integrity, tracking accuracy, and retrieval speed.
2. The Police Command should establish clear administrative guidelines to ensure that abductions occurring during communal or farmer–herder conflicts are dual-coded under dedicated kidnapping offence statutes rather than generalised civil unrest categories.
3. The Plateau State Police Command should establish formal data-sharing protocols with multi-agency task forces, including Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Department of State Services (DSS) to harmonise security statistics.
4. Researchers should conduct qualitative victimological studies and community-level surveys in Plateau State to estimate the precise proportion of kidnapping incidents withheld from formal police channels due to private ransom negotiations.

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Appendix A

Data Extraction Sheet (Total Enumeration)

Date	Location of (LGA)	Number of Cases	Number of Victims	Victims Demographic(Age/Sex/Occupation	Ransom Status	Investigative Outcome
14/02/2022	Jos South	1	2	Adult Male / Commercial Trader	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
09/08/2022	Bokkos	1	1	Adult Female / Civil Servant	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
21/03/2023	Wase	1	3	Adult Male / Businessman	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
11/11/2023	Qua'an Pan	1	2	Adult Male / Commercial Trader	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
18/02/2024	Jos North	1	1	Adult Female / Civil Servant	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
05/05/2024	LangtangSouth	1	2	Adult Male / Farmers	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
12/08/2024	Bassa	1	3	Adult Male / Commercial Trader	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
29/11/2024	Shendan	1	1	AdultFemale/CommercialTrader	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
15/04/2025	Mangu	1	2	Adult Male / Businessmen	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
22/10/2025	Riyom	1	5	Adult Male / Businessmen passengers	Demanded / Withheld	Under Investigation
TOTAL		10	22			