

Edited by Nicolas Florquin and Eric G. Berman

ARMED AND AIMLESS: **ARMED GROUPS, GUNS, AND HUMAN** **SECURITY IN THE ECOWAS REGION**



A Small Arms Survey Publication
Commissioned by



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The Small Arms Survey is an independent research project located at the Graduate Institute of International Studies. It serves as the principal source of public information on all aspects of small arms for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and activists.

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FOREWORD

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has long grappled with the ruinous effects that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has had on its citizens. It has been estimated that more than eight million firearms are in circulation in our region and that most of these are used not to promote peace and security, but rather are in the hands of armed groups such as insurgents as well as those who engage in illicit activities including organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal exploitation of natural resources and terrorism. The scourge has had profound ramifications for economic, social, and political development.

Our Member States are working tirelessly and effectively to address the challenges of small arms proliferation. The government of Mali, for example, began a dialogue with rebel groups that resulted in a peaceful resolution of long-standing tensions and the destruction of thousands of weapons. Subsequently, the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation, and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa was concluded and a Programme of Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) undertaken to support the ground-breaking initiative. ECOWAS Heads of State and Government also approved a Code of Conduct to facilitate progress and accountability. The ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP), which has succeeded PCASED, is yet another example of the region's commitment.

ECOWAS and its Member States recognize the important role that civil society organizations—both within the region and abroad—play in assisting governments to meet their objectives. This study, which Mali initiated and that the ECOWAS Secretariat supported, is an important example of what can be achieved when people and governments work together toward a common goal. It raises numerous concerns that merit additional study such as the need to place greater emphasis on more rigorous stockpile management so that legal transfers of arms do not fall into the hands of criminals and rebels. The study also warns that groups armed by the state ostensibly for its defence can often unintentionally undermine peace and security.

The scope of the report is ambitious and raises many interesting points worthy of further study. I hope that this initiative will help develop good policies and draw attention to the challenges we and our citizens face—and support for our continuous efforts to address them.

Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas

Executive Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

By Eric G. Berman and Nicolas Florquin

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its 15 members¹ have long understood the destabilizing and deleterious effects of small arms and light weapons² on the region. Their decisions to undertake six regional peace-keeping operations since 1990 acknowledge these challenges and underscore their resolve to confront them.³ Indeed, the members, working unilaterally and together, have been at the forefront of international efforts to combat this scourge. A noteworthy example is the ground-breaking initiative of the Government of Mali to enter into a meaningful dialogue with members of its Tuareg and Arab minorities, resulting in the voluntary disarmament of 3,000 combatants in 1996 (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998). The 1998 ECOWAS *Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa* represented an important step towards addressing small arms proliferation in the region.⁴ Recent notable developments include plans to transform the moratorium into a legally binding instrument, the decision to terminate the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) and replace it with the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP), and the creation of a Small Arms Unit (SAU) at ECOWAS headquarters.⁵

The Small Arms Survey, responding to an initiative launched by the Foreign Ministry of Mali as chair of the Human Security Network (HSN), and with the support of the Governments of Canada, Norway, and Switzerland,⁶ agreed to undertake a study of armed groups and small arms in the ECOWAS region. ‘Armed groups’ in this report are groups equipped with small arms that have the capacity to challenge the state’s monopoly of legitimate force.⁷ It was believed that a study that focused solely on armed groups in opposition to the state would be of limited utility, for three principal reasons. First, history shows that governments in the region change frequently and often violently. Indeed, every country in ECOWAS has experienced a military coup d’état except two: Cape Verde and Senegal. Thus, an armed group formed ostensibly to protect the state may soon find itself in opposition to it as a result of changing circumstances. Second, groups’ allegiances may shift regardless of what happens in the capital. Third, a group might support the state politically and still challenge its monopoly on coercion. The study, however, does not cover small-scale banditry and low-level criminal

activity, nor does it document private security companies that are becoming more numerous but in West Africa are understood not to be equipped with firearms.

The research project was to consist of two phases. During Phase 1, the Small Arms Survey conducted desk research to investigate and document the scope of the problem. The Survey relied primarily on open-source information, including UN reports, media accounts, and studies by reputable NGOs and research institutes.

The Survey supplemented this research with field interviews of government officials, humanitarian aid workers, and members of civil society organizations active in promoting peace. During Phase 1 ten ECOWAS countries were visited. Eric Berman, then a consultant with the Survey and now its Managing Director, conducted interviews in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone from 22 February to 6 March 2004. Nicolas Florquin, a Small Arms Survey researcher, visited Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal during 3–20 March. And Mahamadou Nimaga, Foreign Affairs Adviser with the Malian Foreign Ministry who was based in Bamako and selected to work with the Survey, travelled to Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger during 1–21 March.

A preliminary report was presented in May 2004 at the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network in Bamako. It provided information on armed groups in nine ECOWAS countries. The draft also included some initial observations and recommendations, but the focus was on taking the first steps to map the situation on the ground, starting a dialogue, and preparing for Phase 2. The final report was to be launched at the HSN's Seventh Ministerial Meeting in Ottawa in May 2005.

Phase 2 concentrated on directed research in the region. Towards this end, the Survey commissioned field studies along the lines outlined in its preliminary mapping report. Local institutions, researchers, and independent consultants undertook research between June and December 2004. The Survey carried out two additional field visits to monitor research on the ground. Nicolas Florquin travelled with other Survey staff to Bamako from 30 August to 3 September to train researchers from the three members of the Mano River Union (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone)⁸ working on children associated with fighting forces (CAFF). While in Mali, they also held intensive focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants. During 2–5 September, Eric Berman went to Nigeria to participate in focus group discussions that the Survey's local partner organized in Jos and Port Harcourt.

The Survey kept ECOWAS informed of the project from the outset. Eric Berman first visited ECOWAS Headquarters in March 2004, when he briefed

General Cheikh Oumar Diarra, Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence, and Security, and other senior officials on the planned study. He met with Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Executive Secretary, on a subsequent visit in June. ECOWAS welcomed the initiative and pledged its support.

Part I

This monograph comprises two main parts. Part I presents the results of field research carried out during Phase 2. It contains six in-depth studies that are presented as independent thematic chapters. These were selected based on the importance of the issues explored. Additional factors included logistical constraints, security concerns, and the availability of local researchers.

The first two chapters highlight the wide variety of armed groups that continue to threaten the region, using Nigeria and Mali as case studies. The first chapter investigates armed groups in Rivers and Plateau states in Nigeria. Armed violence involving various types of groups has reached dramatic levels in that country, which is the continent's most populous, with more citizens than the other 14 ECOWAS member states combined. In 2004 President Olusegun Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in Plateau state, suspending the state governor for six months, and negotiated directly with armed groups in Rivers state. Mali's experience dealing with very disparate armed groups since 1990 is addressed in Chapter 2. Such groups include insurgents and self-defence militias involved in the 1990–96 Tuareg and Arab rebellion, as well as a north African terrorist movement that has infiltrated the north of the country in recent years.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine some of the challenges linked to armed groups' armament, looking more specifically at craft firearm production and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. Craft small arms production is a region-wide phenomenon⁹ raising fears that it might become a source of weapons for armed groups. Chapter 3 examines this underground activity in Ghana, a country that hosts particularly organized and technologically advanced gunsmiths. DDR programmes are among the key initiatives currently put forward to recover illicit arms from armed groups and promote regional stability. The most recent programme in Liberia, which started in December 2003, is reviewed in Chapter 4.

The two final chapters document some of the human security implications of armed groups and small arms in the region. Chapter 5 presents the results of an

independent study commissioned by the Small Arms Survey and the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) on the militarization and demilitarization of Guinea's refugee camps.¹⁰ It documents how Guinea's large refugee population was targeted during fighting on its southern border in 2000–01, and how various armed groups infiltrated the country's refugee camps. The complex linkages between small arms availability and children associated with fighting forces are examined in Chapter 6. The analysis is based on more than 250 interviews with CAFF carried in the Mano River Union states of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Part II

Part II of the study consists of a region-wide mapping of armed groups. It updates and expands the preliminary (Phase 1) report to cover all 15 current ECOWAS member countries. It includes groups that have been active at any given time since 1998, when the ECOWAS Moratorium was adopted.

The Survey created a template to document each case. The format is designed to clearly and concisely present the information gathered. It can be easily updated. This structure provides the basis for a fuller and more detailed account of armed groups in ECOWAS as well as in other regions.

Each study is organized into three sections. The first identifies the armed groups recently active in the country in question. The second reviews the small arms and light weapons believed to be in their possession. The third notes the effects of these groups' activities on human security.¹¹

The first section on *Armed groups* lists each group separately. Every entry is divided into five subsections: (1) *Origins/composition*; (2) *Leadership*; (3) *Areas of control/activity*; (4) *Sources of financing/support*; and (5) *Status*. The headings are largely self-explanatory. *Origins/composition* notes the organization's establishment as well as its size and structure. Any information on recruitment, such as salaries paid, is included here. The group's political and military command (where separate) are discussed in *Leadership*, with emphasis placed on the present. *Areas of control/activity* documents each group's geographical base and its recent operations. The financial and natural resources available to an organization to allow it to operate, as well as political backing (both foreign and domestic), are highlighted under the heading *Financing/support*. The last subsection describes the *Status* of the organization as of 31 December 2004.

The second section on *Small arms and light weapons* has three categories: (1) *Stockpiles*; (2) *Sources*; and (3) *Recovered*. The *Stockpiles* subsection records weapons in the inventories of the various armed groups discussed above. The *Sources* subsection notes how these groups received their weapons and focuses on domestic and foreign sources of supply. The subsection on arms *Recovered* looks at DDR processes. DDR in this study refers to politically negotiated processes that have a weapons collection component and aim at ensuring the transition of combatants into civilian life. Other initiatives designed to reclaim weapons from these groups, including ‘weapons for development’ projects, gun buy-backs, amnesties, and seizures by security forces, are also noted.

The third section on *Human security issues* has three categories: (1) *CAFF*; (2) *Displacement*; and (3) *Other violations or abuses*. The first subsection on *CAFF* considers whether armed groups conscript, enlist, or use children to participate actively in hostilities.¹² It provides information on the extent of recruitment and, when available, the practical functions children served within the armed groups. The second subsection highlights the extent of *Displacement*.¹³ It provides information on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and country nationals registered as refugees abroad. Where applicable and available, figures reflect the situation both at the peak of conflict and as last reported by specialized agencies or NGOs. In addition, it indicates the number of foreign refugees hosted by the country under study as last reported. The final subsection documents the involvement of armed groups in *Other violations or abuses* that fall under the definition of crimes against humanity or war crimes,¹⁴ with a particular emphasis on killings, rape, and torture.

The media and NGOs have reported effectively on the crises in West Africa. The people of the region have suffered greatly from a succession of lengthy and brutal civil wars whose effects are felt far beyond the countries in conflict. Pictures of young children under arms and stories of terrible human rights abuses are seared into our collective conscience. ECOWAS, the international community, and civil society are working hard to address the challenges that armed groups present to the promotion of human security. Much progress has been made and tremendous resources—both human and financial—have been expended. As this book documents, however, the situation can be expected to deteriorate if current efforts are considered sufficient.

List of abbreviations

BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOSAP	ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
HSN	Human Security Network
IDP	Internally displaced person
MRU	Mano River Union
PCASED	Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development
SAU	Small Arms Unit

Endnotes

- 1 ECOWAS, established in 1975, originally had 15 members: Benin (then known as Dahomey), Burkina Faso (then known as Upper Volta), Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Cape Verde joined ECOWAS in 1977 and Mauritania left the organization in 2000.
- 2 The Small Arms Survey uses the term 'small arms and light weapons' broadly to cover small arms intended for both civilian and military use, as well as light weapons intended for military use. When possible, it follows the definition used in the United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (UNGA, 1997):
 - Small arms: revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns.
 - Light weapons: heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm.

The Survey uses the term 'firearm' to mean civilian and military hand-held weapons that expel a projectile from a barrel by the action of an explosive. Unless the context dictates otherwise, the Survey uses the term 'small arms' to refer to both small arms and light weapons, whereas the term 'light weapons' refers specifically to this category of weapons.

- 3 One peace operation, the ECOWAS mission for the Guinea-Liberian border (authorized in 2000), never deployed. The five others included Liberia (1990–99), Sierra Leone (1997–2000), Guinea-Bissau (1998–99), Côte d’Ivoire (2002–04), and Liberia again (2003). See Berman and Sams (2003).
- 4 For an overview of the ECOWAS moratorium and other small arms control initiatives in the region, see Ebo (2003).
- 5 In December 2004 the role of ECOSAP and its relationship to the SAU were still being worked out. Getting this relationship right and ensuring that civil society and national commissions are appropriately engaged will largely determine whether these developments are successful.
- 6 More specifically, support came through the Human Security Programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada), the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norway), and the Département Fédéral des Affaires Etrangères (Switzerland).
- 7 For a detailed discussion of the rationale behind this definition, see Policzer (2004).
- 8 The Mano River Union (MRU) was established in 1973 with the objective of subregional economic integration. The Union sought to create a customs union among its members. MRU member states have witnessed some of the most violent conflicts in the region since the early 1990s. As a result, most of its activities in recent years have focused on security matters.
- 9 As opposed to legal or state production, which in 2002 was limited to Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Nigeria. See Small Arms Survey (2003). The Guinean plant that produced 12 and 16 gauge shotgun ammunition is located in Boké. It was shut down in July 2004 for renovation, but is scheduled to reopen in April 2005. Written correspondence with Cissé Mahmoud, National Secretary of the Guinean National Commission on Small Arms, 17 March 2005.
- 10 The Small Arms Survey-BICC study on refugee camp militarization will be published during the second half of 2005. In addition to Guinea, it will comprise case studies of Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- 11 The HSN (1999) defines human security as ‘freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety or even their lives’. It further notes that ‘A commitment to human rights and humanitarian law is the foundation for building human security. Human security is advanced in every country by protecting and promoting human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance and democratic structures, a culture of peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.’
- 12 This is a war crime under the *Statute of the International Criminal Court* when it involves children ‘under the age of fifteen years’ (UNGA, 1998, art. 8.2.e.vii). However, as a number of institutions reporting on the subject do, the Small Arms Survey uses the definition contained in the *Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*, which sets 18 as the cut-off age (UNGA, 2000, art. 4).
- 13 Under the *Statute of the International Criminal Court*, the ‘deportation or forcible transfer of population’ is a crime against humanity (UNGA, 1998, art. 7.1.d) and ‘ordering the displacement of the civilian

population' is a war crime (UNGA, 1998, art. 8.2.e.viii). However, this study uses the available international agency and NGO displacement figures that may not always correspond to this particular definition.

14 These include crimes against humanity and war crimes as defined in UNGA (1998, arts. 7 and 8).

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PART I

THEMATIC CHAPTERS



ARMED GROUPS AND CONFLICT IN RIVERS AND PLATEAU STATES, NIGERIA

By Shedrack Gaya Best and Dimieari Von Kemedi

Introduction

Armed conflict has marked Nigeria's history since pre-colonial times, but has intensified following independence in 1960. In 1967, a civil war between the Nigerian federal government and the Biafran secessionists erupted and quickly escalated into full-scale armed conflict before ending in 1970. Since then, Nigeria has been bedeviled by religious, communal, and civil strife.

Religious clashes in northern cities during the 1980s, protests over General Ibrahim Babangida's nullification of the June 1993 presidential elections (1985–93), and repression during Sani Abacha's rule (1993–98) contributed to sporadic conflict in different parts of the country. After almost 30 years of military rule, the return to democracy in May 1999 was a positive development. Greater freedom and less repression did, however, create opportunities for armed groups hostile towards the state or other Nigerian communities to organize and mobilize with relative impunity.

In two of Nigeria's 36 states—Rivers state in the southern Niger Delta, and Plateau state in the north-central region—the situation grew particularly tense in 2004. In the oil-rich Rivers state, the proliferation of large politically driven armed groups such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) is causing significant concern. In Plateau state, increasing violence and bloodshed prompted the federal government to declare a six-month state of emergency on 18 May 2004.

This chapter documents the diversity and complex nature of armed groups in Nigeria, focusing on recent events in Rivers and Plateau states. It is divided

into three sections. The first section provides historical and contextual background to the conflict, to armed groups, and to small arms in Nigeria. The second section examines the current situation in Rivers state, while the third focuses on Plateau state. Both case studies specify the nature of the armed groups, review their weapons holdings, analyse the root causes of the conflict, and discuss attempts to disarm.

A variety of sources inform the analysis. The authors held two focus group meetings in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, on 30 August 2004 (with 10 participants), and in Jos, Plateau state, on 1 September 2004 (with 12 participants). The discussions involved academics, members of civil society groups, and retired police and military personnel. They focused on the themes explored in this chapter and sought to provide guidance for follow-up research. The authors subsequently conducted field research in Rivers and Plateau states between September and December 2004. They interviewed a wide range of stakeholders, including leaders and members of armed groups, as well as officials of local governments and community-based organizations. The research also benefited from information sharing with Our Niger Delta¹ and Academic Associates Peace Work (AAPW),² both of which are playing a significant role in the emerging peace process now under way in Rivers state. Other sources include Nigerian newspapers, as well as petitions and memos from communities listing casualties and loss of property owing to violence in Plateau.

The following are among the chapter's most important findings:

- Nigeria is host to a wide variety of armed groups, including political gangs, ethnic militias, community defence groups, and, allegedly, foreign mercenaries.
- Nigerian armed groups are much more numerous than previously thought. Local authorities have officially identified approximately 100 'secret cults' in Rivers state alone.
- Group allegiances may shift—demonstrating the importance of introducing pro-state militias and community vigilante groups into the debate over armed groups.
- Despite particularly high black-market prices, weapons include modern AK-47 type assault rifles. Nigerian groups also rely on cheaper craft-produced weapons.

- Weapon sources include those trafficked from neighbouring countries or other Nigerian states, weapons seized or bought from corrupt members of the Nigerian security services, and locally manufactured small arms.
- Perceived injustice perpetrated by the Nigerian government, insecurity, lack of political freedom, unemployment, and economic marginalization are among the key motivating factors behind the rise of armed groups.

Conflict, armed groups, and small arms in Nigeria³

Each of Nigeria's 370 identifiable ethnic groups (Otite, 2000, p. 20) perceives itself to be linguistically, culturally, and historically distinct, although four—the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the south-west, and the Igbo in the south-east—constitute a larger share of the population. Tensions among these four are well documented, as are hostilities among other lesser-known groups who have grievances against both the major ethnic groups, the Nigerian state (which they perceive as insensitive to their interests), and one another.

Several armed conflicts have occurred in Nigeria since the inception of party politics that took place during the colonial era (the 1920s in the south and the 1940s in the north). In 1960, the countdown to independence engendered conflicts among groups who used crude weapons such as machetes, bows, and arrows; these conflicts intensified soon thereafter, culminating in the 1967–70 civil war. The United Kingdom exported weapons to the federal government while France supported and armed Biafran secessionists (Musah and Thamson, 1999, p. 112). In addition, the local crafting and manufacture of small arms was further developed, especially in Awka in the south-east, where the secessionists drew from the resources of a long-standing but relatively unsophisticated local blacksmithing industry to overcome the difficulty in obtaining arms from external sources. In the aftermath of the civil war, violence largely subsided—although armed robbers continued to harry the countryside.

In December 1980, the Maitatsine fundamentalist Islamic sect engaged in a number of brutal, religiously motivated attacks in northern Nigeria. The group relied mainly on traditional weapons such as bows, poisoned arrows, and machetes. A cleric of Cameroonian origin led the Maitatsine, which taught and promoted fundamentalist principles, and challenged and opposed the Nigerian state. Violent Maitatsine uprisings erupted in Kano in December



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Mujahid Asari Dokubo, leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF).

1980, during which 4,177 persons were killed in less than ten days of fighting (Tamuno, 1993). It took a joint operation of the army, air force, and police to bring the situation under control. The group participated in similar armed violence in the northern cities of Maiduguri/Bulumkutu in 1982, Rigassa/Kaduna in 1982, Jimeta/Yola in 1984, Gombe in 1984, and Funtua in 1993⁴ (Best, 2001). It fundamentally opposed the state and the role of traditional leaders⁵ in particular. The Maitatsine crises, however, were mostly intra-Islamic, and only occasionally deliberately targeted people outside the faith.

Inter-religious and ethnic conflicts escalated in the mid-1980s. Notable clashes include the Kafanchan, Kaduna, and Zaria debacles of 1987, which sharply pitted Christians against Muslims in Kaduna state (Kukah, 1993). From 1988 to 1994, violent brawls between Muslim and non-Muslim students erupted at a number of universities including Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria), Bayero University (Kano), University of Ibadan, and University of Sokoto (Kukah, 1993). Although these did not involve the use of small arms, violence and insecurity, combined with the repeated failure of the security agencies to protect lives and property, created a demand for weapons among citizens and communities. In the north-eastern zone of Nigeria, tensions over cattle-rustling and farmer-grazier conflicts further engendered calls for small arms among resident and nomadic pastoralists passing through or living in the region (Williams et al., 1999).

Overall, the 1990s saw increases in armed violence as a means of achieving group objectives. The faltering Nigerian economy, coupled with concomitant socio-economic upheaval and a weakened Nigerian state (Egwu, 1998; Suberu, 1996) increased the government's reliance on coercion—as opposed to dialogue—to quell unrest. This in turn encouraged the populace to organize and acquire weapons either for self-defence or to fight back. In the south-western Yoruba states, armed groups challenged the annulment of the 12 June 1993 elections—which they believed their Yoruba kinsman, Moshood Abiola, had won—and contested the legitimacy of Abacha's rise to power (1993–98). As the country moved from military rule to democracy during the 1990s, certain groups began to question what they saw as the absence of justice in the Nigerian political system. Estimates suggest between one million (Small Arms Survey, 2003, p. 2) and three million (Obasi, 2002, p. 69) small arms were in circulation throughout the country in the early 2000s.

In the 1990s, the north-central (Middle Belt) region of Nigeria experienced intense and violent confrontations between the Sayawa-Hausa and the Fulani in Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi state; between the Tiv and Jukun communities in Taraba state (Otite and Albert, 1999); between the Chamba and Jukun-Kuteb in Taraba state (Best, 1998); and between the Bassa and Egbura in Nasarawa state (Best, 2004). The conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke in south-western Osun state, although an intra-Yoruba conflict, spawned the formation of armed militias on both sides. Meanwhile, the conflict between Ijaws, Itsekiris, and Urhobos in Warri led to the emergence of some of the toughest armed ethnic militias in the entire Niger Delta. Overall, state institutions performed poorly in the maintenance of law and order and the management of these crises. Some of these conflicts were characterized by unprecedented small arm use. Given the proximity of these communities, and because of the ethno-linguistic and other cultural associations between parties, small arms circulated freely within and between conflict zones.

The rise of the O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) in the south-west, the Egbesu Boys in the Niger Delta, and the Bakassi Boys in the south-eastern states all contributed to the expanded use of small arms in Nigeria.⁶ Between 1997 and 2001 in the south, the OPC, a militant wing of the Yoruba politico-cultural group, repeatedly attacked and burned down police stations, killed officers, and carted away stolen arms. In the Niger Delta, the Egbesu Boys initially emerged as an Ijaw religious cultural group, but subsequently took up arms in order to challenge perceived injustice caused by the exploitation of oil resources in Ijaw land and the Niger Delta by the Nigerian state and multinational corporations. The Bakassi Boys in the Igbo-speaking south-east, initially formed as a vigilante group to help protect south-eastern traders and their clients from attacks by armed robbers, a situation that arose from the failure of the Nigerian police to perform their duties effectively. After 1999, south-eastern governors later endorsed the Bakassi Boys and they soon became a potent force in the cities where they operated (HRW and CLEEN, 2002, p. 10). Later, complaints regarding the Bakassi Boys' reliance on extrajudicial means such as murder, 'necklacings', and torture drove the vigilantes underground (HRW and CLEEN, 2002). Critics also feared that a number of

south-east governors could deploy the group to terrorize the population in the event that they lost the May 2003 elections.

Armed vigilantism and cults in Rivers state

Fighting in the nine oil-producing states, which include the states of the Niger Delta, is motivated by the ongoing struggle for the control of oil wealth, and anger over the environmental degradation and high levels of unemployment that have surfaced since oil exploration began in 1956. Conflict epicentres included Warri in Delta state (the late 1990s) and, more recently, Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers state. In 2003 and 2004, two main rival armed groups, the NDPVF, the NDV, and a number of associated smaller groups fought over the control of territory and oil bunkering⁷ routes in and around Port Harcourt. Fighting has caused the deaths of hundreds of people and resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands (HRW, 2005, p. 1).

The situation quietened in late September 2004 only after the NDPVF leader, Alhaji Mujahid Abubakar Asari Dokubo, threatened to launch an all-out war unless the Nigerian government granted greater control of the region's oil resources to the Ijaw people, the major ethnic group in the Niger Delta. This move attracted international attention, particularly within the oil industry, and prompted the Nigerian government—which had deployed troops to the region for an internal security mission code-named 'Operation Hakusi'—to negotiate with the two main armed groups. The 1 October 2004 ceasefire agreement and a call for the disarmament of all groups and militias was the end result (HRW, 2005, pp. 1–3).

The NDPVF, the NDV, and secret cults

While many armed groups were active in Nigeria during 2004, the NDPVF in Rivers state was one of the most organized, armed, and deadly. In 2004, Asari, who hailed from the town of Buguma (HRW, 2005, p. 6), claimed that his organization fronted a volunteer force of up to 168,000 fighters and more were joining every day (*The News*, 2004, p. 20)—a contention that most experts now believe to be a wild exaggeration. The NDPVF also maintained they were holding discussions with groups who shared similar ideas in other parts of Nigeria.⁸

Rivers state Governor Peter Odili originally supported Asari in his ambitions to ‘contain’ the growing influence of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), an Ijaw⁹ organization formed in 1998 to push for greater resource control and environmental sustainability (HRW, 2005, pp. 4–5). In 2001, Odili reportedly backed Asari’s bid to become IYC president in order to curtail the movement’s political influence in the run-up to the April 2003 state elections (HRW, 2005, p. 5). Although Odili was re-elected, his strategy backfired because Asari later used his position within the IYC to gain popular support and to publicly criticize the elections (HRW, 2005, pp. 7, 10). Asari stepped down as IYC president on 10 July 2003 amid pressures from senior IYC figures,¹⁰ and subsequently created the NDPVF. The group’s rhetoric is perhaps best illustrated by the words of Asari himself:

I am not an illegal bunkerer. I am taking what belongs to my people and giving it back to them. How can petrol sell for 45 Naira in Abuja and Lagos and today in Buguma and Nembe [in the Niger Delta] it is sold at 200 Naira per litre? ... I am refining it and selling 15 Naira per litre in the riverine areas. They are happy because I have emancipated them from Obasanjo and Odili’s slavery. I give oil, which belongs to the people, back to the people. Who amongst those accusing us about bunkering are not engaging in it from the highest level down? (*The News*, 2004, p. 20)

Led by Ateke Tom, the NDV emerged in Okrika, a major town in Rivers state, during a general state of lawlessness engendered by criminal gang activity. The group, known before 2003 as the Okrika Vigilante or as the Icelanders, gained the support of the community after it was able to neutralize local mafia. It gained prominence in reaction to the inability of the Nigerian police force to maintain law and order, and such was its influence that local politicians took note. Some sources report that former secretary to the state government and current federal transport minister Abiye Sekibo

granted political protection to Ateke as far back as 2001 on the understanding that the NDV would render coercive services—such as intimidating political opponents—during the 2003 elections (HRW, 2005, p. 4). The increasing politicization of the NDV meant that it could extend its reach beyond Okrika, and played a critical role in the Rivers state armed crisis because it opposed NDPVF control over oil bunkering routes following Asari’s quarrel with Odili (HRW, 2005, pp. 7, 10). Odili allegedly backed the NDV during the fighting in 2003–04 (HRW, 2005, pp. 10, 16).

A number of smaller groups gravitated towards the NDPVF and the NDV, and are commonly referred to as ‘cults’ and ‘vigilante groups’. These are essentially groups of individuals dedicated to providing security and economic opportunities for each other and their respective communities, subscribing to an oath of allegiance and secrecy and relying mostly on violent means to achieve their ends. Not all cults, however, are violent—although most are armed to varying degrees. Membership ranges from 20 to 3,000 persons. The Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Law (hereafter Secret Cult Law) passed in June 2004 officially listed about 100 cult groups, which are now banned. These cults include criminal gangs, spiritual and politically motivated groups seeking power and control, gangs that control waterways and passages, as well as those involved in oil bunkering activities.

Cult memberships, methods of operation, and initiation rites, which involve oaths of allegiance, remain secret. Some are pro-state or pro-government, some are anti-state, while others have no clear political objectives. Smaller groups themselves are prone to internal divisions, and during the 2003 elections most rallied behind the key groups of Asari and Ateke to facilitate access to arms and resources (HRW, 2005, p. 3). Interestingly, neither Asari’s NDPVF nor Ateke’s NDV are listed in the Secret Cult Law. However, affiliates such as the Icelanders are included. The Dey Gbam reportedly sided with NDPVF while the Germans enjoy a closer relationship with the NDV (HRW, 2005, pp. 11–14).

A significant amount of the violence in Rivers state, especially in the recent past, has been associated with these groups. Although the reliability of state public health data is questionable, some researchers estimate that violence between October 2003 and October 2004 in Okrika, Buguma, Tombia, Ogakiri, and Port Harcourt claimed the lives of dozens of local residents and resulted

Table 1.1 Secret cults identified in the Secret Cult law

Agbaye	Elegemface	Osiri
Airwords	Executioners	Ostrich Fraternity
Amazon	Fangs	Panama Pyrate
Baccaneers (Sea Lords)	FF	Phoenix
Barracuda	Fliers	Predators
Bas	Frigates	Red Devils
Bees International	Gentlemen's Club	Red Fishes
Big 20	Green Berets Fraternity	Red Sea Horse
Black Axe	Hard Candies	Royal House of Peace
Black Beret Fraternity	Hell's Angels	Royal Queens
Black Brasserie	Hepos	Sailors
Black Brothers	Himalayas	Scavengers
Black Cats	Icelanders	Scorpion
Black Cross	Jaggare Confederation	Scorpion
Black Ladies	KGB	Scorpion Fraternity
Black Ofals	King Cobra	Sea Vipers
Black Scorpions	Klam Konfraternity Klansman	Soiree Fraternity
Black Sword	Ku Klux Klan	Soko
Blanchers	Knite Cade	Sunmen
Blood Hunters	Mafia Lords	Temple of Eden Fraternity
Blood Suckers	Mafioso Fraternity	Thomas Sankara Boys
Brotherhood of Blood	Malcolm X	Tikan Giants
Burkina Faso: Revolution Fraternity	Maphites/Maphlate	Trojan Horses Fraternity
	Mgba Mgba Brothers	Truth Seekers
Canary	Mob Stab	Twin mate
Cappa Vandetto	Musketeers Fraternity	Vikings
Daughters of Jezebel	National Association of	Vipers
Dey Gbam	Adventurers	Vultures
Dey Well	National Association of Sea	Walrus
Dolphins	Dogs	White Bishop
Dragons	Neo-Black Movement	
Dreaded Friends of Friends	Night Mates	
Eagle Club	Nite Hawks	
Egbe Dudu	Nite Rovers	
Eiye of Air Lords Fraternity	Odu Cofraternity	

Note: Amazon, Black Brasserie, Black Ladies, and Daughters of Jezebel are female cult groups.

in the deaths of hundreds of fighters (HRW, 2005, p. 10).¹¹ Cult violence has resulted in the destruction, totally or in part, of several communities. These include Port Harcourt's Njemanze suburb and Okuru community, large sections of Okrika, almost all of Ogbakiri, and several houses in Buguma, Bukuma, and Tombia. Most former inhabitants were still listed as internally displaced as of late 2004. Although there are no reliable estimates of actual numbers, interviews with community members indicate more than 50,000 people, from all of the communities combined, are now homeless.

Small arms availability and sources

Armed groups in Rivers state deploy an arsenal that includes assault rifles (AK-47, Czech SA Vz. 58, G3, FN FNC, and FN FAL), pump-action shotguns, light machine guns, and home-made guns.¹² The types of weapons surrendered in the wake of the peace process (see Table 1.2) confirm this. East European-made AK-47 assault rifles, moreover, are becoming more prevalent than the formerly favoured Beretta AR-70, FNC, and light machine guns. About 75 per cent of the AK-47s surrendered had no butt stocks, which affects the balance and accuracy of the rifle. It also indicates that, for the militia, precision is not as important as portability.

In 2004, a new AK-47 with two magazines could be purchased in the Niger Delta for approximately USD 1,700, and a 200-round machine gun for USD 7,400—inflated prices that suggest that demand for automatic weapons is particularly high and exceeds the current supply.¹³ Prices for pistols and automatic rifles reportedly ranged between USD 200 and USD 400 in 1999 (Musah and Thamson, 1999, p. 131).

Little information is available on the arsenals of specific groups. The NDPVF, however, appears to be more open and forthcoming, although it is necessary to exercise some scepticism over claims. One thing does seem certain, however, and that is that, as a result of its links to oil bunkering, the group has been able to invest in significant arms purchases. Asari, for instance, stated in 2004 that he owned 67 boats, each armed with two light machine guns (*Newswatch*, 2004, p. 10), and more than 3,000 assault rifles (IRIN, 2004d). 'General Commander' of the NDPVF, British Columbus Epebada, who claims to be a Nigerian army ex-serviceman, once boasted, 'we have the GPMG

**Table 1.2 Firearms submitted at Bori Army Camp,
Port Harcourt, 7 October–30 November 2004**

Weapon type	Number
Assault rifles	778
<i>AK-47</i>	324
<i>Czech SA Vz. 58</i>	429
<i>HK G3</i>	22
<i>FN-FAL</i>	3
Shotguns	19
Light machine guns	12
<i>Beretta 12S</i>	2
<i>MAT 49</i>	2
<i>Czech Model 26</i>	7
<i>Sten MK 2</i>	1
Machine guns	3
<i>Czech Model 59 (Rachot)</i>	2
<i>MG 36</i>	1
Hunting rifles	3
Pistols	9
Revolvers	4
Craft weapons	17
<i>Shotguns</i>	10
<i>Revolvers</i>	7
Air guns	1
Total	846

Source: Safer Africa (2004)

[general purpose machine gun], the SLR [self loading rifle], AK-47 Kalashnikovs, MG [machine guns] and several others. We have over five thousand arms among which the GPMG alone are up to 273' (Abubakar and Bello, 2004, p. 17).

Several of the major weapon sources identified during the course of the research are identified below.¹⁴

- A number of small arms originate from other war-ravaged parts of the West African sub-region, particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia. Members of the Nigerian military have reportedly brought back arms from Sierra

Leone, where they took part in ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) for resale after being redeployed back into the state (Musah and Thamson, 1999, p. 131).

- Armed group supporters within the oil industry (see Von Kemedi, 2003) or political parties and even members of the state government (HRW, 2005, p. 8; NDPEHRD, 2004, pp. 5–6) provided weapons or the funds and required contacts to buy them. Traditional leaders seeking protection from armed groups have also supplied weapons, including a local chief from Okrika who Ateke claims purchased weapons for the NDV (HRW, 2005, p. 6).
- Weapons exchanged for stolen or bunkered oil are another major source.¹⁵ Illegal oil bunkering has reportedly been a significant source of revenue for both the NDPVF and the NDV (HRW, 2005, p. 7).
- Weapons captured or seized from local stocks or bought from corrupt individuals also add to the armed group stockpiles. These include arms captured from (or sold by) the Nigeria Mobile Police and Nigerian army personnel; those captured or bought from Cameroonian soldiers stationed in the Bakassi peninsula (whose jurisdiction is disputed between Nigeria and Cameroon); and those purchased from ex-Nigerian soldiers also deployed to the same region.¹⁶
- One group leader claims that arms are available from vessels moored just off the coast of Rivers state, and can be purchased by anybody who can afford them. Warri, the capital of Delta state, is also known as a major arms trafficking hub. Smugglers from Guinea-Bissau, Gabon, and Cameroon reportedly use speedboats to reach offshore ships and purchase guns that they then sell to their respective communities in Warri, where they are often trafficked elsewhere (see Obasi, 2002, pp. 74–75).
- While the presence of craft weapons among those surrendered in Port Harcourt provides evidence of the existence of an underground industry, there is little information available regarding products, production levels, or the quality and price of weapons. Today, Awka, the Anambra state capital, appears to be Nigeria's leading small arms craft manufacturing centre. There are also reports of Ghanaian gunsmiths travelling to Nigeria to train local blacksmiths in gun-making skills (see Chapter 3).

Protection, oil, party politics, and crime

A burgeoning informal protection industry, where police and army personnel are absent or are perceived as biased, contributes to the increased numbers of armed groups and the concomitant proliferation of small arms in Rivers state. This was evident during the run-up to the 2003 elections, which was marred by several unexplained killings of key political figures. Asari, the leader of the NDPVF, justified taking up arms by citing a long list of people that the state's leadership eliminated on political grounds (*Newswatch*, 2004, p. 14). He claimed to have survived several attempts on his own life and charged the police with failing to apprehend known culprits. He concluded: 'I decided reluctantly, but with the help of God on my side, to defend the helpless indigenes and residents of Rivers state who are daily under fear of death, extortion and intimidation ... and have succeeded in putting a stop to all cult activities ...' (*Newswatch*, 2004, p. 16).

The oil economy and its environmental impact in the Niger Delta has had a huge impact on the increasing numbers of armed groups operating in the region. Oil producing communities have hired armed groups in order to have a greater say in state representation and to seek protection. Oil companies such as the Shell Petroleum Development Company have indirectly financed such groups (see Christian Aid et al., 2004, p. 7; HRW, 2005, pp. 5–6, 8; Musah and Thamson, 1999, p. 130) by paying for 'stand-by workers' working from home, or through fictitious contracts, which are paid for but never executed. Over time, armed groups have expanded into other communities belonging to the same clan. These include the Esenasawo groups from Nembe-Ogbolomabiri (Bayelsa state), which became progressively active in other Nembe communities and thereafter aligned with Asari's NDPVF.

The political stakes grow ever higher as elected state officials gain access to oil resources and to the federal allocations, which tend to be comparatively generous. Rivers state receives the third largest allocation from the Nigerian Federation Account, after Delta and Bayelsa states. Within the local population, however, there is a widespread sense that there is little to show for these huge receipts.

During the 1999 general elections, various parties assembled and armed youth. Some observers contend that members of Peter Odili's Rivers state

government and opposing political parties alike financed and armed group members (HRW, 2005, p. 8). In Okrika, former state government secretary, Dr Abiye Sekibo, now the Nigerian Minister of Transport, allegedly supported Ateke's NDV in an attempt to counter the opposition All Nigeria People's Party's influence (ANPP) during the 2003 state and federal elections (HRW, 2005, p. 4). In the aftermath of an upsurge of violence in September 2004, Governor Odili dissolved the cabinet in what appeared to be an attempt to rid the government of cult 'sponsors'.

Another important factor in the rise of armed gangs is the necessity of using weapons to control the waterways that facilitate the illegal transfer of oil assets. Oil bunkers pay rents and other charges to armed groups that administer the routes, and control without arms is hardly possible. Within Port Harcourt, drug dealers also buy protection from cult groups who also arm themselves to prevent incursions from other gangs intent on capturing a piece of their turf. Two main cartels offer protection to drug dealers: the Dey Gbam and the Dey Well street cults, both of them identified by the Secret Cult Law. However, many other cults are also involved in drug protection.

Conflict over traditional titles or rule is another reason behind the arms build-up. Rival claimants and their supporters will often seek to impose their will on the other gangs, often violently dislodging their supporters in the process. This was the case in Okrika, where the conflict also assumed a political dimension when supporters of rival chiefs became affiliated with two different political parties: the opposition ANPP and the ruling PDP. Oil revenue pay-offs exacerbate chieftancy disputes because companies will make payments, not only to the government, but also to 'host communities', which in practice means traditional leaders or chiefs (HRW, 2005, p. 5).

Disarmament and the Rivers state peace process

Nigerian state response has been typically repressive (see HRW, 2005, pp. 15–19). The dialogue that began in September 2004, however, deviated from this pattern. At a meeting between the officials of the Federal Government of Nigeria and leaders of the NDPVF and NVD in Abuja on 1 October 2004 (see HRW, 2005, pp. 19–20), leaders agreed to disband their militias and to totally disarm. They also agreed to an immediate ceasefire and pledged to uphold

peace and to abide by the law. Upon examining the violence in Rivers state, all participants, including the Nigerian president, agreed that efforts should be made to reconcile contending forces in Okrika and to facilitate the resolution of the chieftaincy. They agreed that a similar reconciliation process would also be useful in Kalabari land. The need to rehabilitate and reintegrate disarmed youth was also stressed.

After a second meeting, the president established a committee chaired by Major-General (retired) Abdulahi Muhammed to follow up. Two subcommittees were also formed: the Disarmament Sub-Committee chaired by Governor Odili, and a Community Sub-Committee headed by the deputy governor of Bayelsa state, Dr Goodluck Jonathan. A Community Committee was also established for Okrika chaired by Professor Tekena Tamuno, a respected scholar. In Bugama, a similar committee will likely be established. Both subcommittees held a series of meetings between October and December 2004.

By mid-December 2004, the Disarmament Sub-Committee had collected 1,100 guns (HRW, 2005, p. 19). The state government offered USD 1,800 for the return of each assault rifle, and offered armed group members immunity from prosecution and the release of members held in detention in exchange for weapons (HRW, 2005, p. 19). In accordance with the agreement reached on 1 October 2004 in Abuja, weapons were collected from the various militias, including the Asari and Ateke groups. A general amnesty was granted, ending on 31 December 2004, after which persons and groups found in possession of weapons would be dealt with according to the law.

The disarmament programme has its limitations; observers argue that weapons surrendered are old, and that militiamen still have in their possession newer and more sophisticated weapons—nor has the process addressed root causes (HRW, 2005, p. 19). By October 2004, critics were expressing concern over the relatively low number of weapons surrendered by the NDPVF (200 weapons out of the estimated 3,000) (IRIN, 2004d). Despite these and other issues, the peace process has nevertheless brought a certain degree of peace.

Apparent calm, however, may not last if the current trend of incremental disorder continues. Two recent linked incidents only serve to highlight the fragility of peace in the region. On 5 November 2004, individuals suspected of being Ateke group members killed three members of the Asari faction (IRIN,

2004c). About a week before, Asari group members inflicted life-threatening injuries on some of Ateke's followers. Although the two factional leaders have so far resisted blaming each other and remain committed to peace, apparent differences could escalate into open conflict.

In Rivers state lasting peace is inevitably tied to the sustainable economic outlook of former combatants and other youth who remain susceptible to future recruitment into violent gangs. At the 5 November 2004 meeting, the facilitation team was asked to prepare a framework for a massive and rapid rehabilitation response that would gain the confidence of former combatants, affected communities, and the Rivers population as a whole. The communities identified as requiring immediate attention were Port Harcourt, Ogbakiri, Tombia, Okrika, and Buguma.

Armed groups and ethnic violence in Plateau state

Tensions between Muslim herders and Christian farmers over land and cattle led to several violent attacks and reprisals in 2001 and 2004—culminating in a bloody series of skirmishes between February and May 2004. More than 1,000 people were left dead and thousands displaced (Global IDP Project, 2004) following the September 2001 conflict in and around Jos, the state capital. The May 2004 killings in Yelwa, during which a Christian militia slaughtered several hundreds of Muslims in retaliation for the earlier massacre of 67 persons in a church in February 2004, led President Obasanjo to declare emergency rule in the state: the first time such measures had been taken since Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999.

The introduction in 2000 of strict Islamic Sharia law in 12 northern states intensified suspicion and introduced religious overtones into what was initially a classic dispute between indigenous farmers, traders, and herders (IRIN, 2004a). This sparked a spate of revenge killings against the Christian minority in northern Kano state (Global IDP Project, 2004). An official publication of the Plateau state government puts the number of displaced persons during 2001–04 at 150,000, with 150 villages destroyed and 50,000 households completely uprooted (Plateau State Government, 2004a, p. 5).

From ethnic militias to religious conflict

Between 2001 and 2004, Plateau state, which is a hub for northern Nigerian Christianity, was convulsed with a series of brutal armed conflicts involving various ethnic groups. Violence erupted mainly in the northern and southern zones. The northern zone is made up of six local government areas: Jos North, Jos South, Jos East, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa. Only Jos East remained untouched by conflict. The southern zone also consists of six local government areas: Wase, Langtang North, Langtang South, Shendam, Qua'an Pan, and Mikang, all of which were shaken by episodes of violence. In the central zone, local government areas such as in Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam were affected due to their proximity to the primary zones of fighting and kinship with people from the north and the south. This particular conflict has turned out to be more protracted, intense, and destructive than in the north.

Minority ethnic groups have exploited the religious component of these conflicts in order to further engage in farming and cattle rustling disputes in this mainly agrarian state. While both Christians (who are mainly farmers) and Muslims (primarily cattle herders) have pointed to identification cards recovered during combat as proof that their adversaries are religiously motivated, its true role is insignificant except for the fact that the various ethnic groups involved just happen to belong to one or the other. The Fulani and Wase militias are exclusively Muslim, for example, while the Taroh and Gamai militias are non-Muslim—and are made up of Christians and practitioners of African traditional religions (ATR). Some, more cynical, residents believe that political manoeuvring by local politicians intent on exploiting local tensions before the 2007 elections has contributed to the escalation of conflict (Global IDP Project, 2004).

Nearly all of ethnic groups residing within conflict-affected areas have formed armed militia or community defence groups—usually trained by members with previous military experience. These include the Berom, Anaguta, Afizere, Irigwe, Hausa, and Fulani in the north, and the Taroh, Gamai, Mernyang, Demak, Kwalla, Yom, Ter, Montol, Hausa of Wase, and Hausa of Yelwa in the south. Owing to limited resources, not all can afford small arms and must rely instead on traditional weapons such as machetes and bows. The larger groups, on the other hand, such as the Hausa, Fulani, Taroh, and

Gamai, enjoy access to different categories of military-type assault weapons. Several groups may also defend the interests of the same ethnic group. In Plateau North, the Berom militia was not centralized, but clustered so as to provide security to the various settlements in Jos, Du, Gyel, Vom, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bachit, among others.¹⁷

While field research confirms that armed resistance was usually organized along ethnic lines,¹⁸ since 2001 growing mutual suspicion has led to serious religious cleavages and violence. Religiously motivated operations, such as protecting or destroying places of worship, became common. Ethnic non-Muslim indigenous youth leaders interviewed felt that, after the 2002 and 2004 massacres of Christians, the Muslim enclave of Yelwa had become a threat to the stability and peace of the entire southern region.¹⁹ They perceived Islamic influence as expanding ever further with every renewed bout of fighting.

Violence also allegedly involved incursions by armed groups coming from outside and targeting local communities. Local ethnic communities in Plateau state—such as the Taroh, Gamai, and Berom—have accused the Fulani of hiring mercenaries from Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and other neighbouring countries to fight with them. Despite charges levied by Berom, Gamai, and Taroh leaders, no hard evidence backs up such claims.²⁰

Some residents and personnel working in community-based organizations operating in the southern zone believe that security forces sent to maintain law and order are often bribed to allow attackers from outside to come in and wreak havoc on local communities.²¹ Non-Muslims also contend that Islamic communities outside the state support their brethren in the Plateau by providing resources and arms. On the other hand, Muslims blame the church and certain Christian leaders for perpetrating and promoting armed violence against them. Complaints and counter-complaints, while common, can be attributed to the justifiable reactions to violence engendered by at least one, or indeed both, groups.

Needless to say, civilians suffered greatly. A study based on hospital data revealed that 16 per cent of the victims of fighting in and around Jos during 2001–02 were aged between 3 and 19, and more than a fourth were women (Uba et al., 2003). During the state of emergency, the government of Plateau

state set up a 23-member committee headed by Mr Thomas Kangna'an to conduct a census of IDPs both within and outside the state. The committee collaborated with the National Refugees Commission and developed questionnaires. It also trained personnel in survey administration, and submitted these to displaced persons. Not all could be reached, which left some gaps in coverage (Plateau State Government, 2004a, pp. 77–78). It was this committee that eventually estimated the total numbers of lives lost between September 2001 and May 2004 as approximately 53,000 (IRIN, 2004a). Officials from the suspended civilian democratic regime have contested this figure, however, because they contend that data comes from unverified claims filed by affected local groups.

Indeed, most of the petitions submitted by affected communities appear to have been exaggerated. For instance, the Muslim community in Yelwa Shendam, whose attack precipitated the state of emergency (Christians fled after the 2004 church killings), provided the following assessment—probably exaggerated—of the impact of the Christian militia's retaliatory attack.²²

- Six hundred and thirty people died from gunshot and machete cuts, of which 50 were married and single women, or girls; 250 were youth, and 100 elderly men and women, including the 66-year-old traditional leader of the town.
- One thousand five hundred people received gunshot and machete wounds.
- Property worth 800 million Nigerian Naira (USD 6 million) was destroyed.
- Twelve mosques, including two central mosques, were destroyed.
- Three markets were totally burnt down.
- Three hospitals and a motor park were destroyed.
- Thirty-two cars and lorries and 70 motorcycles were looted; 42 cars and lorries and 5 motorcycles were set ablaze.
- Twelve gas or petrol filling stations were destroyed.
- Five hundred children were taken away from the community by the attackers as spoils of war, and women variously raped by their captors.
- Ten thousand IDPs were in neighbouring states.
- One hundred and twenty women were missing.²³

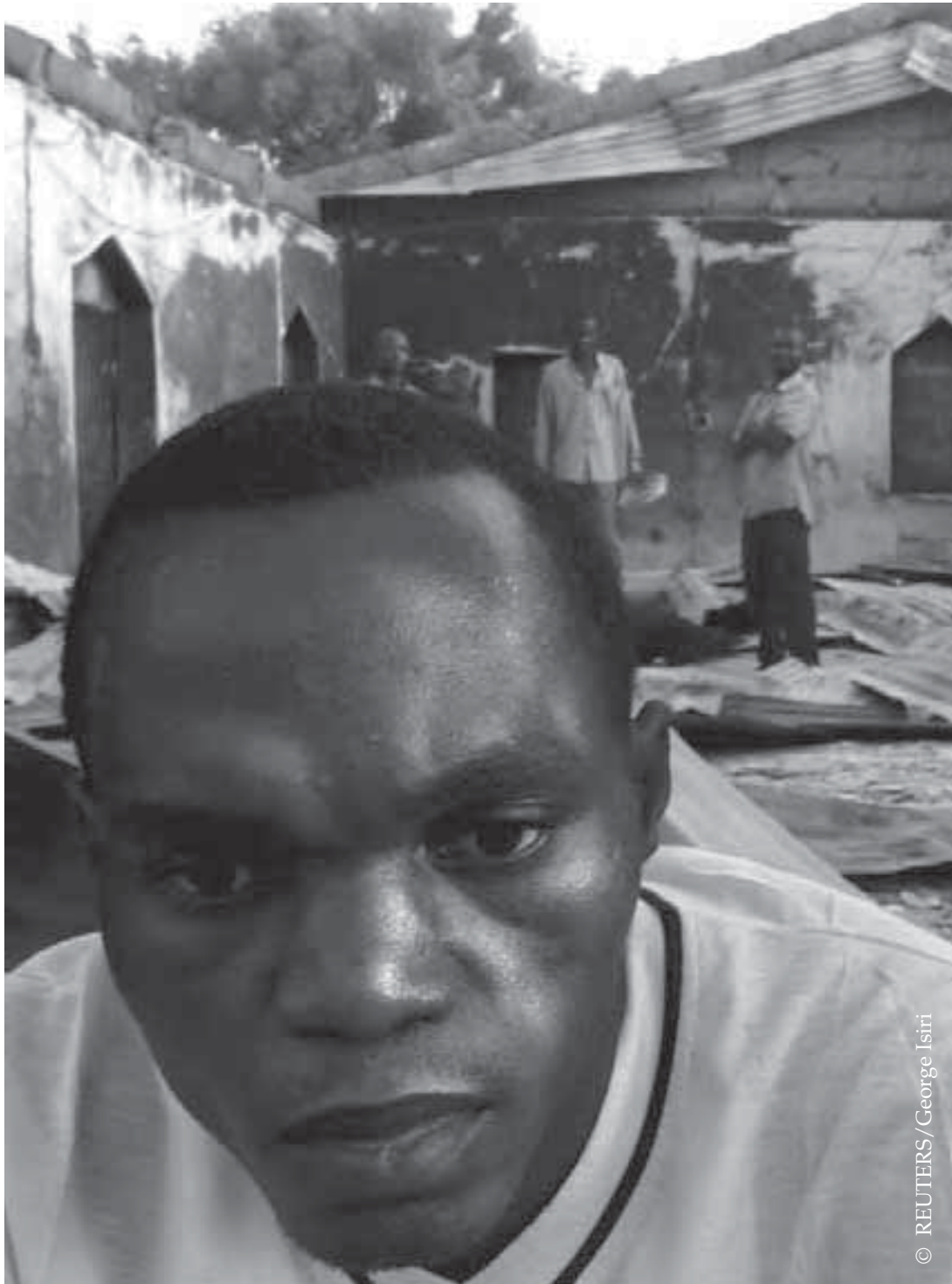
For its part, the indigenous Gamai tribe maintains that Hausa and Fulani Muslims, with the backing of foreign mercenaries, launched 42 armed attacks on their people.²⁴ The Gamai also produced a long list of hundreds of people killed, injured, displaced, or abducted during the conflict. By 3 May 2004, Muslims had intimidated, killed, and driven the entire non-Muslim population in Yelwa from their homes. Not a single church remained standing.²⁵ Other ethnic communities, such as the Taroh, Demak, Kwalla, Mernyang, Ter, and Montol, also claim lives were lost and property destroyed.

Human rights abuses involving the use of small arms were also recorded. These included deprivation of the right to worship, abduction of women, summary execution, and rape—often at gunpoint. All of the local ethnic communities interviewed—Hausa, Fulani, Gamai, Taroh, and so on—made similar accusations. Fighting caused the massive internal displacement of local populations. The Fulani population in Langtang North and South local government areas was totally sacked, and only pockets of Muslim settlements remained. Similarly, non-Muslim populations fled the Shendam, Qua'an Pan Wase, and Langtang South local government areas.

Cattle theft and rustling also intensified during the conflict. While the Fulani are the traditional cattle herders and owners, the Taroh and other indigenous tribes are also increasingly turning to livestock. Mutual cattle theft only deepened the animosities engendered by the conflict. While cattle theft provides the resources with which to acquire weapons, it also pushes owners to either take up weapons or to hire armed groups to protect their animals. The Hausa community in Yelwa claimed that about 700,000 cattle were stolen during the crisis.²⁶ For the Fulani especially, but also for the Taroh, cows and livestock are not merely animals but are central to their self-definition as a separate culture, to their dignity, and life.

Small arms availability and sources

Although craft weapons have long been present in the region, the state was relatively safe during the 1990s, with small arms proliferation becoming a problem only during recent ethnic clashes. The 1 September 2004 focus group meeting and subsequent field research identified the following as the main weapon types available in Plateau state: AK-47 and G3 assault rifles, SLRs, sub-



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Pastor Anifowoshe Caleb sits in front of the burnt Christ Apolistic Church in Kazaure, Jigawa state (northern Nigeria) on 21 November 2003. Religious clashes in Nigeria are not limited to Plateau state.

machine guns, light machine guns,²⁷ pistols and revolvers, craft single- and double-barrel shotguns and dane guns, locally made bombs,²⁸ as well as traditional weapons such as swords, machetes, and bows and arrows. Traditional instruments believed to be imbued with mystical powers, such as bamboo sticks,²⁹ were also used. The AK-47 was the most commonly used assault rifle. The origin of these weapons, however, remains undetermined owing to the fact that security agencies and armed groups did not allow the authors to inspect weapons.

Non-Muslim natives possess large numbers of craft small arms such as shotguns and dane guns—as do some Muslims. Owners traditionally use these for hunting, which is a popular local pastime. Non-Muslims claim it was the sheer number of such shotguns that overwhelmed Muslims, who possessed AK-47s³⁰ that were technologically superior, but relatively few in number. Muslims interviewed, however, dismiss this claim, and insist that indigenous non-Muslims, headed by the Taroh ethnic militia, attacked Muslim settlements with sophisticated military-type assault rifles and killed large numbers of people.³¹ In the Plateau, craft small arms are commonly available, are cheap even by local standards, and are locally crafted. They are used primarily for hunting, and only the extreme escalation of conflict caused people to use them to attack other citizens. Ammunition is not locally produced.³²

Combatants purchased weapons with contributions from community members fearful for their lives. The fact that places of worship and religious leaders were early targets suggests that both Muslim and Christian groups using their own funds were also involved in the acquisition of arms. Trusted ethnic and religious militia leaders and commanders usually held custody of such weapons and kept their location secret.³³

Interviews with both ethnic militia leaders and focus group participants revealed that a number of the weapons used in Plateau originated from internal and cross-border trafficking. Hired mercenaries and fighters brought in some arms from the neighbouring states of Nasarawa, Bauchi, and Taraba, usually on hire. Non-Muslim armed groups apparently purchased most of their weapons from the south-east, while Muslim groups looked northward to Chad and Niger and eastward to Cameroon for their weapons. Additional sources included other Nigerian conflict zones—such as Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Taraba.³⁴ Well-connected local arms brokers facilitated trafficking.

The south-eastern part of Nigeria, where the local crafting of weapons is highly developed and widespread, was another source. Awka was the centre of the Biafran secessionist arms industry during the 1967–70 Nigerian civil war. Following the end of hostilities, the local industry went underground, but has become more advanced and more sophisticated. Onitsha, on the bank of the Niger River in Anambra state, is a market town where craft weapons are sold.

Corrupt security agents sometimes also hired out their weapons, though for short periods of time, sometimes only overnight. Ex-service personnel also donated large numbers of weapons. Following the declaration of the May 2004 state of emergency, some petitioners claimed that regular and serving security personnel, including police, were among those fighting alongside parties to the conflict, and provided photographs to prove it.³⁵ Evidence suggests that official government assault rifles were used in the Plateau conflict. Because claims have yet to be officially investigated and verified, they can be neither confirmed nor denied.

The Plateau state of emergency and disarmament

As stated earlier, the federal government declared a state of emergency in May 2004—removing state governor Joshua Dariye and replacing him with a former army general, Chris Ali, for a period of six months (Global IDP Project, 2004). During emergency rule (18 May–18 November 2004), the Government of Plateau established special committees to look into matters arising from the conflict—such as internal population displacement, loss of lives and property, and possible reconciliation. The emergency regime was able to bring about a ceasefire, which was still holding as of late 2004.

The emergency administration also embarked on a programme that called on citizens to voluntarily surrender their arms and ammunition in exchange for cash. The government granted an amnesty period of 30 days, and later extended it. At the end, the Plateau state government announced that combatants had surrendered 300 weapons of different categories. The police, who supervised the process and received surrendered weapons, were reluctant to provide further details regarding numbers, type, and the condition of proffered weapons, or even where they had been collected. Officials claimed

that arms collection was a continuing exercise, and that they were in no position to comment. Most weapons were apparently recovered from the southern zone of the state, and it was rumoured that many of them were unserviceable.

In addition to receiving voluntarily surrendered weapons, the state government also ordered a cordon and search operation in Langtang North, Dengi, Wase, Qua'an Pan, and Shendam local government areas. On 28 August 2004, for instance, the Nigerian police, the army, and state security services recovered 75 rounds of live, and 10 rounds of expended, ammunition (Plateau State Government, 2004b, p. 60). Weapons seized to date include locally made pistols, rifles and shotguns, double-barrel shotguns, AK-47 and G3 assault rifles, and sub-machine guns (Plateau State Government, 2004a, pp. 59–60).

Generally speaking, all groups in the zone are uncertain whether the fragile peace is genuine and sustainable. In the course of field research, it became clear that people are still fearful of the possibility of future attacks. This makes the parties involved reluctant to disarm. Furthermore, the government has not enforced a compulsory disarmament aimed at forcing militias to relinquish their weapons. The issue also came up at the Plateau state peace conference held from 18 August to 21 September 2004. While members of the affected communities recognized the need for disarmament and its value to the peace process, some cautioned that it would create an opening for mercenaries from outside Plateau state to launch renewed attacks against local communities. They recommend that the federal government initiate a nationwide arms recovery programme, target neighbouring states, and stop armed attackers from entering Plateau state (Plateau State Government, 2004b, p. 92).

Conclusion

The increased incidence of armed conflict in Nigeria, particularly since the mid-1980s, fuelled the proliferation of small arms. Economic decline, which aggravated poverty and increased youth restiveness, undoubtedly facilitated this trend. Following the death of Abacha in 1999, and the rise of democracy, popular frustration with the Obasanjo-led civilian government has likely contributed to an upsurge in armed violence.

The general state of affairs has played a significant role in the rise of disparate armed groups throughout the country—as shown by the two case studies

explored here. Conflicts over oil, political power, and control over agrarian resources have involved very different actors. Armed groups in Rivers and Plateau states are of differing strengths, representing everything from small ethnic groups to large urban communities. Their allegiances are also varied and complex—and include politicians, traditional and religious leaders, drug lords, and organized crime syndicates. These can also shift—with community-based groups becoming increasingly motivated both politically and financially.

Although the supply of guns is not equal to the heavy demand generated by the current state of political and economic disarray, historical trends suggest that weapons are becoming increasingly accessible. Trafficking between conflict zones, corruption among security officials and politicians, and the rise of craft production are among the major sources of weapons identified here. The armament acquired by various groups over time has enabled them to carry out sporadic attacks and organized resistance. No group, however, has yet shown the capacity to engage in sustained combat with the Nigerian military.

The situation may well further deteriorate should ongoing trends continue. The need to halt the continued rise of armed groups will take on more urgency with the approach of the 2007 presidential elections. Whether the Nigerian government's efforts to resolve conflicts in Plateau and Rivers states succeed will greatly depend on several factors—chief among them the ability to create socio-economic opportunities for idle youth and to restore security in areas where confidence has long been lost. Neither disarmament nor peace initiatives, while commendable, will hold until the deeper problems affecting Nigerian society are addressed and dealt with.

List of abbreviations

AAPW	Academic Associates PeaceWorks
ANPP	All Nigeria People's Party
ATR	African traditional religions
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
GPMG	General purpose (light) machine gun
IDP	Internally displaced person
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
JIBWIS	Jama'atu Izalatil Bidia Wa'I Kamatus Sunnah
JNI	Jama'atu Nasril Islam
LGA	Local government area
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign state of Biafra
MG	Machine gun
NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDV	Niger Delta Vigilante
OPC	O'odua People's Congress
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SLR	Self-loading rifle
TAPYA	Taroh Progressive Youth Association

Endnotes

- 1 Our Niger Delta is an influential NGO comprising well-known youth and civil society leaders in the Niger Delta pursuing peace and democratic development in the region.
- 2 AAPW is a leading Nigerian NGO specializing in conflict management. It has worked in many of the nation's conflict flashpoints, including the Niger Delta.
- 3 For complementary information, see 'Nigeria' in Part II of this book.
- 4 There are indications that remnants of the Maitatsine still exist in other parts of Nigeria. For instance, the Nigerian police raided a group at Rafin Pa in Jos North local government area in December 2003 and killed some members of a group which the Plateau state government claimed were members of the Maitatsine sect. No large-scale armed conflict has been carried on in the name of the group since 1993, however.
- 5 Also called traditional rulers. The Nigerian government used these local chiefs in an attempt to retain pre-colonial political and cultural institutions. They go by different names and designations depending on the section of Nigeria in question. In the Muslim north most are Emirs, in the south-west Obas, in the Ibo areas of the south-east Eze, and so on.
- 6 See also Nigeria mapping in Part II of this book. Other recent groups include the 'Shiite' movement in the north of Nigeria (Best, 1999), rhetorical but unarmed, and the 'Taliban' organization, active mainly in the north-eastern states of Borno and Yobe (IRIN, 2004b).
- 7 'Oil bunkering' means stealing crude oil.
- 8 The most notable of such groups is the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB) based in the south-east of the country. This movement, although unarmed and committed to non-violent struggle, aims to re-enact the south-eastern secessionist bid of 1967–70 as a way of fighting against the perceived political under-representation of ethnic Igbos.
- 9 The Ijaw is the dominant ethnic group in the Niger Delta.
- 10 Onyefie Jon Jon was subsequently elected as the IYC's new president.
- 11 A 2003 study based on 610 autopsy records found that 86 per cent of homicide victims in Rivers state between 1986 and 2000 were males, while almost 60 per cent were aged between 20 and 40. The study also found that firearms were the most common weapon used, and communal conflict and armed banditry were the primary motivating factors behind homicide cases (Seleye-Fubara and Etebu, 2003).
- 12 Based on field observation by the authors.
- 13 Money is reportedly not enough to purchase automatic weapons in Rivers state. NDPEHRD (2004, p. 5) reports that the market is highly protected and seriously restricted, and involves aides to top state officials.

- 14 These weapon sources were identified during the 30 August 2004 Port Harcourt focus group discussions. Additional references are provided where available to back up focus group results.
- 15 Confirmed during authors' private discussions with militants, September 2004.
- 16 See, for instance, the 14 July 2004 surrender by an armed group of two Nigerian Army weapons documented in NDPEHRD (2004, p. 3).
- 17 Interview with a Berom Youth leader, Jos, 1 October 2004.
- 18 Discussions with retired navy Captain Ishaku Fanto and Honourable Ishaya Nankap at Garkawa and Langtang, respectively, November 2004.
- 19 Interviews with ethnic youth leaders in Langtang and Garkawa, 15 November 2004.
- 20 Discussions with Nanyak. A letter from the Ngwang Ishi O Taroh, a cultural organization of the ethnic Taroh in Wase, accused the Emir of Wase of importing these mercenaries in a letter addressed to the Administrator of Plateau state titled 'Panacea Peace in Plateau state', 20 July 2004, p. 2.
- 21 Confidential interviews with local residents and civil society organizations, Southern Plateau state, November 2004.
- 22 Compilation by the Muslim community under the auspices of the Ulama/Elders Council, Plateau state, June 2004.
- 23 Attacking militias in the southern zone of Plateau state commonly use the psychological weapon of abducting women into forced marriage, sex slavery, or other forms of humiliation.
- 24 The four largest attacks occurred on 24 February and 26 June 2002, and 2 and 18 May 2004.
- 25 The Gamai community in Yelwa-Inshar, Plateau state, 2004, 'Road Map to Peace in Plateau state: The Yelwa-Shendam LG Case', memo to Special Plateau state Government Committee 'C', June.
- 26 Letter from Alhaji Danbaba Abdullahi II on Behalf of the Yelwa Rehabilitation Committee, to the Secretary, Special Plateau state Government Committee 'C', 7 June 2004.
- 27 For instance, a GPMG was used at Rim village, in Riyom local government area, Plateau state.
- 28 These include petrol and kerosene bombs and other high explosives that were used to attack people and also bring down buildings. The Jos main market was demolished by very high explosives. Details are not available because the government failed to institute an inquest into the destruction of the market. An attempt was made to blow up a bridge using similar explosives.
- 29 Elderly, rural people of the Berom ethnic group called Gwelle are known bamboo stick users. The stick is a traditional defence instrument that increases the protective power of those who hold it.
- 30 For instance, interview with Captain Ishaku Fanto (retd.), a resident of Garkawa, southern Plateau state, 15 November 2004, and Ishaya Namkap, a youth leader at Langtang.
- 31 Discussion with Dauda Damparimi from Wase local government area at Langtang and Jos, December 2004.

- 32 The focus group discussion of 1 September 2004 confirmed that there were no local producers of ammunition. This was confirmed during field research in informal discussions in the southern zone of the state.
- 33 Christians interviewed maintain that the Muslim organizations like Jama'atu Izalatil Bidia Wa'I Kamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS) and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) stock weapons and arms. The Muslims believe Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been doing the same.
- 34 Taraba borders Cameroon, and was affected by rampant armed robbery and conflict during the late 1980s and 1990s. The authorities made little effort to recover these weapons, which included assault rifles.
- 35 See for instance, a letter from the Taroh Progressive Youth Association (TAPYA), 'Breach of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom by the Army in Langtang North and South Local Government Areas, April 2004 to June 2004', addressed to the Chief of Army Staff, Army Headquarters Abuja, 21 June 2004. Photographs of army kits and uniforms were attached.

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INSURGENCY, DISARMAMENT, AND INSECURITY IN NORTHERN MALI, 1990–2004

By Nicolas Florquin and Stéphanie Pézard

Introduction

Despite a ground-breaking approach to disarmament and peace, and a sustained engagement in regional and international small arms control initiatives, the proliferation of light weapons continues to threaten Mali's stability. In 1996 the 'Flame of Peace' ceremony in Timbuktu—which saw the symbolic incineration of 3,000 small arms—and the demobilization of some 12,000 ex-combatants formally marked the end of the 1990–96 Tuareg-Arab rebellion. Nevertheless, continued weapons trafficking, terrorist activity, and increased insecurity are reminders that the situation in northern Mali is still far from secure.

This chapter examines the roots of current small arms-related threats to Mali's internal stability. It documents how armed groups involved in the 1990–96 rebellion procured their armaments in an initially weapons-scarce environment. It also provides insights into how the groups managed and controlled their arsenals, and how levels of weapons supply and misuse may have shifted during the course of conflict. Finally, the chapter assesses the extent to which the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of Malian ex-combatants succeeded in re-establishing a climate of security in northern Mali, and how weapons used during the rebellion found their way into civilian and criminal stockpiles.

Available literature, as well as new field research conducted during the course of this project, informs the information and analysis contained herein. These include interviews and field research in Mali and Niger coordinated by

Mahamadou Nimaga for the Small Arms Survey in September 2004. The analysis also relies extensively on two-day focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants that the Small Arms Survey organized in Bamako on 2–3 September 2004 with the support of the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Firhouroun Mahamar Maiga, a former combatant of the Mouvement patriotique de Ganda Koy (MPGK) and now an active member of Malian civil society, travelled to Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal in July 2004 to identify 25 potential participants. He then selected seven ex-combatants¹ based on their level of influence within particular armed groups and their ability to communicate in French. Discussions concentrated on what weapons are now available to armed groups, the role and traditional symbolism of guns, the use of small arms during combat, and the Malian DDR programme.²

Main findings are as follows:

- Since 1990, Mali has faced different degrees of armed violence perpetrated by insurgents and community-based militias involved in the 1990–96 Tuareg-Arab rebellion, as well as armed incursions undertaken by the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC) terrorist organization.
- At the outset of the insurgency, Malian armed groups relied almost exclusively on weapons captured during combat or seized from state armouries.
- Weapons and ammunition supply was of critical concern to Malian armed groups. Lack of weapons and ammunition forced them to undertake, at times, specific operations to seize or purchase material.
- Ammunition scarcity forced armed groups not to waste ammunition, thereby limiting the risk of collateral damage. Specific measures included setting assault rifles on single-shot mode and applying tough sanctions against combatants who wasted ammunition.
- As the conflict persisted, a number of weapons wound up in the hands of civilians and bandits who did not belong to armed groups. Weapons-trafficking networks, which had operated since the 1930s, expanded their reach and intensified.

- Failure to collect ammunition during DDR coupled with a widely available supply of weapons coming into Mali from West Africa's conflict hot spots have contributed to continued weapons proliferation in the north. Given recent GSPC incursions and the broader context of persistent inter-tribal tensions, this poses a serious threat to regional security.

Small arms in the insurgency (1990–1996)

Historical background

Frustration among nomadic Tuareg and Arabs who had long sought greater autonomy from Mali and Niger ignited the 1990–96 rebellion in the north. In 1963–64, the army defeated an earlier uprising, forcing rebel leaders into exile in Algeria and Libya. From the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, the worsening drought in the Sahel inspired additional numbers of Tuareg refugees to join guerrilla groups. A number of exiles subsequently volunteered and received training from the section general command of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and during the 1980s' Libyan campaign in Chad (Lecocq, 2004). They also founded the Front populaire pour la libération du Sahara arabe central (later Armée de libération du Nord du Mali), an organization seeking independence for northern areas of Mali and Niger. In 1988, the Malian section split from its Nigerien counterpart to form the Mouvement populaire de libération de l'Azawad (MPLA) (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 19). Under President Moussa Traoré's regime, government repression in the north led the MPLA to plan a new rebellion, initially scheduled for 1992 or 1993.

Following the end of the 1980s' oil boom, subsequent economic downturn, and the defeat of Libya's President Qadafy in Chad in 1986, Tuareg immigrants became increasingly unwelcome in Libya, which led a number to return home. The Malian army, informed of rebel activity and plans to launch a rebellion, harassed and arrested returnees in Gao and Kidal in May 1990 (Lecocq, 2002, p. 231). This increased pressure prompted rebels to launch early attacks on Malian government posts in June 1990, propelling the rebellion two years ahead of schedule. At the time, some experts believed numbers of insurgents to be relatively small at an estimated two hundred.³ Reports pinned Malian army personnel at about 7,000-strong (Heyman, 2000).

The first six months of the rebellion consisted of a series of successful, well-planned rebel attacks, which eventually forced the government to recognize that the insurgents would not be easily defeated. By the end of 1990, they numbered an estimated 2,000⁴ to 3,000 men (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 20). On 5 and 6 January 1991, negotiations were held in Tamanrasset, Algeria (Lecocq, 2002, p. 236). The Tamanrasset Accords provided for more decentralization and the recognition of greater autonomy for the north and the integration of rebel combatants into the Malian army. The Accords were never applied, however, because two months later a popular uprising toppled the signatory Traoré government. A new round of negotiations led to the signing of the National Pact in April 1992. By then, the rebels had split into four movements based on tribal and clan affiliation: the Mouvement populaire de l'Azawad (MPA), the Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (FIAA), the Front populaire pour la libération de l'Azawad (FPLA), and the Armée révolutionnaire pour la libération de l'Azawad (ARLA).

Failure to implement the National Pact, and internal divisions within the rebel movements, led to bitter internal fighting between armed groups, which in turn contributed to rampant insecurity and the creation in 1994 of the MPGK: an armed militia composed mainly of sedentary Songhoy and tacitly supported by the Malian army. Throughout 1994, unprecedented ethnic tensions and violence erupted between the army and the MPGK on the one hand, and rebel movements on the other. Unrest gradually ceased after Songhoy and Tuareg community leaders initiated a series of local peace and reconciliation initiatives, which led to a number of agreements between the different parties. These included the 27 March 1996 Flame of Peace ceremony in Timbuktu, and the demobilization of some 12,000 ex-combatants (Boukhari, 2000; Kivimaki, 2003). In 1999, the government also initiated further decentralization and increased autonomy for northern Mali (Lecocq, 2004).

*Overcoming weapons scarcity*⁵

At the outset of the rebellion Malian insurgents possessed few weapons. Some researchers even suggest that the MPLA initiated the uprising with a single AK-47 (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 3). Indeed, rebels reportedly relied primarily on knives during the first series of attacks

(Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 3). During the opening six months of the rebellion, the primary aim of insurgents was to seize weapons, ammunition, petrol, cars, and food (Lecocq, 2002, p. 232). In its first attack on a government post in Tidaghmene on 29 June 1990, the MPLA captured a dozen assault rifles, while in a subsequent attack in Ménaka MPLA fighters netted approximately 500 weapons, including 124 assault rifles (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 3).

Rebel arsenals largely comprised weapons seized and captured from Malian army stockpiles. This assertion is supported by the fact that the groups' weapons were primarily of Russian and Chinese origin (see Table 2.1), as Mali benefited from Soviet support during the 1970s and 1980s (Heyman, 2000, p. 460).⁶ Consequently, weapons such as the FN CAL Belgian assault rifle and its successor the FN FNC, which rebels purchased in small numbers in Mauritania, proved of little use because they required NATO-type ammunition (5.56 x 45 mm calibre). Such ammunition was unusual—and therefore hard to find—in Mali.

The Malian army also reportedly provided arms to the self-defence units that emerged in response to the Tuareg rebellion, later forming the MPGK (K. Keita, 1998, p. 20). Like their Tuareg counterparts, they counted among their ranks soldiers who had deserted from the Malian army (Lecocq, 2004) and had brought their weapons with them (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998, p. 71; K. Keita, 1998, p. 20; Baqué, 1995). Some soldiers also sold their weapons to MPGK combatants during the rebellion.

Broadly speaking, the rebel and MPGK arsenal included AK-47s, rifles, pistols, and a few grenade launchers, machine guns, and mortars (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998, pp. 116–117). The more detailed arsenal presented in Table 2.1 illustrates the overall scarcity of modern weapons, as well as the lack of light weapons (heavy machine guns, for instance) and light weapons ammunition (see also Table 2.2). Cartridges of 12.7 mm were more difficult to find than smaller calibres, limiting the use of weapons such as the Russian DShk or the Chinese Type 77 heavy machine guns. The most difficult type of ammunition to find, however, was that used for mortars and rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs). This was because Malian armed forces possessed only a small number of these.

Table 2.1 Small arms and light weapons used by Malian armed groups during the rebellion (1990-1996)

Small arms (country of manufacture, years of production or service)	
Revolvers	Arminius Model 10 (Germany, 1895–1945), Astra 357 Police (Spain, 1980–), Manurhin MR73 (France, 1973–), Nagant: Russian Model 1895 (Belgium and the Russian Federation, 1895–1950)
Pistols	Astra A-50 (Spain, 1960–), Beretta Model 1931 (Italy, 1931–45), Beretta Model 1934 (Italy, 1934–45), Beretta M 951 (Italy, 1953–82), Browning 1903 (Belgium, 1903–), Browning 1910 (Belgium, 1910–), Browning high-power Model 1935 (Belgium, 1935–), MAB PA-15 (France, 1975–90), Makarov (Russian Federation, 1952–), Sauer M38H (Germany, 1938–45), Stechkin (Russian Federation, 1951–75), Tokarev (Russian Federation, 1930–)
Rifles and carbines	Mannlicher-Carcano TS (Italy, 1891–1918), MAS M1e 1936 (France, 1936–55), Mauser Karabiner 98k (Germany, 1935–45), Mosin-Nagant rifle (Russian Federation, 1892–1950)
Assault rifles	Chinese-type 68 rifle (China, 1970–), FN Cal (Belgium, 1966–75), FN FNC (Belgium, 1979–), FN Minimi (Belgium, 1982–), Heckler and Koch G3 (Germany, 1964–), Kalashnikov AK-47 (Romania and the Russian Federation, 1947–), Type 56 (China, 1958–), Simonov SKS (Russian Federation, 1946–)
Light machine guns	12.7 mm Gepard M2 (Hungary, 1994–), PK (Russian Federation, 1964–), RPK (Russian Federation, 1955–), 7.62 mm RPD (Russian Federation, 1962–)
Light weapons (country of manufacture, years of production or service)	
Heavy machine guns	DShK (Russian Federation, 1938–80), Type 77 (China, 1980–)
Portable anti-tank guns*	RPG-7
Mortars*	60 mm and 81/82 mm

* *In contrast with the other weapon entries, ex-combatants provided no further data which would help determine the country of manufacture and years of production or service of both mortars and portable anti-tank guns.*

Sources: Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004. Country and date of production or service from Hogg (2002).

Army seizures and illegal sales by soldiers and Malian officers were the main sources of arms supply during the rebellion. Malian armed groups, by and large, lacked the material support of foreign governments during the conflict period. While some Tuareg fighters received training (but no arms⁷) from Libya in the 1980s (M. Keita, 2002, p. 9), such support had ceased by the time the rebellion broke out (Lecocq, 2004).

Many of the older revolvers, pistols, and carbines, notably the Mauser 98K, the MAS 36, and Berettas, as well as the Manlicher Carcano carbine, were typically a 'family possession'. Indeed, arms trafficking in the Sahara has historical depth far surpassing the rebellions. Mausers and Manlichers had been the object of a lively arms trade ever since the 1930s in the Sahara; it intensified during the 1940s and again during the Algerian war of independence, the end of which saw the release of large quantities of small arms. Colonial and early independence military and police forces used the MAS-36, which was favoured by rebels during the 1963 uprisings. In the 1980s, exiled fighters in Libya procured arms at the market at the Passe de Salvador on the Chad-Libya-Algeria border.⁸

Outside support for Malian armed groups provided only a minor weapons source during the rebellion, and was primarily limited to diaspora communities living in neighbouring countries. The Songhoy in Nigeria and Ghana reportedly provided arms to the MPGK (K. Keita, 1998, p. 20, fn. 54) and paid individual 'transporters' to carry and deliver weapons to members of the group in Gao. The Songhoy Diaspora in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria offered active financial support (Lecocq, 2002, p. 273).

Tuareg and Arab groups dispatched special expeditions to buy weapons on the illicit market in Mauritania. Arms were transported by caravans of camels and donkeys or, when available, four-by-four vehicles. During the early stages of the rebellion, these trafficking expeditions were relatively insignificant and limited to traditional smuggling routes. Over the years, however, networks were expanded to include other countries in the region (including states in the Mano River Union basin). A number remain active today and contribute to continued weapons proliferation throughout the north.

Finally, rebels and the MPGK also seized a number of weapons from the civilian population. It is worth noting that, while reports indicate the existence of illicit workshops producing craft hunting rifles, shotguns, and pistols in Mali (Nimaga, 2003; Kante, 2004), Malian armed groups appeared to rely primarily on industrially produced weapons.

*Storage, use, and misuse*⁹

During the first years of the rebellion, the scarcity of weapons and ammunition forced Malian armed groups to maintain a certain discipline when it came to accounting for, distributing, and using weapons and ammunition.

When it came to weapons storage, each base appointed one person to be responsible for the systematic account of weapons as well as their distribution to combatants. The base kept rigorous watch over all small arms except when under a state of alert, in which case all combatants received a weapon for the purposes of defence. All arms acquired during combat became the *de facto* property of the movement—although it appears that not all operation leaders declared the totality of weapons seized to base commanders, but kept some for themselves. When a new recruit brought his personal weapon, it automatically became the property of the group.

Leaders provided combatants with different weapons and set amounts of ammunition depending on the type of operation they participated in (major attacks, ambushes, and sabotage operations) and the role assigned. Table 2.2 illustrates how, in the context of the Malian rebellion, different weapon categories had specific uses. Each combatant was responsible for arms provided, and the base kept records of his name and the number of his weapon. Group members who were not trusted or were poor shooters were not given weapons for fear that they would steal or misuse them.

The amount of ammunition commanders distributed depended on the type of weapon carried: combatants carrying a machine gun would need on average six belts of 30 cartridges each; an automatic pistol came with two magazines; and an RPG came with a maximum of two shells. Other selection criteria determining what weapons were most appropriate for combatants depended on their physical strength and the necessity not to overload them.

Table 2.2 Weapon uses in the Malian context, by category

Weapon category	Operation type	Advantages	Flaws
Revolvers and pistols	Small operations (looting, kidnapping, carjacking), guarding prisoners	Easy to conceal, availability of ammunition	None
Rifles and carbines	Short operations	Availability of ammunition, accuracy	Not resistant to long- and/or high-intensity combat
Assault rifles	Short and long operations, medium- and high-intensity combat	Availability of ammunition	Some makes (such as Chinese Type 56) not resistant to long operations
Light machine guns	Short and long operations, high-intensity combat	Availability of ammunition	Some models (DSHK/M, M2, M2A1) require a spare barrel
Heavy machine guns	Long operations, high-intensity combat	Firepower	Scarcity of ammunition
RPGs	Combat with armoured vehicles	Firepower	Short range, scarcity of ammunition
Mortars	Urban warfare, destruction of armoured vehicles and buildings	Firepower	Weight, lack of mobility, scarcity of ammunition

Sources: Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.

The way combatants wielded their weapons was heavily conditioned by the relative scarcity of arms and ammunition, and the need to avoid shortages. When out of ammunition, armed groups set their rifles on single-shot mode and undertook specific operations to replenish their stocks. When undertaking small assaults against police stations, for instance, they sent only their best shooters in order to waste as little ammunition as possible. They also systematically retrieved the weapons and ammunition of those who fell during

fighting. Some members of the group were specifically detailed to pick up dead and wounded combatants on the battlefield as well as all weapons and ammunition that could be recuperated.

The relative scarcity of ammunition also explains why armed groups enforced strict rules governing when and on what grounds combatants could open fire.¹⁰ Shooting in the air, for instance, amounted to wasting ammunition and was punished with sanctions that included temporary isolation (and being prohibited from going on mission), head shaving (considered a sign of shame), or even the infliction of severe pain.¹¹

On the misuse of weapons against civilians, it is interesting to note that in the early stages of the rebellion rebels actively sought civilian buy-in for their cause—the 1960s rebellion had lacked popular support and gave the rebels the image of ‘Tuareg bandits’ acting on their own. Strategies included making the location of their bases public and distinct from civilian areas in order to prevent the Malian army from harassing the population (Lecocq, 2002, p. 235). The rebels also applied tough sanctions (similar to those applied to group members who had wasted ammunition) against fighters who mistreated civilians. Furthermore, there are no reports of Malian armed groups using or recruiting child soldiers, although many combatants had entered Libyan training camps at a very young age.¹²

Tuareg war ethics and relative discipline in the deployment of weapons may explain why the human toll in the first years of the Malian rebellion was in no way comparable to that of armed conflicts in Liberia or Sierra Leone. Another explanation might be that the rebellion was motivated by political ideals, whereas the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia were largely economic wars of plunder. It appears, however, that to a great extent Malian fighters applied their own rules of engagement (see also Lecocq, 2002, ch. 4). Although aware of the Geneva Conventions, as non-state actors they did not feel particularly bound by them.

As the conflict wore on and the rebels split into factions, in 1994 reports began to trickle in of the MPGK, FIAA, and MPLA looting and engaging in inter-tribal killings of civilians (Lecocq, 2002, pp. 275–76, citing various press and Amnesty International reports; see also Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 27). Group commanders argue that, while the core of each group con-

tinued to follow a strict code of honour, a number of bandits claiming to be affiliated with insurgents took advantage of the rebellion to loot villages.¹³ While this period did coincide with rising banditry (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2003, p. 26), divisions within the rebel movement itself over hierarchy and representation of the various clans overshadowed initial political goals, making abuses against civilians more likely.

The resulting inter-communal conflict and insecurity led to bitter fighting and unprecedented atrocities between the MPGK and the army on one side and the various rebel movements on the other. These ceased only after community leaders engaged in a series of local peace initiatives at the end of 2004 (Lecocq, 2002, pp. 265, 275–76). Overall, the rebellion led to 2,500–3,000 deaths,¹⁴ about 200,000 Malian refugees (Refugees International, 2003), and 50,000 IDPs (WFP, 1997).

Disarmament and persisting insecurity (1996–2004)

The Malian DDR or the limits of a success story

With local peace initiatives under way, the government, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a donor roundtable in Timbuktu in July 1995. During the meeting, the government presented its Programme de normalisation et de réhabilitation du Nord, which set out an ambitious plan to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants and to provide development support for the northern region through the Programme d'appui à la réinsertion économique des ex-combattants du Nord Mali (PAREM). The meeting also put in place a DDR Trust Fund, which, by late 1997, had attracted USD 10 million in donor monies (see Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998).

The disarmament effort relied on the voluntary surrender of arms. Ex-combatants handed in their weapons in exchange for the opportunity to participate in community development programmes. At the Timbuktu Flame of Peace a total of 3,000 weapons were destroyed in front of 10,000 spectators—a precursor for many such ceremonies now held around the world. Designed as a grandiose national event, the Flame of Peace was designed to symbolically mark the end of unrest, the reintegration of former rebels into the



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Meeting of Tuareg, Songhoy and other leaders to discuss peace and disarmament after the rebellion.

Malian nation, and the reconciliation of nomadic (Tuareg and Arab) and sedentary (Songhoy) communities (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998, pp. 120–22).

A total of 12,000 former group members¹⁵ benefited from Mali's DDR programme between 1995 and late 1997, when the programme officially ended.¹⁶ About 2,400 joined the Malian armed forces, while 9,530 others received three separate sums of 100,000 CFA Francs (approximately USD 200)¹⁷ to start up small businesses. These demobilization subsidies were sometimes supplemented by micro-credit loans designed to fund specific individual projects (Boukhari, 2000). The overall Malian peace process successfully halted the rebellion, dismantled the various armed groups involved, and laid the foundations for sustainable peace. Reintegration, in particular, was a relative success story. By 2000, 90 per cent of reintegrated former combatants were still earning a living from employment acquired during reintegration (Boukhari, 2000).

Questionable, however, was the efficacy of the disarmament component apart from the symbolic reconciliatory role of the Flame of Peace (see, for instance, Kopel, Gallant, and Eisen, 2003). Former combatants of all sides argue that only a fraction of the 3,000 weapons burnt in the Flame of Peace were actually used during the rebellion; some people handed in old, hardly usable weapons; others who had never fought at all proffered weapons for the express purpose of qualifying as ex-combatants and thus benefiting from the reintegration programme.¹⁸

As with most DDR programmes, many weapons did not find their way to the Flame of Peace. Some ended up in other conflict zones, with the borders of countries such as Mauritania, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire particularly permeable to arms traffickers.¹⁹ Continued insecurity and distrust in the peace process led many ex-combatants and civilians to retain their weapons. A number of community leaders, in particular, remain heavily armed—undoubtedly to 'wait and see' whether hostilities resume. Relative disillusionment with the peace process and vestiges of tension between communities also led a number of civilians to keep weapons.²⁰ Most of the bandits who operated under the guise of fighters and took advantage of the rebellion to rob civilians and loot villages kept their arms and continued to pursue their illicit activities.

Also worth noting is that the disarmament process resulted in only small amounts of ammunition being collected. Weapons were typically handed in with only one cartridge, and most people kept their ammunition and stored it in a safe place.²¹ The Flame of Peace itself did not include the destruction of any ammunition, which was removed from the weapons prior to burning for security reasons (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998, p. 120, fn. 11). For former combatants and civilians, remaining stockpiles of ammunition became an incentive to acquire corresponding weapons—a trend that effectively negated efforts to disarm.²²

In addition to DDR, the government of Mali, with support from Belgium, conducted a weapons-for-development programme from December 2000 to June 2003.²³ Project personnel collected and destroyed 850 weapons, 12,548 rounds of ammunition, and 230 grenades (GoM, 2003). Five communes (Léré, Dianké, Soumpi, Tienkour, and Diré) in the Timbuktu region participated in the programme, and received community funds to establish small development projects as incentives for turning in their arms. All 850 weapons collected were destroyed during ‘mini-flames of peace’ in Léré (9 July 2001), Diré (10 July 2001), and Soumpi (3 May 2003) (GoM, 2003).

Gun smuggling and insecurity

Despite the peace and disarmament process, the northern part of Mali, which borders Mauritania, Algeria, and Niger, is still plagued with gun trafficking and persistent insecurity. Small arms are now widely available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that every family in the region owns at least one weapon,²⁴ with some families and community leaders reportedly stockpiling several dozens of arms.²⁵

Although not a small arms-producing country, Mali appears to have become a recipient country for arms smuggled from elsewhere in the region. Recent examples include the 25 November 2004 seizure of a 32-weapon cache, including heavy machine guns and automatic rifles, located in a Bamako store (Maliweb, 2004). Since the rebellion, the number of networks and smuggling routes for small arms has increased. During the early 1990s, Mauritania and Nigerian criminal gangs were the main suppliers of illegal weapons to northern Mali, along with other syndicates that favoured older

smuggling routes originating in Chad. Due partly to networks established during and after the rebellion, illegal arms supply has now become more diversified, with weapons originating from several of West Africa's conflict zones, and trafficking networks stretching all the way to Sudan.²⁶

The main sources of smuggled weapons today include Mauritania, Algeria, Niger,²⁷ as well as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea (Maliweb, 2004). In Guinea, for instance, the most significant seizures of small arms in 2004 occurred on the border with Mali (Milner, 2004). From February to September 2004, authorities regularly confiscated minor shipments of small arms (typically six to twelve AK-47s) on the border en route to Bamako (Milner, 2004). Within Mali, sources include stolen stockpiles belonging to the Malian army (Maliweb, 2004), weapons sold by corrupt members of Malian security forces,²⁸ and craft production (Kante, 2004). The River Niger is a common route for arms smuggling: arms are packed into waterproof sacks attached under boats. The amount of traffic on the river and the ease with which some customs officers accept bribes explain the relative impunity smugglers enjoy (Boukari, 2000).

Continued underdevelopment, combined with the lack of administrative and governmental control over the Sahelian desert, has contributed to an increase in banditry in northern Mali. This part of the country has traditionally been a haven for bandits and smugglers—the difference being that they are now well armed owing to the remnants of the rebellion and persistent small arms proliferation (Nimaga, 2004). Criminal groups and bandits (*coupeurs de routes*) operating in northern Mali usually target property (such as cattle), vehicles, and individuals.

Criminality has hampered development prospects for the local population and proven problematic for the work of some humanitarian organizations. In 2004, vehicles belonging to the Malian Red Cross and the Canadian NGO Solidarity, Union, Cooperation (SUCO) were hijacked (IRIN, 2004b). Kidnappings have also taken place; for example, in December 2004 kidnapers abducted two men from Qatar and demanded a ransom of USD 375,000 from a Qatari prince in exchange for their release. The Malian army eventually liberated the two hostages (Sylla, 2005).

Alongside banditry, and sometimes concealed by it, are a number of inter-tribal small-scale armed conflicts fought over local natural resources and supported by local political and tribal leaders. These include the Arab-Kunta conflict and skirmishes between Fulani and Daoussahak herdsmen in north-east Mali. The former has been particularly active since 1999, resulting in the deaths of 40 people that same year (Boukhari, 2000). In September 2004, 16 Arabs and Kuntas imprisoned for their involvement in previous violence escaped from the Gao prison. Renewed fighting five days later ended with 13 people dead (IRIN, 2004b). In a separate incident in June 1999, ex-rebel Ibrahim Bahanga of the Iforgoumousen clan violently abducted the entire electoral committee during communal elections following previous fights with rival clans at the Tejerert wells in 1997 and 1998. This move was the latest episode in a land dispute that has been simmering since the 1910s and was marked by violent clashes in 1948 and again in 1973.²⁹

Increasing unrest has triggered an arms race between communities attempting to stockpile more and more weapons for protection, which in turn is fuelling mutual suspicion and further insecurity.³⁰ One particularly worrying trend is not only the increasing proliferation of small-calibre weapons, but also the wider availability of larger, more damaging arms such as mortars and RPGs.³¹ Young people, even those uninvolved with banditry, are showing an increasing tendency towards arming themselves—sometimes heavily.³² Increasing numbers of armed civilians raise prospects of renewed inter-tribal fighting. Insecurity has led a number of northern region inhabitants to ask the government to reinstall, at least temporarily, the military posts dismantled following the 1991 peace process (Boukhari, 2000; IRIN, 2004b; ICG, 2005b, p. 19).

Small arms and terrorist activity in the Sahel

Insecurity and weapons availability have raised concerns that northern Mali in particular, and the Sahel in general may become a hub for North African terrorist activity. These fears have been justified by the recent activities of the Algerian Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC). The Sahel region is particularly attractive to terrorist groups such as the GSPC owing to the lack of state control over large areas of desert and the permeability of borders



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A Tuareg herdsman guarding his cattle with an AK-47 in the remote and insecure area north of Gao.

between Algeria, Mali, Niger, and Chad—both of which facilitate the movement of non-state groups and arms smuggling.

In 1997, Hassane Hatab broke with the Algerian Groupe islamique armé (GIA) and formed the GSPC. The GSPC aims to overthrow the Algerian government and establish an Islamic state in its place (BBC News, 2003). It is estimated to include between 300 (BBC News, 2003; ICG, 2005a)³³ and 4,000 fighters (Schanzer, 2003). Confronted with Algerian army repression and recruitment problems at home, some members have fled to northern Mali and Niger under the leadership of the group's second commander, Abderrazak El Para (RFI, 2005; Nimaga, 2004).

It is important to distinguish GSPC activity from 'Dawa', which is made up of Pakistani and Bangladeshi preachers who undertake Islamic missionary work in order to promote their vision of Islam in Mali and elsewhere (Anderson, 2004). Dawa preachers are members of the Muslim grass-roots movement Tabligh I Jama'at and dedicate a year of their lives travelling and preaching their movement's principles abroad. Although the Tabligh I Jama'at is fundamentalist, it explicitly refrains from engaging in politics and does not preach or practise violence. However, its teachings are perceived by some to be a stepping-stone towards a more violent and radical form of Islam, and the Tabligh I Jama'at is believed by some to have connections to the GSPC (Anderson, 2004, quoting the US ambassador to Mali). In Mali, this religious movement has been very active in enrolling Tuareg men, and more particularly, former leaders of the Tuareg rebellion (ICG, 2005b, pp. 9, 17). Following 9/11, the Malian government sought to extradite all Pakistani preachers active in the country.³⁴

The GSPC, on the other hand, has been listed as a terrorist organization by the US Department of State since 2002 and is on the US Treasury Department's list of organizations whose assets should be blocked (US Department of the Treasury, 2001; BBC News, 2003; US Department of State, 2004). The GSPC is believed to have links with Al-Qaeda³⁵ and released a statement on 11 September 2003 in which it declared its allegiance to Taleban leader Mullah Omar (Schanzer, 2004; ICG, 2005b, p. 1, fn. 9). The United Nations lists the group under Security Council Resolution 1333 alongside several organizations believed to be associated with Usama Bin Laden (UNSC, 2000, para. 8c; UN, 2001).

In 2001 an Al-Qaeda operative, Imad Alwan (also known as Abu Mohamed), met with Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a smuggler of cigarettes, arms, and cars based in southern Algeria and linked with GSPC,³⁶ to establish a possible zone of operations for Al-Qaeda in northern Mali and Niger. Such a zone was to constitute a haven for Al-Qaeda operatives fleeing Afghanistan and the Middle East (Nimaga, 2004). The two men allegedly planned a truck bomb attack against the US embassy in Bamako (Belida, 2003; Debat, 2003; Smith, 2004). Other individuals, such as the London-based Sheikh Omar Mahmud Muhammad Othman (also known as Abu Qatada), are considered associated with both the GSPC and the Al-Qaeda network (Australia, 2005). GSPC units in northern Mali were made up of Algerians from the Batna region, northern Algeria, and were not local Saharan peoples from either Algeria or Mali. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that some local inhabitants sympathetic to Salafist ideas have later joined the GSPC.³⁷

The GSPC made headlines in early 2003 when it kidnapped 31 tourists in the Sahara desert. The Algerian army freed one group of hostages during a raid, but the other 14 (nine Germans, four Swiss, and one Dutch) were held captive for five months in the Taoudenit area of northern Mali. It was during the hot season and one German died of heatstroke.³⁸ Germany allegedly paid a ransom of USD 6 million for the release of the hostages (Smith, 2004; Anderson, 2004).

The group reportedly used the ransom money to purchase four-wheel drive vehicles and arms, including mortar launchers, RPGs, and surface-to-air missiles (Duteil, 2004; Smith, 2004). The GSPC also bought weaponry with money obtained through other types of smuggling, such as cigarettes (Boukhari, 2000). In early 2004, the GSPC's arsenal included automatic pistols, AK-47 assault rifles, heavy machine guns (12.7 mm and 14.5 mm calibres), RPGs, and surface-to-air missiles (Smith, 2004). Many weapons were purchased in Mali and allegedly smuggled from neighbouring countries such as Mauritania,³⁹ Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Chad (Nimaga, 2004). Weapons leaked from Malian security forces were another likely source.⁴⁰

In March 2004, 35 GSPC members of Algerian, Nigerien, Malian, Chadian, Mauritanian, and Burkinabe origin, including El Para, crossed from Mali into northern Niger and Chad, where they clashed with Nigerien and Chadian armed forces. They lost about twenty men and left behind them 14.5 mm anti-

aircraft guns, six mortars, AK-47s, and other weapons and ammunition (IRIN, 2004a; *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 2004; Smith, 2004). Nigerien authorities reported that GSPC members had been collaborating with Nigerien armed bandits and were 'using hideouts and caches left over from the Tuareg rebellion' (IRIN, 2004a).

This incident was a serious setback for the GSPC. Chadian rebels belonging to the Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad (MDJT) captured several survivors, including El Para. Libya, acting as an intermediary, eventually handed El Para over to the Algerian authorities in October 2004 after months of speculation and captivity in Chad (RFI, 2005). Despite El Para's capture, recent reports suggest that the GSPC is still active in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu. Mokhtar Belmokhtar was reportedly seen north of Timbuktu in late August 2004 heading a convoy made up of six vehicles and about 40 men (*Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 2004, citing AFP). Since then, however, he is reported to have returned to Algeria to launch new GSPC-inspired attacks in the Biskra region (ICG, 2005a).

The US government considers GSPC activity serious enough to include the Sahel in its global counter-terrorism activities. Through the so-called Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), which was allocated USD 6.25 million in 2004, the US State Department provides training and material support (vehicles, radios, Global Positioning System [GPS] equipment) to police and military forces in Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania (Smith, 2004; ICG, 2005b, p. 30). Mali is the largest recipient of the PSI, with USD 3.5 million (Harris, 2004b). The initiative, launched in 2002, assists countries in 'detecting and responding to suspicious movements of people and goods across and within their borders' (US Department of State, 2002) and is designed to improve cooperation between participating nations.

PSI headquarters are located in a base near Gao, in northern Mali (Ulmer, 2004). Two hundred American soldiers have been assigned to Mali and Mauritania. In Mali, the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces group from Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) is training 120 local troops (Harris, 2004a). These Special Forces training teams also operate in Bamako and Timbuktu (Ulmer, 2004; ICG, 2005b, p. 30). In collaboration with the Malian customs and the Algerian army, they undertake patrols, which in early 2004

were supported by reconnaissance planes (Smith, 2004).⁴¹ The US forces also provide intelligence support. In December 2003 Malian forces acting on US intelligence were able to intercept a group of about 100 GSPC fighters who had just crossed the Malian border in 20 Toyota pick-ups (Harris, 2004b).

In March 2004, shortly after the Madrid bombings, the United States European Command (EUCOM) convened a meeting with the defence chiefs of seven nations of the Maghreb and Sahel (Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia) in addition to Senegal. The purpose of this meeting was to promote pan-Saharan counter-terrorism cooperation in what could become the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) (Cherfaoui, 2004; Powell, 2004; Whitmore, 2004). TSCTI would be a continuation of PSI—extended to a larger number of countries and involving closer collaboration (ICG, 2005b, p. 30). EUCOM has requested USD 125m for the entire region over five years (Smith, 2004).

Between 1995 and 2003, the Malian government, with support from France, created five ‘Unités Méharistes’, or camel brigades, and recruited men from among the local population to patrol the northern desert regions. Each unit is composed of 100–140 men equipped with modern equipment such as GPS (*Frères d’Armes*, 2003, pp. 32–33). Mali and Niger are also participating in a series of bilateral meetings on border security and the circulation of goods and people between the two countries (Nimaga, 2004). It is also worth noting that Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Mauritania have adopted regional measures such as the creation of a bureau for intelligence gathering in Tamanrasset, Algeria, in addition to the establishment of bilateral initiatives that aim to improve border monitoring (ICG, 2005b, p. 30).⁴²

Conclusion

What was previously a relatively weapon-scarce area, forcing armed groups involved in the rebellion to gear much of their early military strategy towards capturing military equipment, has become an integral part of regional gun smuggling networks. While underdevelopment and traditional banditry are certainly contributing factors, the legacy of the 1990–96 rebellion also deserves attention.

Had the conflict been settled by the 1991 Tamanrasset agreement, at a time when the rebel movement was strongly united and disciplined and weapons relatively hard to come by, today's picture might look very different. It was only as the rebels faced internal fractures that insecurity and inter-tribal conflicts appeared, pushing the region into unprecedented levels of insecurity and violence in 1994. This insecurity, in turn, created a favourable environment for the proliferation of armed bandits and smugglers operating in the area.

While the Malian peace process successfully dismantled rebel movements and put a stop to bitter inter-tribal violence, it did not restore security in northern Mali. The remoteness of the area, which makes law enforcement a particularly challenging and resource-consuming task, and instability in neighbouring countries help explain the situation. Additional contributing factors lie in Mali's DDR experience and, more specifically, in the shortfalls of the disarmament process. The failure to collect ammunition, in particular, served as an incentive for ex-combatants and civilians alike to acquire new weapons. Persisting insecurity also contributed to the armament of civilians for protection purposes.

Following recent GSPC incursions, increased international attention should be welcomed. It remains unclear, however, whether local populations, whose limited wealth comes primarily from international smuggling and transport, will appreciate the presence of US troops. The majority of the population is unfavourably disposed towards the GSPC, whose presence is feared. On the other hand, US actions that disrupt traditional smuggling activities might also lead to anger and motivate locals to volunteer for GSPC recruitment.⁴³

Continued weapons proliferation and insecurity in northern Mali can have explosive outcomes. Infiltrations by the Algerian GSPC terrorist movement and renewed tribal tensions between Kuntas and Arabs should serve as a reminder that, nearly a decade after the Timbuktu ceremony, northern Mali requires continued attention and support if peace is to be sustainable.

List of abbreviations

ARLA	Armée révolutionnaire de libération de l’Azawad
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
EUCOM	United States European Command
FIAA	Front Islamique Arabe de l’Azawad
FPLA	Front populaire de libération de l’Azawad
GIA	Groupe Islamique armé
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MPA	Mouvement populaire de l’Azawad
MDJT	Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad
MPGK	Mouvement patriotique de Ganda Koy
MPLA	Mouvement populaire de libération de l’Azawad
PAREM	Programme d’appui à la réinsertion économique des ex-combattants du Nord Mali
PSI	Pan Sahel Initiative
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher
SOCEUR	Special Operations Command Europe
SUCO	Solidarity, Union, Cooperation
TSCTI	Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa

Endnotes

- 1 Groups represented included: Mouvement populaire de l’Azawad (MPA, one representative), Front Islamique Arabe de l’Azawad (FIAA, two representatives), Armée révolutionnaire de libération de l’Azawad (ARLA, one representative), Front populaire de libération de l’Azawad (FPLA, one representative), and Mouvement patriotique de Ganda Koy (MPGK, two representatives). Ex-combatants asked that their names be kept confidential.
- 2 Methodological note: All participants had important responsibilities within their respective groups, the majority being former unit commanders. M. Mahamar Maiga moderated the meeting, which three Small Arms Survey staff members attended (Nicolas Florquin, Stéphanie

Pézard, and Christina Wille). Mahamadou Nimaga from the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was present during opening and closing sessions but left during substantive discussions to guarantee the participants the free space necessary to speak on sensitive issues. The Small Arms Survey team and M. Mahamar Maiga jointly put together a list of questions to be addressed during each thematic session. The participants received a copy of these questions at the opening of the meeting and were given a chance to review and comment upon them. During focus group sessions each participant had the opportunity to answer the questions.

- 3 Written correspondence with Robin Edward Poulton, International Consultant and Senior Research Fellow at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, February 2005.
- 4 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, July 2004.
- 5 Unless stated otherwise, this section is based on focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 6 Despite the weapon losses suffered by the Malian Army in the course of the conflict, there are no reports confirming Mali's acquisition of new small arms during this period (Heyman, 2000, pp. 461–62). While such procurement cannot be ruled out, it appears that the Malian military relied to a great extent on arms the country acquired from the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc states in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as stocks remaining from the French colonial era.
- 7 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 8 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 9 Unless stated otherwise, this section is based on focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 10 Malian groups' tight control over ammunition seems to contrast with what happened elsewhere in the region. In Liberia for instance, the availability of ammunition (in particular light weapon ammunition) among armed groups coincided with large numbers of indiscriminate killings of civilians (see, for instance, HRW, 2003).
- 11 One such technique involved making cuts and depositing salt on the wounded scalp, which had the effect of making the body swell.
- 12 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 13 Ex-combatants further argued that these loose criminal groups represented a threat for rebel groups to the extent that they attracted some combatants who then deserted the rebel ranks, often taking their weapon with them. Furthermore, ex-combatants expressed frustration at being wrongly associated with criminals in the eyes of the population.
- 14 According to Klute (2001, Annex: 'Opferzahlen'), the general breakdown of deaths is as follows: at least 500 were army soldiers; about 150 came from the different rebel movements; at least 300

civilian victims were among the Songhoy population; and at least 1,500 victims were Arab and Tuareg civilians. These numbers refer to those who died during the fighting and directly as a result of the use of weapons. They do not include those people who died later (as a result of their injuries) or indirectly (due to a lack in food or medicine), and the actual number of direct conflict deaths is likely to be somewhat less than 4,000.

- 15 Lode (1997, ch. 8) estimates the number of people who benefited from the DDR programme to be around 10,000.
- 16 Phone interview with Colonel Sirakoro Sangaré, President of the Malian National Commission on Small Arms, 22 March 2005.
- 17 If their project was not proceeding, they were refused the second payment. PAREM coordinators in Gao and Kidal, for instance, complained in 1996 that former combatants saw the premiums as theirs by right to be used how they wished. Some used their first payment to marry instead and had nothing to show when claiming their second payment, which they subsequently did not receive. Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 18 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 19 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 20 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 21 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 22 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 23 Phone interview with Colonel Sirakoro Sangaré, President of the Malian National Commission on Small Arms, 22 March 2005.
- 24 Confidential written correspondence with several international researchers with expertise on northern Mali, February 2005. A recent report notes that ‘Every head of family throughout the Kidal area is said to have an automatic weapon, hardly surprising given that many participated in the rebellion and most still participate to some extent in nomadic herding, where the threats of theft of livestock or attack by wild animals are ever-present.’ (ICG, 2005b, p. 19).
- 25 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 26 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 27 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 28 In particular, weapons are said to have ‘disappeared’ from the Sévaré and Kidal armouries. Confidential written correspondence with several international researchers with expertise on northern Mali, January and February 2005.
- 29 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.

- 30 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 31 Interviews with Malian ex-combatants (ARLA, FIAA, and MPA), Bamako, 3 September 2004.
- 32 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 33 Estimates of Anderson (2004) are even lower (between 50 and 80 fighters).
- 34 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 35 UN (2001); Schanzer (2003); Nimaga (2004); Australia (2005).
- 36 BBC News (2003); Nimaga (2004); Abdoun (2004); Ghioua (2004); *Le Quotidien d'Oran* (2004).
- 37 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 38 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005, and Connolly (2003).
- 39 Focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 40 Confidential written correspondence with international researchers with expertise on northern Mali, January and February 2005. A recent report by the International Crisis Group mentions that 'Several officers at the Malian army garrison were punished in 2003 when commanders from Bamako discovered that most of its armoury had been sold' (ICG, 2005b, p. 19).
- 41 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.
- 42 As this book was going to press, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) convened a meeting of officials from Mali, Mauritania and Niger, as well as key development partners, on 19-20 April 2005 in Timbuktu. The intention of the meeting was to devise an integrated, cross-border approach to tackle the wide variety of pressing issues facing these border zones, including the cross-border nature of security problems and the relationship between lack of security and lack of development in these areas.
- 43 Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, January 2005.

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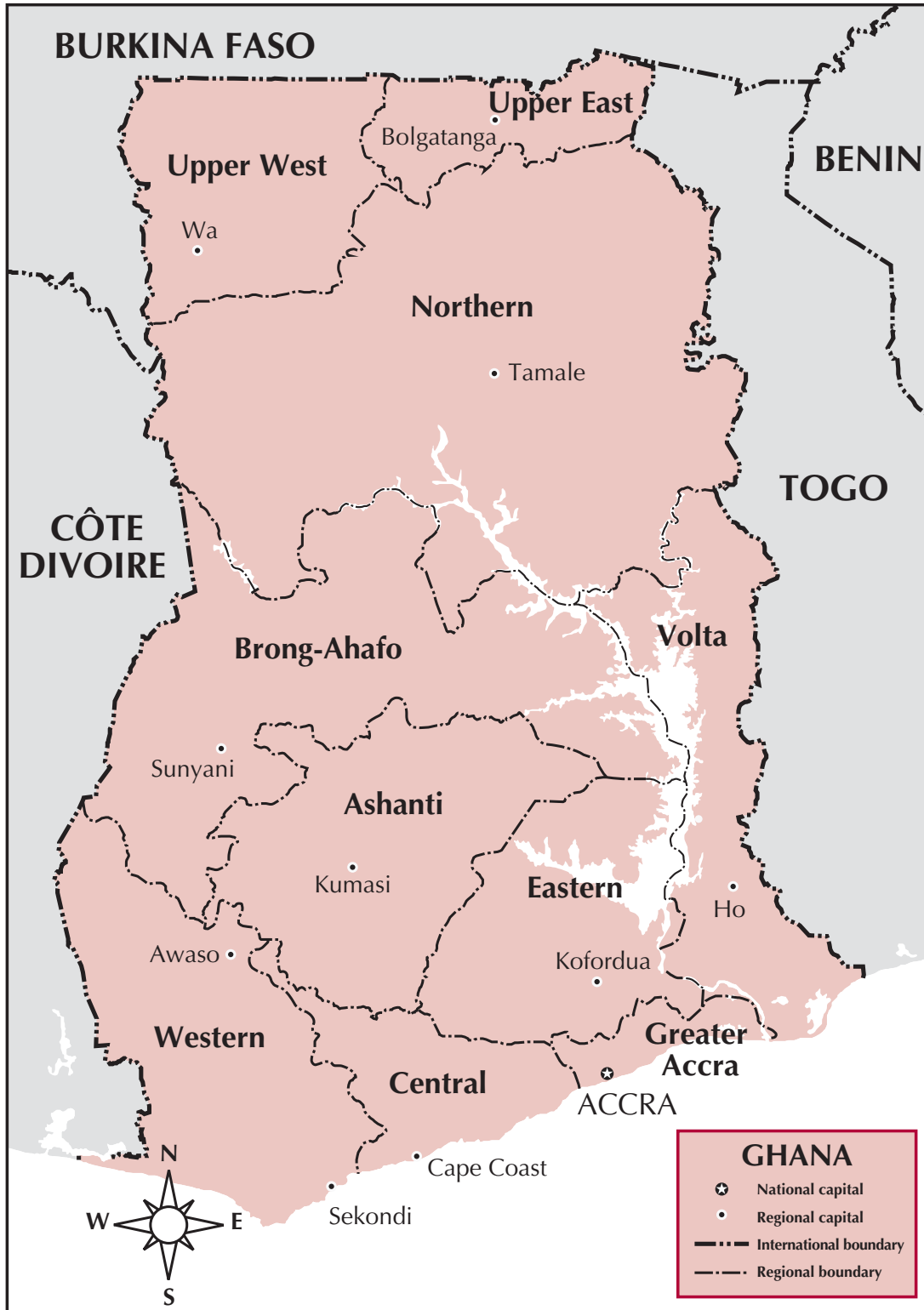
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THE ANATOMY OF GHANA'S SECRET ARMS INDUSTRY

By Emmanuel Kwesi Aning¹

Introduction

Although craft small arms production is present throughout West Africa,² Ghana's long-standing and socially embedded gun-making tradition make it a country of particular concern. Guns 'made in Ghana' are now known regionally for their competitive prices, their effectiveness, and their accessibility—thus raising concerns that they might one day represent a significant source of weaponry for armed groups. Indeed, some local blacksmiths now possess the requisite know-how to copy imported AK-47 assault rifles.

This chapter documents the extent, nature, and effects of Ghanaian craft small arms production and discusses existing and potential responses. It is divided into three main sections. The first section seeks to measure the scope of the activity at the national level, and identifies trends in the production process and the various actors involved. It also highlights the national and regional implications of gunsmithing, paying particular attention to smuggling across borders and criminal use. The second section maps small arms production in selected towns in the country's ten regions, and seeks to identify critical areas for intervention. The last section provides an assessment of existing responses to the problem. It reviews the relevant legislation and government policies, and concludes by discussing alternative civil society-led approaches.

Unless stated otherwise, the information and analysis contained in this chapter are based upon extensive field research carried out in Ghana from June to November 2004. During this period, the author coordinated a team of 12 interviewers who visited 25 towns in Ghana's Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo,

Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta, and Western regions. Approximately 40 gunsmiths, middlemen, and customers were interviewed. Contacts established by Africa Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR)³ greatly facilitated the confidence-building exercise required to interview blacksmiths on what remains a prohibited activity. Although the research team had initially developed a semi-structured questionnaire to guide the interview process, it became clear as the research evolved that the artisans were more comfortable with free-flowing discussions. Notes were therefore taken only after the interview was completed.

This study should not be considered the authoritative survey of Ghanaian craft production. Rather, the following findings should serve as an informed call for further research on the issue.

- All ten regions in Ghana are home to workshops with gun-manufacturing capability.
- On average, each of these has the capacity to produce approximately 80 guns annually—although production varies greatly depending on demand.
- Guns are manufactured in conformity with imported ammunition available on the open market.
- Gunsmiths are also engaged in the production of a variety of other, mainly agricultural products, which provides opportunities for technological reconversion. Gun production, however, clearly constitutes their most profitable activity.
- A thriving group of middlemen export craft guns to other countries in the region. These include Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, and Togo. This trade appears to be limited to individuals, however, and there is no evidence that armed groups elsewhere in the region actively seek to obtain Ghanaian craft weapons.
- Craft guns are used by some of Ghana’s vigilante groups, landguards, and criminals.
- In Ghana, the prohibition of craft gun production has not prevented the industry from growing. Rather, it has forced gunsmiths to organize into sophisticated and secretive networks.

The nature of the problem

Worrying trends

Gun manufacture in Ghana dates back several hundred years, when iron working was first introduced. In pre-colonial and colonial Ghanaian society, guns were used in a variety of different contexts—but were most often deployed in the slave trade. Guns were used to terrorize and enslave thousands of people, to force them to dig for gold in order to buy and/or manufacture more guns, and to capture even more slaves. Among the several Ghanaian ethnic groups involved in slave-raiding expeditions, guns are a symbol of a 'glorious' past now colourfully recreated during festivals.⁴

Gun production was first criminalized in the mid-nineteenth century, after colonial powers (Denmark and then Great Britain) began to perceive the proliferation of small arms as a serious threat to their hegemony.⁵ Legislation, however, succeeded only in driving the industry further underground. Under the guise of producing trinkets, gold ornaments, and basic farm implements, blacksmiths secretly continued to manufacture the more profitable small arms which then slipped outside the purview of the law and the state. Not only did clandestine manufacture continue to grow, but it also engendered networks and mechanisms designed to elude law-enforcement agencies.

Guns 'made in Ghana' are now known for their competitive prices, reliability, and accessibility. Indeed, guns produced elsewhere rarely challenge Ghanaian gunsmiths when it comes to their own market. In addition to pistols, single-barrel guns, double-barrel shotguns, pump-action shotguns, and traditional dane guns, reports suggest that some gunsmiths now possess the capability of copying imported AK-47 assault rifles.⁶ Craft guns use ammunition available locally—most of which, however, is still imported from abroad. Indeed, it is common for customers to bring ammunition in order that gunsmiths may create the appropriate firearm. The most popular and easily available types of ammunition include 12-bore shotgun shells and .410 calibre cartridges.⁷

Although self-defence, collection, and sport shooting (primarily hunting) clearly drive the demand for craft guns, significant numbers of locally made weapons have also made their way into criminal hands. Low price, efficacy,

and easy accessibility has resulted in Ghanaian craft guns being the weapon of choice used in as many as 30 per cent of gun-related crimes (Ghanaian Chronicle, 2002). According to law-enforcement officials, these have risen sharply since 1998.⁸ Out of the 60 reported armed robberies in the Greater Accra region and its vicinities during June 2001, as many as 15 involved locally manufactured small arms (Accra Mail, 2003b). Apart from armed robbers and bandits (Accra Mail, 2003a), vigilante groups, landguards, and 'political macho-men'—e.g. the armed gangs hired by politicians—are the main organized users of craft weapons in Ghana.⁹ Recurring chieftaincy disputes in the Northern region—including the 1994 conflict involving the Nanumbas and Konkombas, and the more recent Dagbon crisis—also fuel small arms demand.

Insecurity in Ghana and instability in Togo, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire have resulted in higher prices—which holds trans-national implications for Ghanaian production. In these countries customers not only import Ghanaian craft guns, but also invite gunsmiths to teach their craft to others. Under the rubric of skills transfer, manufacturers are thus able to evade the scrutiny of Ghanaian security forces. Gunsmiths credit this tactic with raising their income, while simultaneously reducing the need for bribery and the likelihood of arrest.

Despite worrying trends, there is a general lack of reliable information on the extent of Ghanaian craft gun production. Analysts not only run into a wall when it comes to confronting high levels of secrecy, but must also deal with the politicized nature of the debate, which tends to result in official underestimation of the true extent and breadth of small arms production and trade. The unreliability of data proffered by Ghanaian officials is perhaps best illustrated by the following, which appeared in the November 1999 interim report of the Arms and Ammunition Inventory Committee:

The Police and Customs, Excise & Preventive Service (CEPS) provided the committee with a list each of active and dormant arms dealers. It was observed in the course of the Committee's work that the lists were not up to date. Several of the

dealers who were classified as 'Active' were in fact dormant operators who renewed their licenses yearly hoping to re-commence business sometime in the future. On the other hand some dealers whose names appeared on the dormant list turned out to be active operators.¹⁰

It remains virtually impossible to quantify the actual extent of craft gun production in Ghana, primarily owing to the fact that it is an illegal activity and gunsmiths have no incentive to keep records. Researchers have, therefore, sought to estimate production capacity based on the number of identified gunsmiths and information regarding the average time required to produce individual guns. From the end of 2000 until the middle of 2001, early estimates pin the production capacity at between 35,000 and 40,000. This is based on information available from only five of the ten regions and was calculated using the estimated production capacity of the 500 gunsmiths operating in the 70 towns known to be involved in gun manufacture (Aning et al., 2001).

New information gathered during the course of this study suggests production capacity is also likely to be on a much greater scale. More than 2,500 blacksmiths are now known to possess the capacity to produce guns in the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo regions alone.¹¹ This figure does not include their apprentices, who also possess the skills to manufacture guns with supervision. Field interviews suggest that each gunsmith has the capability to manufacture approximately 80 weapons per year. Based on this information, Ghana may have the potential to produce an estimated 200,000 illicit weapons annually. Because of disparities in production and demand, the actual output nevertheless remains an unknown.

During the last 10—15 years, profit has become a driving force, although few gunsmiths are willing to admit it.¹² Interviews suggest that criminal activity, export, and personal protection spur increased profitability. According to a gunsmith in the eastern region's Akyem Manso, a single-barrel gun can be sold for USD 100. Because the weapon costs only USD 25 to produce, this means a profit margin of 75 dollars.¹³ Previously, the pride engendered from the father to son transfer of traditional artisan skills drove much of the craft

gun industry. Indeed, many manufacturers maintain their families have been producing guns for more than 100 years.

Production process and actors

In Ghana, the manufacture of guns involves a hierarchy of diverse actors and is not confined only to individual artisans. The production process is usually headed by a guild,¹⁴ a family elder, or a loose association of leaders, who coordinate a complex network of 10–50 individuals possessing the specific skills necessary to design, supply, market, and further develop small arms (see Table 3.1). In addition to offering practical skills, members also provide the following types of support:

- market analysis and information regarding the reliability of trading partners; contract-enforcement mechanisms to resolve disputes over agreed upon products and prices;
- financial support and informal credit in times of crisis through kinship and urban-rural networks; and
- intelligence on forthcoming raids by the police and other security agencies. Needless to say, this suggests that some members enjoy access to these sectors.

Table 3.1 Critical actors involved in the gun-making process

Actor	Role
Guild	Coordinate whole process Set rules and sanctions
Lock- and blacksmith	Gun manufacture and assembly Repair and servicing Accessories
Carpenter	Shaping of stock
Machinist	Engravings on stock and barrel Trigger
Mechanic	Springs
Middleman	Identifying potential buyers Sale of product Introducing actors

Of particular note is that the skills of some manufacturers are not limited to gunsmithing and can be used to produce non-lethal items. For example, black- or locksmiths involved in gunsmithing usually also produce a number of tools¹⁵ such as metal chairs, hangers, tile cutters, irons, bellows (for making gold and silver ornaments), iron beds, cutters, tongs, corn mills, ploughs, harrows (for ploughing fields prior to sowing seeds), and handcuffs. Some also manufacture motorcycle, car, and bicycle parts on a very small scale. Parts include discs, bells, and horns. Among smaller blacksmiths, repair and assembly are more common activities than the full-scale gun production.

Although networks can be large, individual actors are usually aware of only part of the manufacturing process and are usually unfamiliar with other players—the rationale being that this limits the risk that the entire operation will be dismantled following the arrest of a single member. While the secrecy shrouding Ghanaian artisan capacity is in no way limited to gun manufacture and has existed for centuries, criminalization has rendered it even more secretive. As a result, gun-making techniques and expertise are now tightly controlled and limited to few individuals.

Clear restrictions apply when it comes to joining gunsmithing networks. These further guarantee confidentiality. Traditionally, membership was transmitted from father to son and from uncle to nephew. However, industry profitability has led to a greater demand for labour. As a result, some guilds have established strict apprentice training procedures to allow the recruitment of non-family members. It must be noted, however, that the rules and conditions for group membership are not homogeneous across regions.

Because gun manufacture is often illegal, gunsmiths rely on rules and punitive measures to resolve internal conflicts and punish offenders. Sanctions include being banned from the village or town and being refused access to information and credit. Disputes are usually related to market access, the recruitment of effective middlemen to locate potential purchasers, and the establishment of pricing mechanisms. During the course of this research, however, it became clear that as financial returns have increased and even smaller gunsmiths have become financially independent, many are increasingly unwilling to conform to guild rules. In one case in Ashanti, a

dispute between two blacksmiths prompted one to report the other to the police for allegedly manufacturing weapons to supply armed robbers.¹⁶

Part of the difficulty in combating gunsmithing is that much of it takes place under the cover of legitimate production activities. Most Ghanaian gunsmiths originally started as legal black-, gold-, and silversmiths, and only turned to gunsmithing gradually and for profit. For the most part, they continue their legal activities. The production of ornaments and paraphernalia for traditional chiefly rites remains a powerful motivation to continue in the legitimate economy. Market forces and the drive to make a higher income have, however, encouraged some gunsmiths to manufacture weapons to meet criminal demand, a move that is against the rules and regulations of most legitimate guilds.

Although gunsmiths have far-stretching networks, they do not appear to be interested in extending their influence to the political or judiciary sphere. This group has no direct representation in the parliament, the executive, or the diplomatic service of Ghana. The very secretive nature of these networks is such that influencing them is virtually impossible. The closest that Ghana comes to politically driven armed groups is the 'macho-men' hired by politicians or chiefs to intimidate their opponents (Hope, 2002; Vinokor, 2002).

Gunsmiths are nevertheless well connected with local law-enforcement authorities, particularly the police, who at the village level are often reluctant to arrest manufacturers owing to their socially integrated nature and the lack of immediate threat. Apparent contradictions in existing legislation that on the one hand criminalizes the local manufacture of arms but permits blacksmiths to repair imported arms on the other, further complicate law enforcement.



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Chief Mahamadu, 20, speaks to journalists on 14 December 2004. Mahamadu is the potential successor to Ghanaian Dagbon king Ya-Na Yakubu, who was killed during the latest salvo in a 30-year power struggle between the Abudu and Andani clans.

Mapping Ghanaian craft small arms production

Volta region: Kpando, Tafi Atome, and Ho

Kpando, Tafi Atome, and Ho are towns that support appreciable levels of gun manufacture. While Ho is the regional capital of Volta, Kpando is a fairly large district town and Tafi Atome a smaller rural setting.

The Volta region, located in the eastern part of the country on the Togolese border, possesses some of Ghana's best gunsmiths. Gun manufacture is deeply embedded in the region's colonial history and host communities accept and protect their gunsmiths. Oral tradition suggests that the Volta's first gun manufacturer, a man called Asamoah, learned his trade from working with Europeans and studying in India. Some even claim that Asamoah knew how to make guns before the arrival of Europeans.

In the past 50 years, conflicts between the citizens of Alavanyo and those of Nkonya have contributed to the dispersion of gun-making skills across the region's towns and beyond, with recent disputes occurring in 1996–97, May 2001, and 2004.¹⁷ Among the two groups, gunsmiths originating from Alavanyo are usually recognized as the more capable craft gun manufacturers and handlers. However, others have extensively copied their techniques, and security forces now threaten to expose and damage their operations. Artisans from Nkonya are believed to have migrated to Nkawkaw and Hordzor, near Ho and Tafi Atome, in Hohoe District. The migration of these itinerant gun manufactures is significant because it reveals how expertise is dispersed and suggests wider implications for the spread of gun-making technology.¹⁸

Today the region's gunsmiths produce pistols (locally known by their nicknames 'Klosasa' or 'Tukpui') that are sold for approximately USD 25; single-barrel guns ('Aprim') for USD 115,¹⁹ double-barrel shotguns ('Nueze') for USD 20–35; pump-action shotguns ('Gadoe') for USD 15; and traditional dane guns ('Nueze') for USD 6. While useful to researchers, it is important to note that these prices tend to fluctuate during periods of local insecurity and tension.

Today it is almost impossible to distinguish guns manufactured in Volta from imports. By purchasing, dismantling and examining imported weapons, blacksmiths have managed to create near-perfect replicas of the

originals—the only difference being the degree of smoothness inside the barrel. Most craft guns are of good quality and have a lifespan of approximately 20—30 years. Moreover, blacksmiths are now designing their own models, whose quality and durability are comparable to those of industrial weapons. Customers from other regions have expressed a willingness to travel long distances in order to purchase Volta-made guns owing simply to the mastery and artisanship of the local gunsmiths.²⁰

Volta region gunsmiths have established particularly strict rules and codes of conduct, all informed by the need for secrecy and discretion. Both marketing and manufacturing are confined to networks of trusted individuals. It is impossible for an outsider to purchase a gun in the Volta region. To avoid suspicion, the region's gunsmiths rely on secure networks for the acquisition of raw material. They purchase metal only in small quantities in Accra, while trusted local carpenters provide wooden parts. Most manufacturers do not mark their products with their personal signatures, as these would indicate the town and workshop of origin. Rather, they copy industrial marks to make them look like genuine imported weapons.

Gun-producing workshops in the Volta region are usually headed by a guild that employs between 10 and 20 workers. Apprentices must be natives of the town in which they wish to learn gun-making and are obligated to obey the guild's rules. In order to acquire knowledge of the entire manufacturing process, apprentices learn to produce different gun parts in addition to undertaking a wide variety of tasks: the guild ultimately decides whether the apprentice meets the requirements necessary to establish his own workshop. As part of the graduation ceremony, all trainees collectively purchase a white sheep. The sheep is slaughtered and fragments of gun parts are symbolically placed on the corpse. The apprentices then swear to protect the secrets of the trade. This oath reinforces social cohesion between blacksmiths and formally requires members to share intelligence regarding potential threats and to cooperate when it comes to establishing common pricing mechanisms.

Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions: Kumasi and Techiman

Suame-Magazine in Kumasi, Ashanti region, and Techiman in the Brong Ahafo region, are host to a large group of manufacturers organized under the

rubric of the Ashanti Region Association of Blacksmiths (ARAB). While Suame is known as the technological hub of Ghana, Techiman is better known as a regional trading centre, which attracts customers from the entire West African sub-region.

Because raw materials are cheap and the retail price high, gun manufacture is profitable. Depending on demand, each manufacturer may produce more than a hundred weapons a year—mainly rifles and single-barrel guns. In Techiman, customers include both international traders and local users, while in Suame they are mainly local (including members of the local Lebanese diaspora). Trusted friends and middlemen facilitate sales. Little is known, however, about where guns actually wind up. Interviews reveal that some manufacturers and apprentices admit to producing weapons commissioned by armed robbers, macho-men,²¹ landguards, and gun traffickers intent on smuggling them out of the country.

The Suame-Magazine area of Kumasi is probably one of the most established gun-manufacturing centres in Ghana. This is largely owing to the presence of numerous mechanical workshops specializing in different products. This large manufacturing capacity has resulted in larger numbers of highly skilled craftsmen, which has in turn facilitated the proliferation of manufacturers producing high-quality weapons. In fact, although the Suame-Magazine area is relatively open to public trade, it is also one of the few regions that apply a professional code of conduct designed specifically to restrict gun manufacture information to insiders only.²²

Associations influence the entire production process. The manufacture of a pistol or a pump-action gun does not take place at a single workshop. Rather, different artisans produce and deliver parts to a central assembling point. Several reasons are behind this. First, subcontracting the manufacture of different parts to specialized artisans enhances the quality and increases the calibre of products. Second, because post-independence governments perceive local gun manufacture as a potential threat to stability, subcontracting individual parts ensures the financial survival of manufacturers because some gun parts are not identifiable as such and can be passed off as something else.²³

Central region: Agona Asafo

Agona Asafo is a medium-sized town with a population of approximately 30,000 and is considered one of the oldest towns in the Central region. Agona Asafo boasts two workshops of between two or three gunsmiths and apprentices each. A number have been in business for more than a century, and their primary clients are *Asafo* (warrior) companies who deploy weapons for musketry displays during the annual *akwanbo* (literally, 'clearing the path') festival.

Despite 'risks', gunsmiths interviewed maintain small arm manufacture is considerably more lucrative than either farming (the dominant local economic activity) or trading. Manufacturers here retain no organizational structure owing to the belief that it could spell disaster if one of its members were to be arrested. Because small arms manufacture is more or less a family undertaking, expertise is usually passed on from father to son. Owing to increasing police pressure, artisans will purchase weapon parts from out of town in order to avoid detection. Customers pay in two instalments—at the time of order and upon delivery. Following assembly, gunsmiths hide guns for safe keeping in outlying villages and will deliver their product only when customers make their final payment.

Guns manufactured in Agona Asafo differ from imports only in the appearance of the trigger and the lack of distinctive marks. Both stocks and barrels are highly polished and smooth. Over the five days of field research, more than 70 guns had been ordered, finished, and stocked ready for delivery. The town is involved in the manufacture of four different types of guns.

Table 3.2 Craft gun prices and length of manufacture in Agona Asafo

Type of Gun	Price (USD)	Time required for manufacture
Pistols	35–45	3 days
Single barrel	95	2 weeks
Short action pump gun	65	1 week
Traditional dane gun	20	2 days

Customers appear to be individuals rather than groups. They include both foreigners and nationals coming from all major towns in southern Ghana (especially Accra, Takoradi, and Cape Coast).²⁴ While most Ghanaians request unmarked guns, foreigners routinely ask for specific identification, including false country of origin.

Buyers usually claim guns will be used for hunting, as decorative pieces, or during annual local festivals. Queried about registration and permits, one customer claimed that police contacts could enable him to quickly register a craft gun for a fee of 120,000 Cedis (approximately USD 13). This price corresponds to the bribe paid to register craft guns. In Ghana the official registration fee is 250,000 Cedis (USD 27).

Northern region: Tamale and Kumbungu

The inhabitants of Tamale, the Northern region's capital, are known and recognized for their blacksmithing skills, including the manufacture of tin drums and agricultural implements. Local artisans can also produce pistols and convert discarded steel pipes into lethal weapons. The name of one of Tamale's suburbs, Sabunjida-Machelene, literally means 'a colony of blacksmiths in Sabunjida'.²⁵ A craft gun costs between USD 100 and 200 and can be produced within three days. Tamale gunsmiths have found ready markets for craft weapons following civil disturbance in several districts in the North, especially in and around Yendi.²⁶ In the Kumbungu area, in the central part of the Northern region, demand for guns is driven by Dagomba warriors whose profession, identity, and manhood rest upon gun ownership. Warriors and blacksmiths have thus developed a symbiotic relationship and recognize the importance of each other's skills to ensure the collective survival of the clan.

Greater Accra region: Kasoa

Although there is not much evidence of gun manufacture in the capital itself, which is under relatively tight police control, Kasoa, one of Accra's adjoining market towns, is a well-known and technologically advanced gun manufacturing and trading centre. According to officials, a workshop raided by the police had developed the capability to produce an imitation AK-47 as well as revolvers that could hold up to eight bullets each.²⁷ Proximity to the capital has facilitated technological developments in two ways: first, Accra's strong industrial base makes possible the transfer of widely available technological skills. Second, in the capital there is a strong demand from landguards, macho-men, vigilante groups, and customers from Nigeria, Togo, and Benin.

Eastern region: Nsawam

Gun production in the Eastern region is limited, and tends to occur in small villages and towns. Manufacturers primarily specialize in the repair and servicing of guns but also produce a wide variety of 'non-lethal' domestic implements such as hoes, cutlasses, and farm implements.

Most gunsmiths appear to produce the bulk of their weapons for farmers and hunters in the forest regions, or for purchasers who want their guns specially engraved. This uniformity of demand encourages better collaboration and support among manufacturers. Middlemen smuggle craft guns to sell in larger towns such as Nsawam, population 300,000. In addition to local clientele, long-distance drivers heading to Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger also stop over in Nsawam to purchase guns. Impossible to determine, however, is for whom, or for what use, such guns are ultimately destined. Anecdotal information suggests that international demand has contributed to price increases.

Western region: Takoradi

Takoradi, home to some 400,000 people, is the capital of the Western region and hosts Ghana's second largest port after Tema. Although a minor manufacturing town, Takoradi is nevertheless geographically critical to the exportation of weapons to other West African states. Furthermore, demand for guns is high in Côte d'Ivoire, which borders the region to the west. As a result, craft guns are being smuggled in, while some Western region gunsmiths claim they have been invited to demonstrate skills and train Ivoirians to make their own weapons. Middlemen from Takoradi also facilitate the purchase of guns by foreigners residing in Ghana.

Unlike those in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo, Western region gunsmiths are poorly organized and rarely collaborate, even when producing similar products. Although gun manufacture remains profitable, serious seasonal price fluctuations occur depending on demand and insecurity in the Western region and in the wider West African sub-region. As of September 2004, prices fluctuated around USD 10 for a pistol, USD 135 for a double-barrel gun, and USD 100 for a rifle. Western region gunsmiths also produce agricultural implements and basic household equipment such as irons, drying lines, tongs, and buckets.

Upper East and Upper West regions: Bolgatanga and Bawku

In the Upper East and Upper West regions, which border Burkina Faso to the north, locally manufactured shotguns, while also available, are less of a problem than imported industrial weapons. Gun violence appears to be relatively under control even though armed robberies and cattle rustlers armed with AK-47s have forced herders and communities to arm themselves.²⁸ Fulani herdsmen, who criss-cross the West African sub-region searching for cattle pasture, are also well armed owing to struggles with locals over access to grazing lands and watering holes. Furthermore, two professional outlaw gangs based in the town of Bawku (Upper East) roam most of northern Ghana and are known to engage in smuggling and motorcycle jacking.²⁹ Weapons of choice include assault rifles (AK-47s, G3s), pistols, shotguns, self-loading rifles, medium machine guns, hand-held grenades, and rocket-propelled grenades.³⁰ Bolgatanga (Upper East) and Bawku are among the principal gun-trading centres in the North of the country.

Responses

Legislation and government initiatives

Ghana first criminalized gun manufacture in the mid-nineteenth century, when colonial powers (Britain and Denmark) began to see it as a threat. Since Ghana gained independence in 1957, the government has enacted new legislation. Section 16 of the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1962 (Act 118) proscribes arms and ammunition possession and use, and bans local manufacture of small arms. Section 17 allows blacksmiths to repair imported guns damaged in Ghana. Section 6 of the 1972 Arms and Ammunitions Decree (NRCD 9) improved the registration process and also reinforced sections of the 1962 law that criminalized the local manufacture of arms. Subsequent tinkering has led to the Locksmiths Act of 1994 (Act 488) and the Arms and Ammunition (Amendment) Act of 1996 (Act 519).³¹ The 2003 Draft Arms and Ammunitions Bill, which as of December 2004 remained in draft form, states that 'A person shall not without the written consent of the Minister manufacture arms or ammunition.'³² While the law clearly bans gun manufacture, in practice the Minister of Interior can at his or her discretion,

grant exemptions—although conditions are not spelt out. As of December 2004, however, no known exemptions were granted.³³

While the law prohibits craft manufacture, state security forces and civilians continue to purchase weapons abroad. The legislative regime allows two categories of arms importers in Ghana: those described as individual first-class arms and ammunition dealers who import between 1,000 and 2,000 shotguns a year, and second-class importers who bring in fewer than 1,000 units a year. Annual shotgun imports in Ghana average 20,000 units and are dominated by five major arms importers: Game Marketing Limited; Yadco Enterprise; Globart Teslria Enterprise; Bradco Trading & Associates;³⁴ and Ampoma Ahwene Enterprise (GoG, 1999, p. 3). In 2003, new gun registrations fetched the Ghana Police Service 1.4 billion Cedis (USD 155,000).³⁵ At 250,000 Cedis per gun registration, this implies that only about 5,600 guns are registered annually, which raises questions about the final destination of other imported guns. According to the Arms and Ammunitions report of 1999 (GoG, 1999), a disturbing number of guns imported into Ghana are then smuggled into other West African states.

Small arms have become an important political issue in Ghana since the New Patriotic Party (NPP) took power in January 2001. While in opposition, the NPP repeatedly highlighted the dangers associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (NPP, 2000, p. 40). Subsequently, when it launched its campaign manifesto, *An Agenda for Positive Change—Manifesto 2000 of the New Patriotic Party*, the NPP for the first time highlighted the potential threat that the ready availability of small arms and increasing levels of small arms-related violence posed to private investment in Ghana. The NPP promised that, if voted into power, it would grant 'a two-month amnesty for all assault weapons and ammunition currently held by unauthorised persons in private homes to be handed over to the regular army, and thereby outlaw private possession of AK-47s and allied weapons which should only be in Police and Military custody' (NPP, 2000, p. 40).

One month after taking over the reins of government in January 2001, the NPP administration gave an operational directive to the security services to initiate a joint police and military small-arms collection scheme titled '*etuo mu ye sum*,' literally meaning 'the barrel of a gun is dark'. This joint operation was



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Ghanaian blacksmiths display agricultural implements. In addition to firearms, most Ghanaian gunsmiths also produce a variety of other products.

conducted under the Command of Yaw Adu Gyimah and Lt. Col. Issa Awuni of the 5th Battalion (*Daily Graphic*, 2001). During the first phase, owners of unregistered guns were granted a two-week amnesty to hand in their guns without punishment. A cash-for-guns reward scheme sought to encourage the retrieval of excess and unlicensed weapons.³⁶ The amnesty ultimately lasted six months and resulted in the collection of 2,000 weapons, primarily from former government civil servants who had acquired weapons during the 1979–1992 military regime (Bah, 2004, p. 41).

After the amnesty period, targeted searches based on local intelligence provided by private citizens were the principal means by which police flushed out illicit weapons. Weapons confiscated included AK-47 assault rifles, pistols, shotguns (both locally manufactured and imported), and pump-action guns. Because there is little information regarding numbers of guns in private hands it is impossible to gauge whether the operation has been successful or not. However, during the country's July 2004, International Weapons Destruction Day, Vice-President Aliu Mahama stated that 'in a massive cordon and search operation conducted in Accra in February 2001, 715 small arms of various types were seized. These were part of the 8,000 weapons destroyed on 9 July 2001.'³⁷

In spite of these limited successes, in Ghana the potential clash between 'modernity' and 'tradition' in the interpretation of the law has resulted in a pronounced legal dualism when it comes to gun control. First, a parliamentary and judicial-legal system inherited from the colonial period forms the 'official' system. A second, unofficial system is based on more traditional norms, often in the form of taboos, which, like the official system, are associated with various sanctions and systems of institutional support. As a result, people 'jump' from one system to the other whenever it is felt appropriate (see Aning and Addo, 2005).

Legally, only the first system exists—and the second is barely acknowledged. But in reality the first is embedded in the second. The way the official system is interpreted in any given situation depends on its relationship with the traditional system. The power of the traditional system, of course, arises from the fact that it is rooted in the traditional values and ethical concerns of the people, and its ultimate sanction lies in its unseen and spiritual dimensions,

especially with ancestors. One may be legally required to observe the first system but morally obliged to observe the second. Because of this dualism and dichotomy, the police and law enforcement agencies, in rural areas especially, often side with gunsmiths or are sympathetic towards them. They may be breaking the law but it is a Western law (*aborofo amamre*) and therefore not really regarded as something that works for the common good. From this perspective, they are bearers of an important tradition and perform a valuable service to the community, of which they are upstanding members.³⁸

Law enforcement

The family (for example, the guilds in Volta), ritual (for example, the Aboakyir and Akwanbo festivals in Central region), warrior (for example, the Ashanti and Dagomba in the Northern region) and historical (for example, in the Ashanti, Central, and Volta regions) ramifications of craft gun production described earlier show how this banned activity has played a significant role in Ghanaian culture since pre-colonial times. Thus gunsmithing is bound by a cultural ethos that requires further exploration because it has a direct impact as to why such activities continue—in some cases even with the knowledge and tacit support of the local community and minus local police intervention. Despite official political rhetoric that criminalizes gun manufacture, its social embeddedness means that local police officers are often sympathetic towards gunsmiths, given that craft guns have many traditional—and therefore morally acceptable—uses. Allegations that the local police occasionally register craft guns as foreign-made for about half the official registration fee³⁹ illustrate this dichotomy between official and actual attitudes. While the political rhetoric is one of criminalization, in practice it is widely felt that this particular type of crime should be re-evaluated.

The dubious quality of official intelligence further hinders ban enforcement by the police and Ghana Armed Forces (GAF). According to a newspaper report, a highly publicized 'joint police-military team in an exercise seized nine locally made cap guns and ammunition . . . The exercise was aimed at seizing illegal arms and locally manufactured weapons in the two traditional areas' (*Daily Graphic*, 2003, pp. 1, 4). Two hundred police and military officers were involved in what can only be described as a failed mission.

Such fiascos highlight the necessity of better intelligence and information involving illicit manufacture. As discussed earlier, craft guns are not numbered, nor are registers of purchasers kept. This makes it impossible for the police to know who is involved in manufacture, where the gun was produced, and who the final users are. This will not change unless information flows are improved.

The 1999 Interim Report of Arms and Ammunition Inventory Committee offered the following conclusions:

During the Committee's visit to the Volta region some information on locally manufactured arms was obtained. It came out that although these manufacturers were still operating; most of them had gone 'underground' for fear of apprehension. The committee intends to collect further information on the subject for inclusion in the final report. (GoG, 1999, p. 4)

More recent data provided by the Ghana Police Service (GPS), former members of the Arms and Ammunition Inventory Committee and of the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms (GNCSA) are certainly out of date.⁴⁰ A typical example is the assertion by the Ghana Police Service that 'the following areas are known for their locally manufactured firearms [*sic*]; Alavanyo and Nkonya/Volta region; Techiman/Brong Ahafo region; Suame/Ashanti region' (GoG, 1999, p. 5). Despite the fact that these towns produce relatively high numbers of craft weapons, they form only a minute percentage of the production base in Ghana as a whole. As this study has shown, this extends to the country's ten regions. Popular discourse has characterized craft gun-making in Ghana as almost extinct, at best, obsolete with weapons produced still dependent on gunpowder (GoG, 1999, p. 9). This chapter reveals the exact opposite: Ghanaian gunsmithing has become ever more sophisticated and the weapons manufactured of a quality comparable with industrially produced guns.

Civil society initiatives

The quality of the blacksmith products and their traditional integration into communities highlight the limitations of coercive approaches to outlawing gun production, which rely mainly on official bans. Clearly, any effective and sustainable solution will involve persuading local communities to include in their traditional codes of conduct the condemnation of gun sales for the purpose of anti-social activities—including armed conflict and criminal use.

In a pioneering attempt to undertake social change, civil society organizations such as the Africa Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR) have sought to initiate a dialogue between manufacturers, local communities, and government—particularly in the Ashanti region. The first step involved organizing gunsmiths into associations. To date, the Ashanti Region Association of Blacksmiths (ARAB) is the largest, with headquarters in Kumasi. Established in 2002, it was the first organization to formally register the region’s gunsmiths and has lobbied for a shift in public perception, which tends to perceive all blacksmiths as supplying weapons to criminal gangs. As a result, and in consultation with the Ashanti region Police command, ARAB has endeavoured to encourage blacksmiths to form a formal association, register its members, and begin the process of reconversion to non-lethal products.

Since 2003, and under the leadership of Inspector Opoku of the Ashanti region Police Service, several informal meetings between the police and blacksmiths have taken place with the express purpose of formally organizing blacksmiths and changing the institutional culture within the GPS. Information campaigns also aim to encourage blacksmiths to abandon gun production—especially those destined for criminal use. The success of these efforts is difficult to gauge as daily newspapers still report incidents of blacksmiths being arrested for illegal manufacture. Presently, and with the support of ASDR, initiatives are under way to form similar associations in Brong Ahafo and the Western and Central regions of Ghana.

Conclusion

Lack of information and research on Ghanaian arms manufacture has inevitably led to bad policy. The current prohibition and overall coercive approach adopted by previous and the current administrations, has, far from stemming gun production and trade, simply driven the manufacture, sale, and transportation of locally manufactured small arms underground. Artisans involved in the manufacture and sale of these weapons are convinced that, owing to the illegality of their activities, the true extent of their small arms production needs to be kept secret. Thus the trade thrives despite prohibition and owing to the establishment of long-standing networks that are honour-bound to protect the identities of members. Because of the high degree of trust, secrecy, and information-sharing between participants, these networks function effectively without any state intervention.

Enlightened legislation should not seek to outlaw the manufacture of small arms and light weapons but needs to establish regulations designed to bring the trade into the open, while, at the same time, bringing it under more effective government control. The criminalization of gunsmithing has driven it underground and subsequently weakened the state's ability to exercise control and to partner with Ghanaian manufacturers in their efforts to regulate and stem the illicit flow of arms. Furthermore, criminalization fails to recognize the family, ritual, warrior, and historical traditions underpinning craft gun production, which represents an important aspect of Ghanaian culture and is therefore much more broadly accepted than the law would suggest.

The social embeddedness of gun manufacture in Ghana should not, however, overshadow the more troubling findings uncovered in this study: craft small arms are becoming increasingly advanced and are attracting a growing number of 'illegitimate' users—including criminals in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa. Though much more is required to deal with this threat, it is clear that the state, manufacturers, and civil society have recently demonstrated an admirable willingness to begin the difficult and rocky process of communication and confidence-building. An important 'first step' would be the establishment of an amnesty period to allow for a series of discussions, moderated by civil society, to take place between different stakeholders (law enforcement agencies, various ministries, blacksmiths) without fear of arrest.

The skills developed by Ghana's gunsmiths could be more productively used for agricultural and industrial ends. Technological transformation, however, requires substantial amounts of financial backing. If gun-making is to be replaced with less lethal products, it will be necessary to provide economic incentives to make reconversion worthwhile.

Finally, while public rhetoric continues to dominate the headlines, there is still very little scholarly information on the extent of the small arms problem in Ghana. Complementing this first regional mapping exercise with a more exhaustive review of Ghanaian gunsmithing at the district level is essential to ensure the effective implementation of any reconversion scheme. The examination of the economic significance of gunsmithing within communities is one key area that would help us better assess the challenge inherent in technological transfer.

List of abbreviations

ARAB	Ashanti Region Association of Blacksmiths
ASDR	Africa Security Dialogue and Research
GAF	Ghana Armed Forces
GNCSA	Ghana National Commission on Small Arms
GPS	Ghana Police Service
NPP	New Patriotic Party

Endnotes

- 1 The author is grateful to Kojo Brew, Daniel Numetu, Issa Mohammed, and Emmanuel Addo Sowatey for their help in gathering field information. These were the four main researchers, who subsequently hired additional individuals with specific local knowledge.
- 2 See Part II for a regional overview and Kante (2004) for a detailed analysis of the situation in Mali.
- 3 ASDR is a think-tank based in Accra, Ghana that specializes in issues such as security sector reform, civil-military relations, and the mechanisms and processes of military budgeting in Africa. For further information, see <<http://www.africansecurity.org>>
- 4 The author is most grateful to an anonymous Ghana expert for this point.

- 5 For a general discussion of the threats of guns and the responses by colonial powers, see for example de Marees et al. (1988) and Jones (1985).
- 6 Interview with a manufacturer, September 2004. This person claimed that in the Central region blacksmiths hold competitions to best copy a foreign gun. He indicated that he had won one such competition by copying an AK-47. See also *Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Radio 1* (2001).
- 7 This ammunition comes mainly from the UK and the core manufacturer is Gamebore Cartridge Company Ltd.
- 8 Diverse interviews with senior officials of Ghana Police Service at Police Headquarters Accra, September 2004.
- 9 Landguards are individuals or groups of youth hired by landowners to protect their lands from encroachment. See for example Mingle (2003, p. 3). According to the report, '[n]ine people ... took refuge ... following an attack on the residents of the town by suspected *armed landguards and thugs* ... to avoid sustaining severe injuries ... by the *thugs* wielding AK-47s and machetes'. See also Arthur (2001). In this particular case, '*... a group of armed civilians* led by police sergeant Ansah stormed the [building] site and without provocation started firing indiscriminately ostensibly to scare [people] to flee [from] the land' (emphasis added).
- 10 See GoG (1999, p.10). Cross-border crime and smuggling activities involving firearms are very widespread in the West African sub-region. Similarly, '[t]he Western Marine Command of Nigeria's Customs Service intercepted ... in Lagos six Ghanaians in a canoe containing 72,000 rounds of live ammunition and 99 sacks of shotguns from Ghana'. At <<http://www.nisat.org>> accessed on 16 April 2003.
- 11 Interview with the leadership of the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Blacksmiths Association in Kumasi, 6 September 2004.
- 12 In almost all the interviews conducted, gunsmiths were reluctant to indicate the extent to which economically profitable motives underlay their actions. Most spoke about honour, skill development, and family tradition.
- 13 Interview with a blacksmith in Akyem Manso, 27 September 2004
- 14 Guilds are informal groups of gunsmiths that together determine the rules and regulations governing their activities.
- 15 A classic example of this is the Tamale Implements Factory Limited, which has trained ten blacksmiths in technological conversion to produce animal traction implements. The regional office of the Ministry of Agriculture under Sylvester Adongo has been very supportive of this scheme.
- 16 Interview with a blacksmith, Kumasi, 20 October 2004.

- 17 It is important to recognize the conflicts between these two towns and the relationship to knowledge dispersal of gun manufacturers. The author is grateful to his colleague, Emmanuel Sowatey, for this point.
- 18 Emmanuel Sowatey (2005) argues that knowledge dispersal by itinerant gun-makers from the Volta region is widespread in Ghana.
- 19 The apparent high cost of single barrel guns is related to excessively high demand.
- 20 Interviews at various periods between August and September 2004 at Ho, Tafi Atome, and Kpando.
- 21 These are usually thugs available for hire to intimidate people.
- 22 Interview with the Secretary of the Ashanti region Blacksmiths Association, 15 September 2004.
- 23 Different Interviews with Inspector Opoku, July–September 2004. Since August 2004 Inspector Opoku has been transferred to the Kpeshie Division of the Ghana Police Service in Accra.
- 24 Questioned as to whether customers gave false addresses and identities, manufacturers responded that it was unlikely since purchasing was done through trusted people. In addition, they explained that they did not ask their customers what the guns would be used for.
- 25 Interview in Tamale, 13 August 2004.
- 26 The town of Yendi, home of the Yaa Naa (the second most powerful traditional ruler in Ghana after the Asantehene), gained notoriety in March 2002 when two groups struggling for the control of the Kingdom of Dagbon clashed. In the ensuing battle the Yaa Naa was assassinated and 40 of his elders killed. Until August 2004, the town was under a curfew and a state of emergency declared.
- 27 Interview with police officer in Accra, September 2004.
- 28 The problem posed by cattle rustlers, though not yet perceived as national, is beginning to take on disturbing dimensions. In interviews with Fulani herdsman in other parts of Ghana, primarily in the Dodowa Plains of Greater Accra, cattle rustling and the use of military-style weapons in such attacks are beginning to be reported.
- 29 Confidential written correspondence with an expert on Ghana, 18 February 2005.
- 30 Interview with official of National Commission for Civic Education official in Tamale, 10 July 2004.
- 31 This particular act modifies the payable amounts and specifies in detail the fees to be paid upon registration.
- 32 Draft Arms and Ammunition Bill 2003, Section 14 i.
- 33 Interview with several senior police officers, Elmina, 15 December 2005.
- 34 According to GoG (1999, p. 5), this particular company was involved in a possible trans-

shipment of shotguns and cartridges to 2 Nigerians involving 14,672 pieces of shotguns and 1,313,453 cartridges.

35 Interview with head of arms registration bureau in Accra, 12 October 2004.

36 See *Daily Graphic* (2001, p. 1) and interview with Yaw Adu-Gyimah, 22 March 2001. Yaw Adu-Gyimah was the police officer in charge of this exercise.

37 Keynote address by His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana on the occasion of International Weapons Destruction Day, Friday 9 July 2004, p. 2.

38 The author is grateful to an anonymous referee for these points.

39 Interview with a manufacturer in the Central region who helps his customers register their guns, September 2004.

40 Interviews during July and September 2004 in Accra.

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DISARMING LIBERIA: PROGRESS AND PITFALLS

By Ryan Nichols

Introduction

More than a decade of civil war in Liberia came to a close on 18 August 2003 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana. The CPA called for, among other things, the establishment of a National Transitional Government in Liberia (NTGL) and the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) programme for the country's estimated 38,000 ex-combatants. Established by Security Council resolution 1509 of 19 September 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was charged with the task of keeping the peace while the DDRR programme was planned and implemented.¹ The programme began December 2003, and its DD component officially ended on 31 October 2004.

This chapter charts the progress of the DDRR programme in Liberia up to December 2004, one year after eager ex-combatants first surrendered their weapons. The assessment is divided into three sections: the first presents the operational process of DDRR and highlights main results to date; the second focuses on the principal difficulties experienced during this process; while the third discusses main challenges ahead.

Information and analysis used in this chapter draw extensively on the author's experience as DDRR officer in Liberia from mid-2004 to early 2005. While in Monrovia, the author interviewed a wide range of international civil servants, peacekeeping officials, ex-combatants, and representatives of civil society. The author undertook an extensive review of UN documents and statistics, and secondary sources such as press articles, to further substantiate his analysis.

The chapter comes to the following conclusions:

- The disarmament process resulted in the surrender of more than 27,000 weapons, which represents roughly two-thirds of Liberian armed groups' estimated stockpiles.
- A weak screening process enabled more than 100,000 people to go through the DDRR process – more than two-and-a-half times the original estimate.
- A rushed start and subsequent operational hiccups led to several riots and demonstrations.
- As of December 2004, funds for rehabilitation and reintegration (RR) were insufficient to reintegrate the large number of people who demobilized, raising fears that some 47,000 ex-combatants would be excluded from the programme.
- Despite demobilization, Liberian armed groups' structures remain very much intact and incidents of violence still threaten the fragile peace process.

Liberia's DDRR process: a closer look

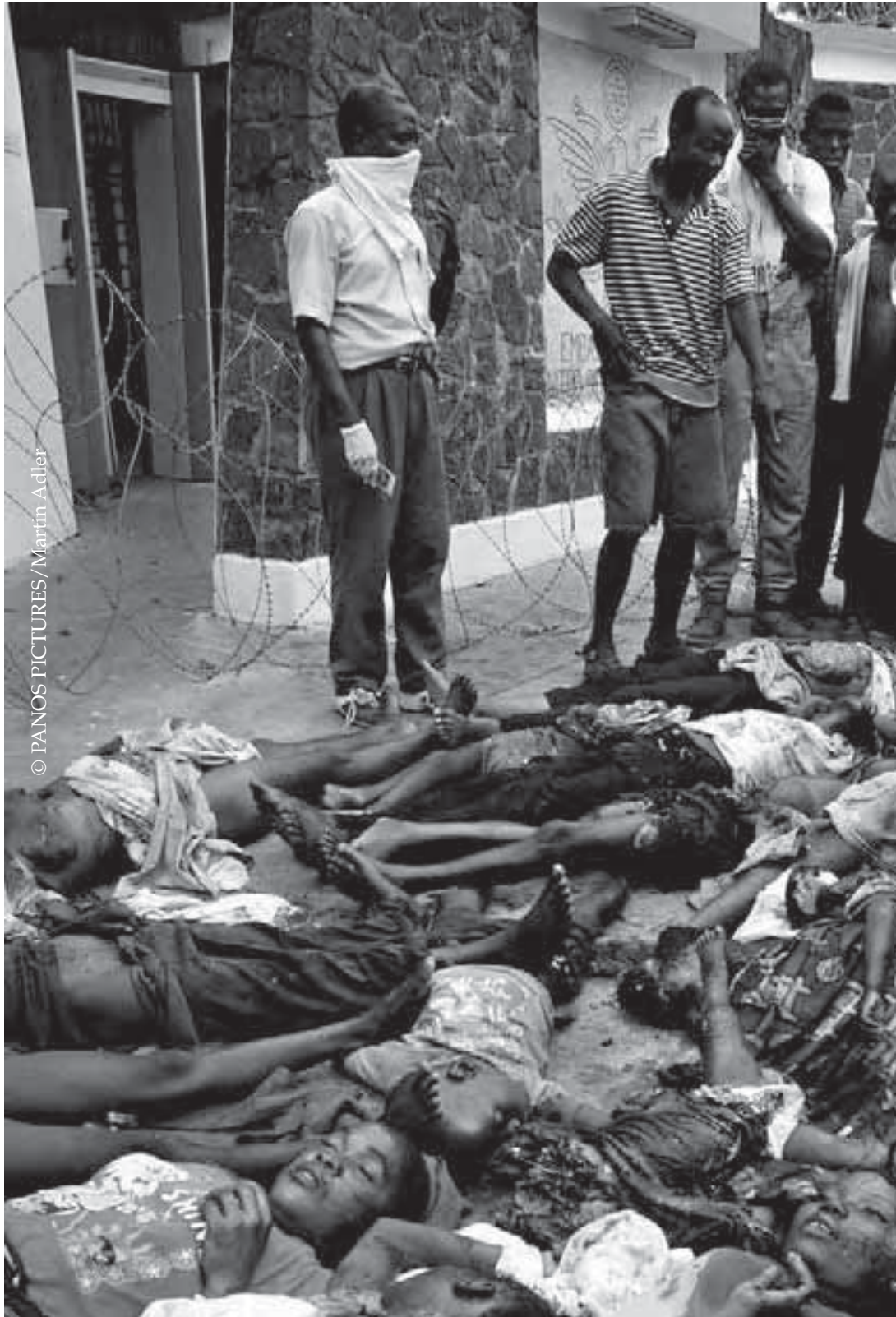
Getting it wrong: disarmament in December 2003

Following a symbolic weapons destruction ceremony on 1 December 2003, UNMIL started the official DDRR process on 7 December despite widespread fears that the launch was premature (UNMIL, 2003a). When frustrated ex-combatants fired shots and took over the disarmament site, it became clear that preparations were woefully inadequate. Despite this highly publicized setback, disarmament continued until 27 December and was then suspended indefinitely due to the increasing threat of violence and general deterioration of security.

On 7 December at Camp Scheffelin, near Monrovia, ex-Government of Liberia (ex-GoL) fighters began to disarm. From the moment the decision was announced, those on the ground knew there were going to be problems. As one UN official explained, 'every technocrat knew the timing was premature... it went against all technical logic as there was not even a monitoring system in place.'² With fewer than 7,000 peacekeepers in the country, a distinct lack of security exacerbated an already precarious situation (UNMIL, 2003b). Many assumed that the decision to start disarmament was driven by donor pressure on UNMIL to demonstrate operational readiness.³ Senior

Table 4.1 Fourteen years of conflict in Liberia: A timeline of key events

Timeframe	Event
December 1989	Charles Taylor leads his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in an invasion of Northern Liberia—the first step of a plan to topple President Samuel Doe.
1990	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends an intervention force to Liberia: the Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Doe is executed by a breakaway faction of the NPFL, led by Prince Johnson.
March 1991	Fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invade Sierra Leone from Liberia, led by Foday Sankoh, an associate of Charles Taylor.
May 1991	Liberian refugees from Guinea and Sierra Leone, who had backed ex-President Doe, form the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO)—a rival to Taylor's NPFL.
1991–95	Fighting continues between the NPFL, ECOMOG and ULIMO forces. In 1993 ULIMO splits along ethnic lines into two warring factions, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K.
September 1993	The UN Security Council establishes the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL).
August 1995	A peace agreement is signed in Abuja, calling for a cease-fire and disarmament of fighting forces.
1996	Fighting erupts between ULIMO-J and the NPFL and spreads to Monrovia. ECOMOG troops regain control and another ceasefire is declared. ECOMOG launches a disarmament and demobilization programme.
May 1997	The RUF, backed by Taylor, topples President Kabbah in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's Kamajor fighters, who supported ex-president Kabbah, flee to Liberia where they unite with ULIMO rebels.
July 1997	Charles Taylor is elected president. His National Patriotic Party wins a majority of seats in the National Assembly.
September 1997	UNOMIL withdraws.
February 2000	Anti-Taylor groups, including the Kamajors and ULIMO, unite to form Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).
July 2000	LURD invades northern Liberia from Guinea.
September 2000	Taylor counter-attacks LURD by sending RUF forces into Guinea.
May 2001	The UN Security Council imposes an arms embargo and sanctions on Liberia for its continued support of the RUF.
February 2002	LURD advances to within 50 km of Monrovia. Taylor declares a state of emergency.
March 2003	MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) emerges as a new Liberian rebel group, closely linked to LURD but based in Côte d'Ivoire.
June 2003	The Special Court in Sierra Leone issues an indictment for war crimes against Charles Taylor due to his alleged support for the RUF.
August 2003	ECOWAS peacekeepers arrive in Liberia. A CPA is signed in Accra. Taylor accepts an offer of asylum in Nigeria and an interim government is established, headed by Gyude Bryant.
September 2003	The UN Security Council establishes the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).
December 2003	Liberia's DDDR programme is launched.



Outside the US embassy, civilians pile up the corpses of those killed in the latest mortar attack on central Monrovia.

UNMIL officials also claimed, however, that Chairman Gyude Bryant of the NTGL pushed for disarmament in response to violent threats from ex-GoL fighters eager to swap arms for cash.⁴

On the opening day of disarmament, UNMIL officials expected to process 250 ex-combatants, but well over 1,000 showed up. Needless to say, numbers were completely unmanageable, and both UN staff and NGO service providers were overwhelmed. A slow start meant that by nightfall, 500 people were still lining up outside the camp, weapons in hand.⁵ A lack of food and water, coupled with widespread confusion led to mounting frustration. Many fighters mistakenly assumed that when they turned in their arms they would instantly receive their cash payment of USD 150. This misinformation was clearly attributed to inadequate sensitization regarding the DDRR process. As dissatisfaction boiled over, the ex-combatants began brandishing their weapons and subsequently took over Camp Scheffelin. Shots were fired and many disgruntled fighters returned to Monrovia, riding atop vehicles and waving their guns. Angry ex-combatants set up roadblocks and a general period of rioting ensued in the capital and surrounding areas for the following two days, resulting in the deaths of nine citizens (assumed to be ex-GoL fighters).⁶

Despite the chaos, disarmament continued. UNMIL decided to appease ex-combatants intent on handing in weapons and ammunition with an on-the-spot payment of USD 75. A second instalment of USD 75 was to be paid out when disarmament resumed in April 2004. In the meantime, ex-combatants continued to hand over their weapons at Camp Scheffelin until 27 December 2003, at which point the process was finally suspended amid further security concerns. More than 13,000 fighters reportedly disarmed, although JIU officials estimated that at least 3,000 of these succeeded in 'disarming twice' owing to the lack of monitoring and control.⁷

Resuming the process

Following the December fiasco, UNMIL returned to the drawing board and focused on raising public awareness while simultaneously continuing site preparations. On 21 January 2004, UNMIL launched a nationwide DDRR information campaign (UNMIL, 2004a). In April, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General to Liberia Jacques Klein announced that three

preconditions for resumption of DDRR had been met: adequate sensitization of combatants; adequate force deployment; the construction of cantonment sites and service provider readiness. Unfortunately, however, armed factions had failed to submit comprehensive lists of combatants to UNMIL (UNMIL, 2004b). This not only contributed to the delay of the DDRR process, but also made it impossible to predict the number of ex-combatants expected to take part.

Despite this critical absence of crucial information, on 15 April 2004, UNMIL re-launched DDRR and continued to disarm ex-combatants largely without incident until the DD component officially closed on 31 October 2004.⁸ All told, 102,193 ex-combatants disarmed and UNMIL collected a total of 27,804 weapons and 7,129,198 rounds of small arms ammunition (SAA) (NCDDRR, 2004b; UNMIL, 2004d, Annex E). A complete breakdown of DDRR results is presented in Table 4.3.

Under the guidance of a National Commission on DDRR (NCDDRR), a Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) made up of UNMIL, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners was responsible for the overall planning and implementation of the DDRR programme.⁹ As outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, DDRR targeted the three main warring parties, namely, the former Government of Liberia (GoL) forces (and other paramilitary groups); Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD); and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL).

The disarmament and demobilization phase of the DDRR programme took place in 11 separate areas around the country.¹¹ UNMIL personnel collected, separated, and then destroyed weapons and ammunition at specific sites. Daily, explosives teams destroyed ammunition at disposal sites around the country, while the weapons themselves were temporarily stored in containers until they could be transported to Monrovia. Prior to their destruction, personnel collected, re-counted, and catalogued by type and serial number all weapons. An American company, ORDSafe, dismantled the weapons using circular saws and a large shredding machine. Local organizations used some of the scrap for parts. The rest was disposed of.¹²

Table 4.2 DDRR and weapons collection and destruction programmes in Liberia

Event and timeframe	Implementing agency	Number of combatants disarmed	Number of weapons/ammunition collected	Number of weapons and ammunition destroyed
Disarmament and demobilization programme (D&D) ^a 22/11/96—9/02/97	ECOMOG / UNOMIL ^b / HACO	20,332 ^c	7,797 weapons (serviceable) ^d 1,782 weapons (unserviceable) 1,218,300 rounds of ammunition ^e	none
Cordon and search operations 9/02/97—13/08/97	ECOMOG	132 ^f	3,750 assorted weapons ^g 152,500 rounds of ammunition	none
Ceremonial weapons burning 26/07/99	ECOMOG and UNOL ^h	-	-	1,000
Weapons destruction Completed 19/10/99 ⁱ	ECOMOG and UNOL	-	-	18,420 small arms ^j 626 heavy machine guns 150 anti-tank launchers 63 mortars 26 recoilless rifles 9 guns and howitzers 3 rocket launchers 3,000,000 rounds of SAA ^k
DDRR 7/12/03—31/10/04 Note: the DDRR process was suspended from January to April 2004	JIU, UNMIL, UNDP, other UN UN agencies and partners	68,952 men 22,020 women 8,704 boys 2,517 girls ----- Total: 102,193 ^l	27,804 weapons 7,129,198 rounds of SAA 32,530 other ammunition ^m	All destroyed or slated for destruction
Community arms collection programme ⁿ (timeframe to be determined)	UNDP	-	-	-

Notes: a This D&D programme was called for under the 1995 Abuja Agreement. b The UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was established by Security Council resolution 866 (1993). c CAII (1997, p. 19). d These weapons included: pistols, revolvers, sub-machine guns, sub-machine carbines, rifles, general purpose machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank, heavy-calibre, and other weapons (UNSC, 1997a, Annex II). e Ammunition included grenades, SAA, higher-calibre ammunition, artillery shells, and mines (UNSC, 1997a, Annex II). f UNSC (1997b, para. 17). g UNSC (1997c, para. 16). h The UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) was established on 1 November 1997 following the withdrawal of UNOMIL (UN, 2000). i Source for this section: PCASED (1999). j The small arms were as follows: 25 per cent AK-47 (USSR and China), 25 per cent M16 (USA), 15 per cent Fames (France), 15 per cent Beretta (Italy), 10 per cent Uzi (Israel), 5 per cent Rifles (USA), 5 per cent other (various). k The total weapons and ammunition destroyed were estimated to be worth more than USD 6 million. l NCDDRR (2004b). m UNMIL (2004d, Annex E). n A community arms collection programme, to be implemented following the completion of Liberia's formal DDRR process, was called for in the Liberian DDRR Strategy and Implementation Framework (Draft Interim Secretariat, 2003, p. 16).

Table 4.3 Liberia's DDDR statistics at a glance (as of 24 November 2004)¹⁰		
Total ex-combatants processed		
Adult	M	68,952
	F	22,020
Children	M	8,704
	F	2,517
TOTAL		102,193
Total ex-combatants processed by faction		
AFL ^a		12,246
LURD		33,485
MODEL		13,149
Ex-GoL (incl. paramilitary)		15,589
Other ^b		27,724
TOTAL		102,193
Total weapons collected		
Rifles/sub-machine guns		20,458
Machine guns		690
Pistols		641
RPG launchers		1,829
Mortars		178
Misc. ^c		4,008
TOTAL		27,804
Total ammunition collected		
SAA		7,129,198
RPG rockets		8,703
60/81 mm mortars		12,287
82 mm mortars		15
Hand grenades		10,410
Surface-to-air missiles		12
Misc.		1,103
TOTAL ammunition (excluding SAA)		32,530

a The CPA called for the Armed Forces of Liberia to be 'confined to their barracks, their arms placed in armouries and their ammunition in storage bunkers' (CPA article VI, para. 3.). However, this did not occur and AFL members were subsequently allowed to go through the DDDR process along with the other warring parties. *b* This category is largely assumed to be ex-GoL fighters. *c* Based on information from the JIU, it is believed that over 3,000 of these weapons are actually shotguns.

Sources: NCDDRR (2004b); UNMIL (2004d, Annex E)

Table 4.4 Qualification for entry into the DDDR programme				
	Description	Qualifying number of people for each	Remarks	
APPROVED WEAPON	Rifle/pistol	1	Serviceable weapons only (unserviceable = parts missing and cannot be made functional)	
	RPG launcher	1	-	
	Light / medium / heavy machine gun	2	Belt fed weapons only	
	60 mm mortar	2	Tube, base plate and stand	
	81 mm mortar	3	Tube, base plate and stand	
	106 / 120 / 155 mortar / howitzer	6	-	
	Anti-aircraft guns	4	-	
	Description	Qualifying number of people for each	Number of munitions required	Remarks
APPROVED AMMUNITION	Grenades	1	2	-
	RPG (rocket & grenade) Mortar bomb (120, 60, 81 mm)	1	1	Together or no entry (not to be handed in as separate items)
	Smoke grenades	1	4	-
	Ammunition	1	150	Single or linked

Source: MILOBS

In order to be eligible for the DDDR programme, participants had to:

- present a serviceable weapon or ammunition which met the required entry criteria (see Table 4.4); or
- be a child (under 18) associated with the fighting forces (CAFF); or
- be a woman associated with the fighting forces (WAFF).¹³

Following disarmament, ex-combatants were housed and fed at a demobilization cantonment site for a total of five days. A maximum of 250 ex-combatants were expected to be admitted every day, and upon arrival, cantonment site staff put them through a medical screening process, issued ID cards, identified their reintegration preference, and provided them with a

package of non-food items.¹⁴ Following registration, women and men were housed in separate quarters while child protection agencies transported children to interim care centres until they could be reunited with their families.¹⁵ During their stay the ex-combatants participated in a series of pre-discharge orientation sessions dealing with topics such as career counselling, health awareness, civic education, peace-building, and reconciliation. Women also received reproductive health and sexually based gender violence (SBGV) counselling.

Prior to discharge, ex-combatants received a one-month food ration and USD 150, the first instalment of their Transitional Safety Net Allowance (TSA).¹⁶ Child combatants also received a TSA, though this was paid only once they were reunited with their parents. The second instalment of the TSA, another USD 150, was subsequently paid to the ex-combatants after a period of three months.

DD in review

While the RR of Liberia's ex-combatants is ongoing and the success of the final outcome not yet clear, DD officially ended 31 October 2004, and is thus ripe for analysis.

Shortcomings in the screening process

Firstly, the incredibly large number of people who went through the DDRR process (102,193, more than two-and-a-half times the original estimate of 38,000) can undoubtedly be attributed to two factors: underestimation coupled with a flawed screening process. When originally planning DDRR, UNMIL came up with a best estimate of 38,000 given that armed factions failed to provide a comprehensive list of their fighting forces.¹⁷ Following the first phase of disarmament in December 2003, UNMIL and the NTGL raised the number to 53,000 ex-combatants – although this figure also proved sadly inaccurate (NTGL, 2004, p. 11).

UNMIL soon discovered that the high number of participants was not simply the result of low estimates, but could also be blamed on a flawed screening process. Initially, military observers (MILOBS) were tasked with both disarming fighters and subsequently screening them at the demobilization camp using a series of questions designed to ascertain that participants were,



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Government soldiers loyal to Liberian president Charles Taylor get psyched before heading to the Waterside front to battle LURD insurgents. Many take drugs before engaging in combat.

indeed, ex-combatants or women or children associated with the fighting forces (WAFF or CAFF). However, the MILOBS left this post-disarmament screening process to local NGO staff, who lacked the training and authority required to effectively identify and reject illegitimate participants. This meant that, by the time the ex-combatants had been processed at the disarmament sites, they were virtually guaranteed admission into the cantonment sites, making any screening process largely irrelevant.¹⁸

At the initial pick-up points, MILOBS *did* attempt to screen the ex-combatants before allowing them to board the trucks that then transported them to disarmament sites. They questioned them about their roles and responsibilities during the war, and tested their knowledge, often asking them to dismantle their guns, identify parts, and explain what ammunition they used. There was no standardized screening procedure or set questions, however, and this process was often undermined by language barriers and cultural misunderstandings despite the assistance of local translators. In essence, the extent to which ex-combatants were screened depended entirely on the persistence and ability of the MILOBS to ask the right questions and to obtain accurate information. While they had the final say in who boarded the trucks and who did not, MILOBS were often obliged to rely on information that commanders provided or on local NGO and NCDDRR staff, all of whom have been accused on occasion of trying to deceive MILOBS into granting entry to non-combatants.¹⁹

As a result of the weak screening process, many non-fighters managed to gain entry into the programme.²⁰ It was even easier for women and children because they were not required to hand over a weapon or any ammunition—although many did.²¹ Of the 33,241 women and children processed, 13,891 brought weapons or ammunition with them. The remaining 19,350 were admitted as WAFF or CAFF.²² MILOBS managed to screen these, but found it tremendously difficult to separate legitimate WAFF and CAFF from regular citizens trying to sneak into the DDDR programme.²³ As one of the MILOBS explained, ‘fighting has been ongoing in the country for the last 14 years ... sometimes it seems as though everyone has been associated with the fighting forces in some way or another at some point in time.’ It is not clear how many potential WAFF or CAFF MILOBS were turned away but according to one observer, ‘not very many’.²⁴

In general there is no way to determine how many illegitimate participants took part in the DDRR programme, although one UNMIL official estimated that of the 102,193 people processed no more than 60,000 were legitimate fighters, WAFF or CAFF.²⁵

Weak entry criteria—specifically, the 150 rounds of ammunition—have also been blamed for contributing to the large number of ex-combatants who entered the DDRR programme. Some UN officials felt that SAA should not have been accepted in lieu of a weapon or that the minimum amount should at least have been set higher than 150 rounds.²⁶

One consequence of incomplete lists and weak entry criteria was that some faction leaders hand-picked and provided weapons to soldiers whom they then sent through the programme. Leaders profited by collecting the TSA payment. This was reported, for example, at the Harper disarmament site where commanders disarmed fighters in advance and then redistributed weapons and ammunition to those from whom they could easily recover money. Annoyed and frustrated, a number of legitimate fighters excluded from the DDRR programme openly clashed with commanders and demanded that their weapons be returned—to no avail.²⁷

These kinds of scams meant that the DDRR programme effectively resulted in the enrichment of many commanders who were able to turn in a weapon or ammunition with a market value ranging from USD 30 to USD 50 and come out the other end with up to USD 300.²⁸ While ex-combatants still controlled by their commanders were forced to give up their cash payment, they still stood to benefit from the reintegration phase. In a similar twist, there were also reports of both commanders and other legitimate combatants selling weapons and ammunition to non-combatants, who then succeeded in breezing past the DDRR screening process (UNSC, 2004b, para. 11).

Disarmament: what's in a number?

The large number of participants in the DDRR programme would be little cause for alarm, were it not for the apparent lack of corresponding weapons: only 27,804 for 102,193 ex-combatants. As alluded to above, the lopsided person-to-weapon ratio can be partly explained by the fact that almost 20,000 women and children entered the programme without weapons or ammuni-



All weapons collected during the disarmament programme were systematically destroyed.

tion, and that many men may have brought in ammunition and left their guns behind. It should also be noted that at least 75 per cent of the 4,008 'miscellaneous' weapons collected were actually shotguns. This represents more than 10 per cent of the total arms turned in. Some UNMIL officials felt that these weapons should not have been accepted for entry into the DDRR programme owing to their extremely poor quality and the fact that it is questionable whether ex-combatants actually used them.²⁹ Many larger weapons, such as those used during the August 2003 siege of Monrovia, were never turned in despite promises from faction leaders (NCDDRR, 2004a).

Following the start of DDRR, UN officials soon noticed a significant disparity between the number and type of weapons that the JIU (DDRR headquarters) reported collecting, and the actual physical count that took place prior to their destruction. This apparently stemmed from confusion between the MILOBS who recorded the collected weapons, and database personnel who then processed the disarmament forms and tallied figures at the JIU. For example: when an ex-combatant handed in a 120 mm mortar, MILOBS would record a '1' on the disarmament form, which was its identification code. Likewise, a '7' would be recorded for an AK-47 assault rifle. Those processing the forms easily misread numbers that appeared so similar when handwritten, resulting in an inordinately high number of 120 mm mortars being reported instead of AK-47s.

Another problem arose with the mortar weapons, which consist of three parts: a base plate, a tripod, and a firing tube. These three components would often be handed in separately, yet each one would subsequently be recorded and tallied as a complete weapon.³⁰ Compounding problems even more was the fact that some MILOBS apparently lacked sufficient training to accurately identify the weapons collected, thus further skewing the numbers.

These reporting errors means that NCDDRR and JIU weapons and ammunition breakdowns listed in their fortnightly DDRR Consolidated Reports were inaccurate and unreliable.³¹ To resolve this, DDRR officials were required to rely on the actual physical count of the weapons and ammunition collected and recorded by MILOBS (the figures reported in Table 4.3). Data that the JIU collected from the disarmament forms was largely ignored.

There is no clear indication how many weapons were present in Liberia prior to DDRR, though the illegal shipments reported by the UN Panel of Experts

on Liberia in 2002 and 2003 alone suggest that the number is significant (UNSC, 2002, paras. 64–5; 2003, paras. 95–7; 2004a, paras. 55–6). Since August 2003, there have been no recorded weapons shipments by air although, as the Panel of Experts points out, ‘international smuggling networks remain in place and could be reactivated at any time’ (UNSC, 2004a, para. 4).

With no accurate figure for weapons stockpiles, it is difficult to assess to what extent the disarmament process has been successful. However, one rough calculation undertaken by UNMIL is based on the examination of serial numbers and type of weapons collected and then comparing this to six known arms shipments transported from the former Yugoslavia in 2002.

Included were a total of 5,000 automatic rifles (7.62 x 39 mm), highlighted in the red boxes in Table 4.7. As disarmament progressed, it quickly became evident that many of the automatic rifles collected probably came from these shipments because serial numbers were similar and spanned a range of exactly 5,000—from 795,163 to 800,163. With less than a month remaining in the disarmament process, by 3 October 2004, ex-combatants had turned in a total of 3,175, or 64 per cent, of the original 5,000 rifles. UNMIL undertook a similar count of 200 missile launchers (RB M57), highlighted in the black boxes. Of these, it appeared from the serial numbers that ex-combatants had turned in 184, or 92 per cent. Further analysis also showed that, of an estimated 791 RPG-7 rockets (not listed in Table 4.7), a total of 459, or 58 per cent, were collected.³³

Combined, these figures show that 64 per cent of the weapons from these three groups were collected (see Table 4.5). When these calculations were made in early October 2004, a total of 25,167 weapons had been turned in during the Liberian disarmament process. If one were to extrapolate and assume that 25,167 weapons collected represented 64 per cent of the total, this would suggest that, in early October 2004, approximately 14,000 weapons remained unaccounted for (see Table 4.6). (Since that time, ex-combatants turned in an additional 3,000 prior to the official end of disarmament.) Such calculations are, of course, exceptionally crude owing to the fact that there is little to suggest that the 64 per cent collection rate can accurately be extended to Liberia’s total small arms holdings.

Noteworthy is the fact that many ex-combatants, particularly faction leaders, were perhaps well aware that the weapons from the Yugoslavian ship-

Table 4.5 Total weapons collected for three groups as of 3 October 2004

Weapon type	Number collected
Automatic rifles	3,175 / 5,000 = 64%
Missile launchers	184 / 200 = 92%
RPG rockets	459 / 791 = 58%
Total	3,818 / 5,991 = 64%

Table 4.6 Projected estimate of uncollected weapons as of 3 October 2004

Projected estimate	Percentage and number
Collected weapons	64% = 25,167
Total weapons	100% = 39,323
Uncollected weapons	36% = 14,156

ments are well-tracked by the UN and therefore would likely have been inclined to turn these in first. Nonetheless, as rough as the figures may be, one member of the Panel of Experts on Liberia estimates that approximately 60 per cent of the country's weapons have been collected.³⁴

While there is no doubt that many weapons still remain unaccounted for, there is little to indicate where they may be. In October 2003, UNMIL discovered large weapons caches in the executive mansion, in ex-President Moses Blah's residence, and in two areas in the bush (one in Voinjama, northern Liberia, and the other near the western border with Sierra Leone). UNMIL assumes that other caches exist but have yet to be found.³⁵ Occasional reports circulating in the media suggest this is the case.³⁶ It is also possible that traffickers may have shipped missing weapons to Côte d'Ivoire. Fortunately, since the serial number batches of the collected weapons are being recorded, it will be possible to discover whether any of the weapons turned in during Côte d'Ivoire's eventual DDR programme originated in Liberia, thus providing information on cross-border trafficking.³⁷

Demobilization

Although relatively comprehensive, demobilization was hindered by its limited duration. Some officials viewed the five-day period in which the

Table 4.7 List of weapon shipments from Yugoslavia to Liberia from June to August 2002, as found in the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia Report (October 2002)

Date of flight landing in Liberia	Contents of flights	Weight (tonnes)
1 June 2002	1,000 automatic rifles (7.62 x 39 mm) 498,960 cartridges (7.62 x 39 mm, M67) 2,000 hand grenades (M75)	21
7 June 2002	1,000 automatic rifles (7.62 x 39 mm) 1,260,000 cartridges (7.62 x 39 mm, M67) 2,496 hand grenades (M75)	40
29 June 2002	1,500 automatic rifles (7.62 x 39 mm) 1,165,500 cartridges (7.62 x 39 mm, M67)	40
5 July 2002	120,000 rounds of ammunition (7.62 mm for M84) 11,250 rounds of ammunition (9 mm NATO) 75,000 rounds of ammunition (7.65 mm) 100 missile launchers (RB M57) 4500 mines for RB M57 60 automatic pistols (M84, 7.65 mm) 20 pistols (CZ99, 9 mm) 10 Black Arrow long-range rifles (M93, 12.7 mm) 5 machine guns (M84, 7.62 mm)	33
23 August 2002	100 missile launchers (RB M57) 1,000 mines for RB M57 50 machine guns (M84, 7.62 mm) 1,500 automatic rifles (7.62 x 39 mm) 17 pistols (CZ99, 9 mm) 92,400 rounds of ammunition (7.62 x 54 mm) 526,680 rounds of ammunition (7.62 x 39 mm) 9,000 rounds of ammunition (9 mm) 6,000 rounds of ammunition (7.65 mm) 9 hunting rifles	38
25 August 2002	152 missile launchers 1,000 mines for RB M57 10 automatic pistols (M84, 7.65 mm) 5,200 rounds of ammunition for the Black Arrow long-range rifle (M93, 12.7 mm) 183,600 rounds of ammunition (7.62 x 54 mm) 999,180 rounds of ammunition (7.62 x 39 mm) 2 sets of rubber pipelines 3 propellers 1 rotor head 17 pistol holders	38.5

Source: UNSC (2002, paras. 64–65)

combatants were housed at the cantonment sites as too brief to enable substantial and sustained behaviour and attitude change—and certainly too short to effectively break up existing command and control structures among armed factions.³⁸ This shortcoming was made clear following widespread reports of ex-fighters, usually children, relinquishing their TSA to ‘former’ commanders upon leaving cantonment sites.³⁹ The power that faction leaders continue to exercise over their followers is significant: during a post-disarmament uprising of disgruntled ex-combatants in Tubmanburg, UNMIL troops had to bring in a former LURD commander to quell the rioting.⁴⁰

While the ‘demobilization’ goal of the cantonment period was only a minor success, ex-combatants did benefit from services provided, and this should not be discounted. Of particular value were the medical screening process and the SBGV counselling for women. Many of the ex-combatants also reported finding pre-discharge orientation sessions to be of considerable help. It was also critical that child protection agencies separate those under 18 from their commanders—even if for only a limited time—by handing the children over to interim care centres. This allowed the children an opportunity, however brief, to escape the control structure and influence of the armed faction they had been tied to, and receive some post-conflict support in a caring environment.⁴¹

Bigger picture, bigger problems

Overall, despite problems such as those described above, and a very imperfect set-up, the DD phase came to a close minus any major mishaps—the December 2003 fiasco aside. This was no small feat given unexpected numbers of ex-combatants and the complex dynamics that existed between warring factions. Had the initial launch of DDRR in December 2003 not been rushed, and the appropriate preparations been made instead, UNMIL might even be in a position to describe the DD as an overall success—despite the small number of weapons collected.

In addition to the DD’s technical shortcomings, however, it is clear that greater problems undermined the effectiveness of the overall DDRR programme from its very inception. One senior UNMIL official commented that the programme was largely drawn up from scratch and it was unclear from the

beginning what policies should guide it. To be truly effective, he maintained, the DDRR process should have been based on a skeleton document formed in consultation with appropriate parties, such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This would have established specific criteria (with regard to women, children, and entry, for example) prior to the roll-out of DDRR, and thus avoided much of the debate, policy wrangling, confusion, and delay that took place during the design stage. This DDRR template could then have been adapted to both national and regional considerations, and elaborated with funders at the table.⁴²

The lack of coordination and communication between UN officials in neighbouring countries was apparent when, in March 2004, Côte d'Ivoire announced the details of its own forthcoming DDR programme – taking many UNMIL officials by surprise.⁴³ Confounding Liberia's DDRR, is the fact that in Côte d'Ivoire, ex-combatants will be receiving considerably more money than Liberians when (and if) the disarmament process finally takes place (BBC, 2004). This has prompted speculation that many Liberian fighters may be holding back weapons in order to cash them in next door. Côte d'Ivoire's DDR process, which had been scheduled for 15 October 2004 but was delayed indefinitely, originally called for a payment of USD 900 (IRIN, 2004a).

Despite reports that this sum has since been reduced to USD 830, it remains a significant amount of money compared with the USD 300 paid in Liberia.⁴⁴ This disparity may not only have significantly undermined Liberia's DDRR process by providing fighters an extra incentive to hold on to their weapons but also may be contributing to the ongoing instability in Côte d'Ivoire by encouraging armed Liberian fighters to cross the border. One UNMIL official speculates that fighters may have brought weapons into Côte d'Ivoire during March 2004 when DDR programme details were first announced.⁴⁵ Although only Ivorian fighters will be eligible, Liberian fighters may be all too happy to offer a weapon to an Ivorian counterpart for a share of the spoils.⁴⁶

In an attempt to promote cooperation between UN missions in the region, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), located in Dakar, hosted an initial meeting in May 2004, followed by a second in August, which focused on the harmonization of DDR programmes in West Africa (UNOWA, 2004a;

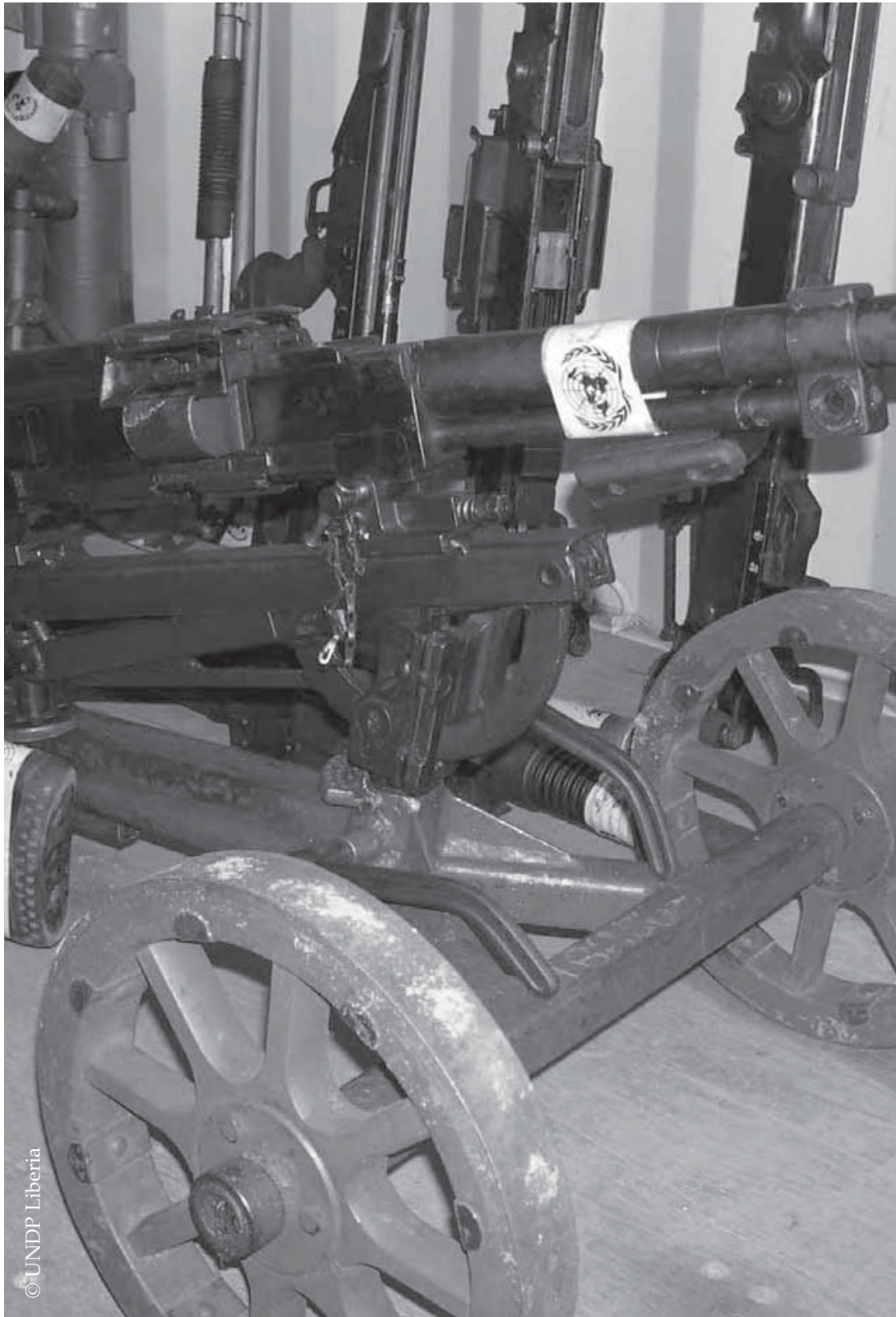
2004b). While these meetings most certainly led to a valuable exchange of information between UN missions and to the tabling of numerous programme and policy recommendations, it is questionable whether this has translated into concrete action on the ground. The meetings were also likely of negligible value to the planning and implementation of DDRR in Liberia owing to the fact that the disarmament process was already well under way.

One UNMIL official commented that, preparatory shortcomings aside, Liberia's DDRR programme was destined to have problems for two major reasons: first, all DDRR programmes are unique and each will inevitably encounter serious and unavoidable challenges; and second, a DDRR programme should not be launched in the start-up phase of a UN mission, particularly when there are insufficient peacekeepers to maintain a secure environment.⁴⁷

A final issue which has hamstrung DDRR operations is that, at the policy level, the JIU has failed to function in a cohesive manner. Relations between some UN officials have been particularly strained, with several policy-makers openly critical of one another. The concept of joint effort and responsibility quickly degraded into unilateralism and finger pointing when things went wrong. The NCDDRR has been critical of the JIU structure, claiming it has been sidelined throughout much of the process and set up to fail by being given a huge mandate but no means with which to fulfil it.⁴⁸

In general, UNMIL has been criticized for having a 'you are either with us or against us' attitude. This arrogance has caused friction with partner UN agencies and NGOs that were established in Liberia long before UNMIL's arrival and will remain long after it departs.⁴⁹ Operationally, DDRR continues to run relatively smoothly, but there remains significant potential for further conflict between experts as they clash over programme and policy decisions. When asked to comment on the overall situation, one UNMIL official simply concluded, 'I know two things: disarmament in Liberia is incomplete... and there is no such thing as a DDRR expert.'⁵⁰

During the creation of Liberia's programme it has become unclear to what extent lessons learned from other DDRR experiences, particularly those in neighbouring Sierra Leone, have been applied. The programme has also been criticized for being designed and implemented largely in a void, with insufficient thought given to Liberia's neighbours. In a region as volatile as West



Disappointingly few of the larger weapons were handed in during the disarmament programme, despite the promises of faction leaders to do so.

Africa, and particularly the Mano River Union, this has potentially grave implications.⁵¹ Long, porous borders between Liberia and its neighbours means that what happens in one country will invariably affect the others. This is especially the case with transient fighters and their weapons. When Liberia launched its DDRR process and started paying for weapons and ammunition, a market was instantly created.

Reports indicate that arms and ammunition are being brought into the country from abroad. In Guinea, at least two individuals are known to have been selling ammunition for transport into Liberia. Similarly, in Sierra Leone soldiers were caught trying to steal grenades from an armoury with the intention of selling them to Liberians looking for a ticket into the DDRR programme.⁵² Following an assessment visit to Voinjama (northern Liberia) in September 2004, NCDDRR officials also reported stories of arms and ammunition being smuggled from Guinea into Lofa County in order to allow individuals to enter the DDRR programme at the Voinjama site.⁵³

Despite initiatives such as Operation Blue Vigilance—a United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) attempt to patrol the Sierra Leone-Liberia border—stemming the flow of people and their weapons remains an impossible task (UNAMSIL, 2003). One estimate is that between Boh-Waterside and the Porkpa district, a relatively short section of Liberia's overall border with Sierra Leone, there are 43 border crossings alone of which only 15 are monitored. The situation is dramatically worse with Côte d'Ivoire, because UNMIL has only minimal control over the border despite recent deployments to the area.

UN officials have no estimate of how many weapons or fighters may have already passed back and forth between Liberia and its neighbours, but the flow is unlikely to stop anytime soon.⁵⁴ This was made abundantly evident following the outbreak of renewed violence in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2004, when reports emerged that the Ivorian government was recruiting Liberian mercenaries to support President Laurent Gbagbo (*National Chronicle*, 2004). Similarly, in September 2004 it was reported that a rebel group, led by a former associate of Charles Taylor, was paying Liberian fighters USD 150–USD 200 to join him in his bid to overthrow the Guinean government (IRIN, 2004b).

Challenges ahead

Money matters: funding Liberia's RR

Key to the success of Liberia's DDRR programme and the achievement of sustainable peace is the effective reintegration of ex-combatants who have been disarmed and demobilized. The RR aspect of the DDRR programme is designed to provide vocational training and formal education opportunities, which are of critical importance to the reintegration of ex-combatants into society as normal citizens. Indeed, without a comprehensive RR component, DD may largely be a wasted effort owing to the fact that impoverished, unskilled, and disgruntled former fighters are often prone to take up arms in the absence of better alternatives.

Much of the success of reintegration hinges on available funding which, in turn, is dependent upon the generosity of donor nations. The DDRR trust fund, administered by UNDP, is paying for all civilian-related demobilization and reintegration activities, as well as the establishment and operation of the JIU. As of 1 November 2004, a total of USD 30.4 million had been pledged to the trust fund, while the actual amount received was USD 24.3 million—approximately 80 per cent of the total (UNDP, 2004).

With the case-load of ex-combatants disarmed far exceeding the original estimate of 38,000, the projected budget for DDRR was shattered. Consequently, even if the remaining 20 per cent of pledges are fulfilled, there will be insufficient funding to cover the expected cost of reintegration activities. As of 1 December 2004, UNDP calculated that 47,000 ex-combatants would be excluded from the reintegration programme, owing to a shortfall of USD 44.2 million (UNDP, 2004).⁵⁵ While donors are being solicited to assist in covering these costs, it is still unknown, when, or indeed, whether, this funding will ever come through.

Meanwhile, ex-combatants continue to grow impatient as they wait for their reintegration package – with increasingly dangerous implications. Many have already moved into the capital from outlying regions, and violent crime and demonstrations have consequently increased while the general security situation has deteriorated. Official disarmament may be complete but, until Liberia's ex-combatants are effectively reintegrated, the country's woes will be far from over.

The fragility of Liberia's hard-earned peace became frighteningly apparent when on 28 October 2004, just days before the official end of disarmament, violence erupted on the streets of Monrovia and subsequently spread to other parts of the countryside. Three days later, after 19 people were killed, over 200 injured, and numerous mosques, churches, schools, and shops burned, UNMIL peacekeepers finally succeeded in restoring order. Liberians and foreign-aid workers alike were left reeling from the unexpected violence, which served as a grim reminder that the peace process is still very much in its infancy.

Particularly disconcerting was the fact that some firearms were brandished and used during the violence, confirming widespread fears that even the capital Monrovia was not 'weapon-free', as suggested by UNMIL. The precise cause of the outbreak was unclear, though some attributed it to a land dispute between LURD members—who are predominantly Muslim—and other Christian locals. There was also speculation that those opposed to the peace process and/or the closure of the disarmament programme were responsible for engineering the violence (UNMIL HCS, 2004).

Liberia's fighters: neither gone nor forgotten

In a post-disarmament ceremony held on 3 November 2004, representatives from LURD, MODEL, and the ex-GoL militias signed a formal declaration dissolving and disbanding their respective armed factions, which officially ceased to exist as military groups (UNMIL, 2004c). While this is a reassuring step on the path towards peace in Liberia, concerns remain whether this commitment is consistent with the intentions of ex-combatants in the countryside.

Liberia was relatively calm in late 2004 but remains widely unstable and insecure, especially in rural areas. Although UNMIL has close to its full capacity of 15,000 peacekeepers, former armed factions retain a significant hold over large parts of the country. LURD still largely controls most of the north-western region of Liberia (Lofa County) from the Guinean border to as far south as Tubmanburg. The extent of this control is such that, in October, LURD commanders presented visitors to Gola Konneh, an area towards the Sierra Leone border, with a typed 'laissez-passer' for their journey.⁵⁶

To date, MODEL remains relatively quiescent but is very much intact and well organized. It is in charge of large parts of the country, particularly in the

south-east in the areas bordering Côte d'Ivoire (Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, and Grand Kru).⁵⁷ The extent of its continued control is not overly surprising given that UNMIL peacekeepers did not arrive in the south-east until June 2004 (UNSC, 2004b, para. 2). MODEL's level of organization is such that it completely controls two main vehicle border crossings. For example, at the main crossing near the town of Harper, in the Pleebo-Sodeken district, MODEL reportedly issues visas for LRD 100 (approximately USD 2) and even has an official stamp for passports.⁵⁸

While Liberia's formal disarmament process may be complete, the country remains potentially volatile, in large part because armed factions still operate and because low numbers of weapons handed in suggests that many remain in the hands of former fighters. Some speculate that armed factions are gauging the political situation and biding their time until after elections, which are scheduled for October 2005.⁵⁹ In the meantime, LURD and MODEL fighters, particularly those in outlying rural areas, are frustrated with the slow pace of reintegration and likely feel that their former commanders have abandoned them. Many of these are thought to be living well in Monrovia.⁶⁰

Also potentially problematic are an unknown number of ex-combatants who, for a variety of reasons, are without weapons and have thus been excluded from DDRR. These include those who surrendered their weapons to ECOMIL (the ECOWAS peacekeeping mission that was in place prior to UNMIL). Others claim their faction leaders confiscated their weapons prior to DDRR, and some argue they shared a single weapon among several fighters. UNMIL made a significant effort to verify these claims and accommodate the former fighters accordingly. They established a mobile disarmament team that operated for several weeks following the official closure of the DD.

During this time, over 5,000 ex-combatants were granted admission into the DDRR programme.⁶¹ According to one NCDDRR official, however, there is no question that many legitimate ex-combatants were left behind, many still with arms.⁶² This sentiment appears to be shared by many Liberians, and prior to the closure of disarmament, both LURD and MODEL representatives made public appeals for DD to be extended.⁶³ Their concerns were reinforced late in November 2004 when reports emerged that some ex-combatants in

Zwedru were erecting roadblocks and harassing UN personnel to protest the DD closure. They claimed to still have weapons and wanted to disarm.⁶⁴

Conclusion

DDRR is a concept that appears to be still very much in its infancy. This belies the fact that since 1990, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes have been integral to more than 15 peacekeeping operations. Indeed, there is no shortage of experience from which to draw when designing and implementing such programmes. Yet identification, let alone application, of lessons learned from previous initiatives appears to be perpetually and painfully difficult.

Much of the problem perhaps lies in the fact that DDRR remains a dauntingly complex process which, even when well conceived, can be easily undermined by time constraints, financial limitations, uncooperative ex-combatants, and the personal agendas of politicians and policy-makers who lack the will or ability to focus on practicalities on the ground.

Both the complexity of DDRR and the sluggish pace of learning from one initiative to the next have been made evident in Liberia, where one of the UN's largest peacekeeping missions in history, and partners at the JIU, have struggled to push forward a programme whose credibility and effectiveness have been seriously questioned since its inception.

Shortcomings aside, the DDRR process has enabled Liberia to take significant steps on the path towards peace and stability. This is no small feat – particularly in view of the fact that the disarmament programme was perpetually at risk of derailment by any number of factors that can surface during dealings with armed factions in a post-conflict environment.

Nonetheless, even the most optimistically positive DDRR officials, UN or other, are not so blissfully ignorant as to believe that disarmament is anywhere near 100 per cent complete or that the threat posed by armed Liberian rebels is a nightmare of the past. Liberia's history has devastatingly shown that unless the underlying causes of conflict are addressed—such as rampant corruption, widespread unemployment, and the subsequent disenchantment amongst the Liberian people—then the cycle of violence will be perpetuated. Indeed, in a sub-region notorious for its porous borders, ubiquitous weaponry,

and ruthless mercenaries, conditions remain ripe for continued instability. Clearly, enormous challenges to sustainable peace remain and it will require more than a DDRR programme—regardless of its effectiveness—to ensure they are overcome.

List of abbreviations

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration
ECOMIL	ECOWAS Mission in Liberia
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GoL	Government of Liberia
HACO	UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Cell
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MILOBS	Military observers
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NCDDRR	National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
PCASED	Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SAA	Small arms ammunition
SBGV	Sexually based gender violence
TSA	Transitional Safety Net Allowance
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOL	United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
UNSECOORD	Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator
WAFF	Woman associated with fighting forces

Endnotes

- 1 UNMIL is authorized to eventually include 15,000 military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers. As of 31 October 2004, UNMIL strength stood at 14,337 peacekeepers, 198 military observers, 1,097 civilian police, and 475 international civilian personnel. See UNDPKO.
- 2 Interview with UNDP DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 3 An International Conference for the Reconstruction of Liberia was subsequently held in New York, 5–6 February 2004.
- 4 Interview with UNMIL officials in Monrovia, 22 September and 24 November 2004.
- 5 Unlike subsequent DD operations, in December the disarmament area was set up adjacent to the actual cantonment site, with the collected weapons being stored 30 meters away from the ex-combatants in line.
- 6 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 28 September 2004.
- 7 This figure of 3,000 was based on the number of unclaimed forms (one copy was given to the fighter, another was kept by UNMIL) that remained after the ex-combatants continued the DDRR process in April 2004. Those who disarmed twice in December would have been given two forms—one for each weapon—but could use only one to continue the DDRR process.
- 8 A mobile disarmament team continued to disarm several residual case-loads around the country until 20 November 2004. These additional numbers are included in the totals presented in Table 4.3.
- 9 The NCDDRR is comprised of representatives from the three armed factions, the UN, ECOWAS, the National Transitional Government of Liberia, the European Commission, and the United States.
- 10 Subsequent statistics, with slight variations, were reported in the UN Secretary-General’s report of December 2004. See UNSC (2004d, para. 23).

- 11 The 11 sites were: Buchanan, Ganta, Gbarnga, Harper, Kakata, Scheffelin Barracks, Tappita, Tubmanburg, VOA, Voinjama, and Zwedru.
- 12 Interview with ORDSafe staff in Monrovia, 29 September 2004.
- 13 WAFF and CAFF were generally considered to be those who were wives and girlfriends, cooks, and general support staff for the armed factions. It was left to UN Military Observers (MILOBS) to determine, through a series of questions, whether women and children seeking to enter the DDDR programme were legitimate WAFF and CAFF.
- 14 The non-food item kit included a mat to sleep on, a bucket for washing and some basic clothing and toiletry items.
- 15 Children stayed at interim care centres for an average of three months.
- 16 The TSA was designed to provide ex-combatants with a means of surviving during the period prior to the reintegration phase, and to decrease their need to depend on former commanders for support.
- 17 Interview with UNMIL DDDR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 18 Interview with UNDP DDDR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 19 As discussed below, commanders were in a position to hand-pick those who they wanted to enter either by providing weapons to non-combatants or by misleading the MILOBS about certain candidates. Some local NGO and NCDDRR staff were also accused of trying to persuade MILOBS to admit friends and relatives, particularly women and children, who were non-combatants. Interview with UNMIL MILOBS in Monrovia, 17 November 2004.
- 20 Interview with UNDP DDDR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 21 One UN official reported that women were going to night schools to learn how to handle and dismantle weapons so that they would succeed in convincing the MILOBS they were ex-combatants when they handed over the weapon. Interview with UNDP DDDR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 22 These figures were obtained directly from the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit database, at the Joint Implementation Unit, DDDR Headquarters, Monrovia, 25 November 2004.
- 23 Child protection agencies working alongside the MILOBS managed to help screen out some of those children posing as CAFF, but it is thought that many more were allowed in.
- 24 Interview with UNMIL MILOBS in Monrovia, 17 November 2004.
- 25 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 24 November 2004.
- 26 Interviews with UNMIL officials in Monrovia, 21 September, 28 September and 7 October 2004. The allowance of SAA ammunition presented another problem when it was discovered that some ex-combatants were filling spent shells with sand and dirt and then resealing them in such a way that it was often difficult to distinguish them from unused ammunition.

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- 27 Interview with UNDP officials in Monrovia, 23 November 2004.
 - 28 Some Liberians have reportedly claimed that an AK-47 can be bought for USD 40–50, and 100 shotgun cartridges for USD 20. Interviews with UNMIL DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004, and phone interview with UNMIL JMAC official, 20 November 2004.
 - 29 Interview with UNMIL MILOBS in Monrovia, 28 September and 17 November 2004.
 - 30 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 28 September 2004.
 - 31 DDRR Consolidated Reports continue to circulate and misleading weapons and ammunition figures are being spread as a result. In the DDRR Consolidated Report of 24 November 2004, the weapons and ammunition analysis sections were not included at all.
 - 32 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 7 October 2004.
 - 33 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 7 October 2004.
 - 34 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004. These findings and conclusions regarding total weapons collected were echoed in the December 2004 Liberia Panel of Experts report to the UN Security Council. See UNSC (2004c, para. 67).
 - 35 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 7 October 2004.
 - 36 One local newspaper reported, for example, that ex-LURD fighters and Kamajor fighters from Sierra Leone were concealing heavy weapons in Gbarpolu County. See *The Analyst* (2004b).
 - 37 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
 - 38 One UNDP official explained that the minimum time for cantonment should have been three weeks, but that this was not feasible due to budget constraints. Interview with UNDP DDRR official in Monrovia, 23 November 2004.
 - 39 As related by participants at the DDRR Weekly Forum meeting held at the JIU in Monrovia, 29 September 2004.
 - 40 Interview with UNDP DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
 - 41 Interviews with ex-combatants in April and May 2004 at VOA and Gbarnga sites.
 - 42 Interview with UNMIL DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
 - 43 Interview with UNMIL DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
 - 44 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 28 September 2004.
 - 45 Interview with UNMIL regional coordinator in Liberia, 11 October 2004.
 - 46 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
 - 47 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 24 November 2004.
 - 48 Interview with NCDDRR official in Monrovia, 20 November 2004.
 - 49 Interview with UNMIL official in Monrovia, 24 November 2004.
 - 50 Interview with UNMIL DDRR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.

- 51 Interview with UNMIL DDDR official in Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- 52 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
- 53 Interview with NCDDRR official in Monrovia, 15 November 2004.
- 54 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
- 55 While these figures were acquired directly from UNDP Liberia, they differ slightly from those in the UN Secretary-General's report of December 2004 where the number of ex-combatants still needing to be provided for was put at 43,000, and the funding shortfall said to be USD 60 million. See UNSC (2004d, para. 25).
- 56 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
- 57 Interview with UNSECOORD official in Monrovia, 20 September 2004.
- 58 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
- 59 Interview with UN Security (UNSECOORD) official in Monrovia, 20 September 2004.
- 60 Interview with member of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia in Monrovia, 12 October 2004.
- 61 Interview with UNMIL DDDR official in Monrovia, 22 November 2004.
- 62 Interview with NCDDRR official in Monrovia, 20 November 2004.
- 63 See, for example, *The Analyst* (2004a).
- 64 As related by MILOBS at the DDDR Weekly Forum held at the JIU in Monrovia, 1 December 2004.

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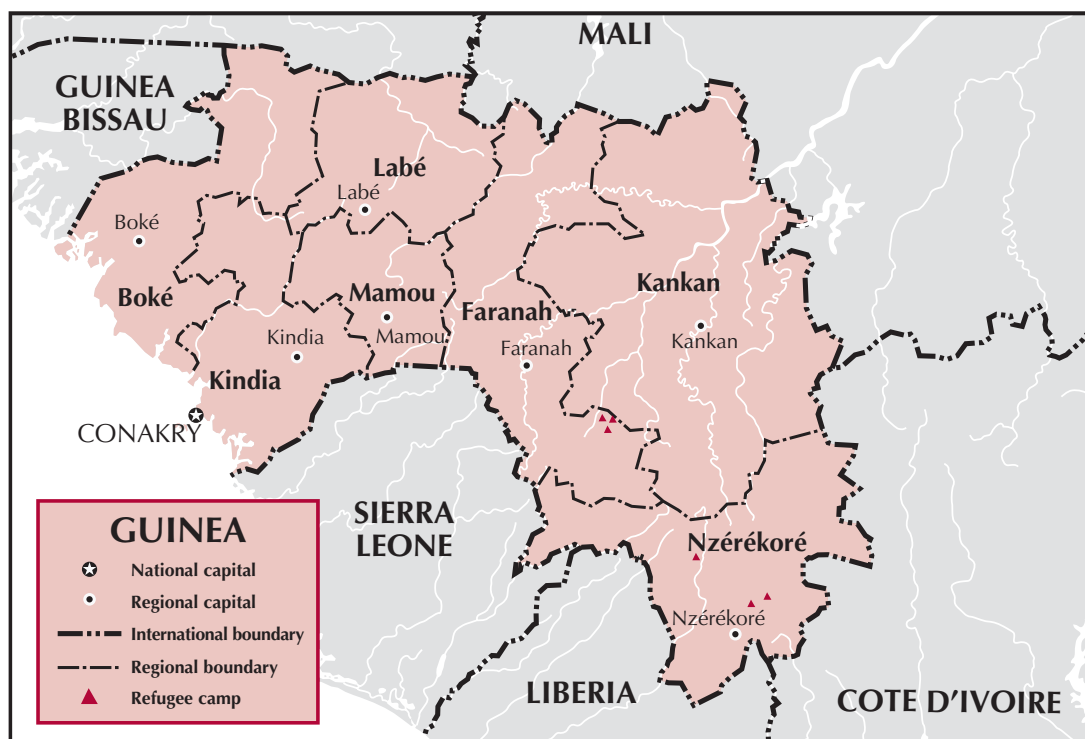
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Refugee camps as of March 2000



Refugee camps as of April 2004



THE MILITARIZATION AND DEMILITARIZATION OF REFUGEE CAMPS IN GUINEA

By James Milner

Introduction

Following a series of attacks on Guinean border towns by Liberia-sponsored rebels in September 2000, Guinean president Lansana Conté appealed to Guinean citizens to defend their country by repelling the invaders and by rounding up the country's 450,000 refugees, whom he blamed for the outbreak of violence. A wave of harassment of refugees followed, while Conté simultaneously entered into an alliance with a Liberian opposition group and recruited and armed an estimated 7,000–30,000 young Guineans (known as the 'Young Volunteers') in a massive mobilizing effort geared towards repelling the invaders. By March 2001, a tenuous calm had returned to Guinea, but the implications of the events of the previous years were significant. A fifth of the population of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone combined was displaced, Guinea's tradition of generous asylum was shattered, and armed ex-combatants circulated freely in the remaining refugee camps and roamed the country with impunity.

This chapter examines the militarization of refugee-populated areas in Guinea from 1999 to 2004.¹ More specifically, it documents the use of refugee camps as bases for armed groups and the targeting of refugees during fighting. It is divided into three main sections. The first section reviews security and political events from 1999 to 2003 and documents their impact on Guinea's refugee population. The second section assesses a series of governmental and international initiatives undertaken to restore security in the camps. The third section documents the situation as of October 2004, and highlights remaining threats including the continued presence of armed elements and small arms proliferation in refugee-populated areas.

Much of the information and analysis presented in the chapter is drawn from field research conducted by the author and Astrid Christoffersen-Deb in Guinea from 19 September to 10 October 2004. A total of 50 meetings were held with representatives of the Guinean government, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor governments, community and business leaders, civil society representatives, and refugees in Conakry and in the Forest region of southern Guinea, where the author was able to visit Lainé (near N'Zérékoré) and Kouankan (near Macenta) refugee camps. The author also benefited from his experience as a consultant with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Guinea during 2001.

The following findings emerge from this research:

- Refugee camps and settlements were a key target during the Liberia-sponsored attacks on Guinea between September 2000 and March 2001.
- The widely reported military, financial, and logistical support provided by the Government of Guinea to anti-Taylor groups such as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), and the basing of these groups in and around the refugee camps, contributed to the militarization of the camps from 1999 to 2003.
- The termination of the Liberian civil war, the relocation of refugee camps, and the implementation of camp security arrangements led to the progressive demilitarization of the Forest region's refugee camps.
- Initiatives such as the 'Mixed Brigades' and the deployment of Canadian police officers have had a positive impact on camp security, but their effectiveness remains limited due to a mandate that does not allow them to engage in broader security planning outside the refugee camps and to a lack of basic materials and equipment.
- While the official—UNHCR-supervised—refugee camps are no longer militarized, the continued presence of armed elements and the proliferation of small arms in the Forest region as a whole remain significant sources of criminality and insecurity.
- Refugees are not responsible for the current proliferation of small arms in Guinea. Major sources of weapons in the country include the looting of a

state armoury in Conakry, the non-return of officially issued weapons, local craft production, and trafficking between Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali.

- More than 3,800 Young Volunteers have yet to be demobilized and reintegrated, contributing to insecurity in the Forest region and raising concerns that they may be recruited by armed political groups.
- The persistent rumours of more lucrative disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) packages in Côte d'Ivoire have contributed to a flow of weapons and armed elements from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire through southern Guinea.

Conflict and the militarization of Guinea's refugee camps (1999–2003)²

Refugees and the outbreak of conflict (1999–2000)

From the first arrival of refugees from the Liberian civil war in 1990, through the outbreak of the Sierra Leonean conflict in 1991, the 1997 coup d'état in Freetown, and the resumption of the Liberian war in 2000, Guinea provided shelter for more than 500,000 refugees during the 1990s. Guinea's refugee population lived in relative security during most of the 1990s, and was able to pursue economic self-sufficiency through agricultural production and trade with the local community (Van Damme, 1999, pp. 36–42). In 1999 Guinea hosted a total of 450,000 refugees, the highest refugee population in Africa that year (USCR, *World Refugee Survey*, 2000).³ Some 300,000 Sierra Leoneans lived around Guékédou and 50,000 near Forécariah, and approximately 100,000 Liberians were sheltered in the Forest region of Guinea between Macenta and N'Zérékoré.

This relative stability⁴ began to change in the late 1990s following a series of cross-border raids on the settlements by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 3), and the reported presence of Sierra Leonean pro-government *Kamajors* militias in Massakoundou camp in southern Guinea (LCHR, 2002, p. 64).⁵ The US Committee for Refugees (USCR) reported that refugee camps in the region were 'dangerously close to the border' and that 'following several deadly cross-border

raids by Sierra Leonean rebels, Guinean authorities declared a midnight-to-dawn curfew in some areas' (USCR, *World Refugee Survey*, 2000).⁶ In response to these attacks, UNHCR began to relocate some refugees away from the border, relocating some 14,000 Sierra Leonean refugees before the start of the rainy season in July 1999.

As Sierra Leoneans were being relocated, Liberian refugees were being prepared for repatriation. Following the relatively successful July 1997 elections in Liberia, UNHCR announced that assistance to Liberians in Guinea would be terminated at the end of 1999, and repatriated some 13,000 Liberians in the first eight months of 1999. The repatriation was not, however, sustainable, as over 10,000 Liberians fled to Guinea between April and August as fresh fighting erupted in northern Liberia. This violence again spilled over into Guinea when Liberian elements attacked a Guinean border town near Macenta in September 1999, leaving 27 Guineans dead (FEWER, 2000). As a result the border was closed and the repatriation suspended.

As the Liberian civil war escalated, and responding to LURD attacks in July 2000 carried out into Liberia from Guinea, Liberian president Charles Taylor initiated a series of incursions on Guinean territory carried out by the RUF in conjunction with Liberian armed forces and Guinean dissidents (grouped into the Movement of Democratic Forces of Guinea, RFDG) during September 2000 (Szajkowski, 2004, p. 298). A first attack on 2 September 2000 on the border town of Massadou, to the east of Macenta, resulted in at least 40 Guinean casualties (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 3). On 4 September Madina Woula, on the border with Sierra Leone and south-east of the regional centre of Kindia, was also attacked, resulting in another 40 deaths (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 3). Two days later, on 6 September, Pamalap, a border town near Forécariah and only 100 km from Conakry, was attacked and held, allegedly by the RUF (IRIN, 2000a; 2000b).

These seemingly coordinated attacks, spanning the length of Guinea's border with Sierra Leone and Liberia, caused panic in the capital. On 9 September 2000 President Conté addressed the nation on television and radio as follows:

I am giving orders that we bring together all foreigners... and that we search and arrest all suspects... They should go home. We know that there are rebels among the refugees. Civilians and soldiers, let's defend our country together.
(LCHR, 2002, p. 74)

According to Amnesty International (2001, p. 3), 'the President's speech is widely seen as a decisive turning point in national policy but also as implicit permission to the military, and the Guinean public, to go on the offensive against refugees in Guinea.' Refugees in Conakry were particularly affected. Approximately 6,000 urban refugees were detained in the capital in the days following the speech. Many more were evicted from their homes and subjected to harassment and abuse, both physical and sexual, by their neighbours, the police, and Young Volunteers.

The militarization of refugee populated areas (2000–2001)

Conté's speech also reflected the feeling within the government that the Guinean army—lacking motivation, poorly trained, and under-equipped—would not be able to repel the invasion without outside support. The government therefore sought support from two groups. First, the alliance between Guinean forces and foreign groups based in Guinea was reinforced. Former fighters from the Liberian anti-Taylor group United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), which regrouped in 2000 as the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), were mobilized along with the Guinean army in the defence of Macenta and Guékédou (HRW, 2001; 2002). Many of these combatants had previously been refugees in Guinea, were drawn directly from the refugee population, or had family members within the refugee camps, especially Kouankan refugee camp, near Macenta.⁷

Second, thousands of young Guineans were recruited into local militias to reinforce border defences. These Young Volunteers came primarily from the Préfectures located along the border. They were recruited and armed by the local Préfets, and sent to fight at the front line with little or no training.⁸

No central registry of the Young Volunteers was kept, so it is impossible to know exactly how many were recruited, although estimates range from 7,000⁹ to 30,000.¹⁰ In addition to fighting at the border, these Young Volunteers established roadblocks around the country and entered refugee camps and settlements to search for rebel elements.¹¹

With the support of the Young Volunteers and ULIMO-LURD, the Guinean military waged a seven-month campaign against the incursions. On 17 September 2000 Liberian-based elements attacked the town of Macenta, resulting in many civilian casualties, including Mensah Kpognon, the head of the UNHCR Macenta Office. A second UNHCR worker, Sapeu Laurence Djeya, was abducted and later released in Liberia. During the attack, the UNHCR office in Macenta was looted.

Additional attacks on Macenta and Forécariah continued throughout September. In October and November the fighting shifted into the Languette region of southern Guinea, a sliver of territory south of Guékédou that juts into Sierra Leone and partially borders Liberia. By the end of November RUF fighters had come close to capturing Kissidougou, an important regional town, after holding the town of Yendé for one week. Refugee settlements were also targeted in the fighting. According to Amnesty International, 'Katkama Camp, where the RUF reportedly attempted to recruit refugees to fight, was one of the camps particularly hard hit' (2001, p. 4).

The fighting reached Guékédou on 6 December. RUF fighters attacked from the south and west, as pro-Taylor Liberians and Guinean dissidents reportedly joined from the east. The UNHCR sub-office in Guékédou, the base for one of the largest refugee operations in Africa, was attacked, looted, and partially burned. Looted UNHCR materials from the sub-office and the regional hospital, especially Land Cruisers and communications equipment, were visibly used by both camps in the fighting, further reinforcing the public perception of a link between the refugee camps and the rebel incursions.¹² The fight for Guékédou lasted several weeks and resulted in the virtual destruction of the town. The hospital, post office, and other public services were destroyed in the fighting. In addition, an estimated 100,000 Guineans fled the fighting and became internally displaced.

Fighting in the area continued until March 2001, when RUF fighters attacked the Nongoa area, 30 km west of Guékédou. This was the last significant attack in the Languette, and brought to a close months of localized fighting in the Forest region of southern Guinea—stretching from Kissidougou to N’Zérékoré—and in and around Forécariah. Government officials estimate that the conflict resulted in the deaths of 1,500 Guineans and the internal displacement of well over 350,000.¹³ USCR reported in 2002 that ‘aid workers widely considered’ the Government’s estimate ‘to be greatly inflated’ and estimated the number of displaced at the end of 2001 to be closer to 100,000 (USCR, 2002, p. 79). During the violence, over 5,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed, mostly in Guékédou, Macenta, and Forécariah.¹⁴

The Guinean conflict also had significant implications for the refugee population. Tens of thousands of refugees were themselves displaced by the fighting. Following attacks on Forécariah in October 2000, one UNHCR official estimated that some 32,000 refugees were expelled from the town.¹⁵ The majority of the more than 90 refugee settlements in the Languette were destroyed along with the refugees’ livelihoods. In the midst of the conflict refugees were subjected to harassment, forced recruitment—both as combatants and as porters to ferry looted goods back into Sierra Leone—physical and sexual abuse, arbitrary detention, and direct attacks by all sides of the conflict (Amnesty International, 2001; USCR, 2001; 2002; HRW, 2002). Finally, the killing of the UNHCR Head of Office in Macenta resulted in the evacuation of all UNHCR staff from Forécariah, Guékédou, N’Zérékoré, and Macenta, and the suspension of all UNHCR activities outside of Conakry, leaving some 400,000 refugees without assistance for months. In addition, an estimated 100,000 Guineans became internally displaced.

Guinean refugee camps and the Liberian civil war

Renewed fighting in northern Liberia in November 2001 further aggravated the plight of Guinea’s refugee population. As the fighting drew closer to Monrovia in February 2002, prompting Taylor to declare a state of emergency, some 26,000 Liberian refugees crossed into Guinea, while many others were prevented from crossing the border. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that LURD stopped Liberian civilians seeking asylum in Guinea and sent

them back into Liberia from border crossings at Ouet-Kama and Tekoulo. Many of those sent back to Liberia were forced to carry supplies and arms back into Liberia from Guinea, with the knowledge of the Guinean military (HRW, 2002, pp. 10–15).

LURD activities were based mostly out of the town of Macenta and from the Kouankan refugee camp. HRW reported that ‘numerous refugees gave detailed descriptions of the presence of armed LURD combatants in the refugee camp of Kouankan, where often uniformed and sometimes armed LURD rebels moved freely in and out of the camp’ (HRW, 2002, p. 10). LURD also used the camp as a base for their families, as a destination for rest and relaxation, and as a source for supplies, especially food and medicine. In 2002 the ‘UNHCR urged Guinean officials to remove rebels from the camp and threatened to withdraw from Kouankan entirely, unless the situation improved’ (USCR, 2003).

Although officially denied by the government, there is ample evidence of LURD presence in the country and of tacit Guinean support to the rebel movement (UNSC, 2001, paras. 174–178; 2003a, para. 68; 2003b, para. 105; ICG, 2002, p. 11; HRW, 2002, p. 10; 2003, pp. 18–25). As reported by HRW, ‘the Government of Guinea has long fuelled the Liberian conflict by providing logistical, financial and military support to the LURD rebels’ (HRW, 2003, p. 15). HRW further reported that wounded LURD fighters were evacuated to Conakry for treatment, that Guinean military officials provided technical support to LURD, and that LURD rear bases had long been established in Macenta.

Many also point to the personal link between President Conté and Sekou Conneh, the leader of LURD. Conneh was reportedly ‘based in Guinea for most of the past 13 years’ and enjoyed ‘close links with Guinean President Lansana Conté’ (IRIN, 2003b). Conneh’s wife, Aisha, is Conté’s personal clairvoyant, and Conneh was consequently ‘invited to become chairman of LURD because of his high-level contacts with the Guinean government’ (IRIN, 2003a). It is also significant to note that, when Conneh returned to Liberia in late 2003 to participate in the formation of a transitional government, ‘he travelled in a four-wheel drive jeep with darkened windows and Guinea government license plates’ and was accompanied by ‘a fleet of Guinean government cars’ (IRIN, 2003b).



Refugees expressing a desire to return to their homelands of Sierra Leone, 11 February 2001.

Of greater concern, however, is the alleged role that Guinea played in facilitating LURD's access to arms and munitions, in violation of the UN Security Council's arms embargo on Liberia (UNSC, 2001, paras. 174–178; 2003a, para. 68; 2003b, para. 105; ICG, 2002, p. 11; HRW, 2002, p. 10; 2003, pp. 18–25). A November 2002 HRW report provides specific details of how a significant number of Liberian asylum seekers were stopped at border towns by Guinean officials and handed over to LURD commanders (HRW, 2002). These asylum seekers were then forced to carry arms, ammunition, and supplies across the border to LURD bases in Lofa County. Many asylum seekers reported collecting the weapons from Guinean military trucks, some of which were still in their original wrapping, and then were forced to make the return journey several times before being allowed to seek refuge in Guinea (HRW, 2002, pp. 15–17). At the end of 2002, the presence of armed elements in the camps, along with the remaining Young Volunteers in the areas surrounding the camps, resulted in significant protection concerns for refugees and hindered the activities of humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR.

The outbreak of violence in Côte d'Ivoire in late 2002, coupled with the arrival of thousands of Ivorian refugees and some 30,000 Guinean nationals returning from Côte d'Ivoire, added pressure to this volatile situation (USCR, 2003). The Government of Guinea briefly closed its border with Côte d'Ivoire, citing security concerns, but by the end of 2002, the international donor community compelled it to reopen its border to allow Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire to seek protection in Guinea. There was a general concern within the humanitarian community that the combination of ongoing conflict in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire would have serious implications for the militarization of refugee camps near N'Zérékoré, Guinea's second largest city, located less than 100 km from both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and the home of a thriving sub-regional market.

Restoring camp security: a review of responses (2001–2004)

Relocation

As the violence subsided in early 2001, UNHCR began to chart its response to the upheaval. It developed a three-pronged strategy to restore stability to the refugee population and to address the protection needs of the refugees. First, a massive relocation exercise was planned to find scattered refugees throughout southern Guinea and transport them to new refugee camps in Albadaria and Lola Préfectures, both more than 50 km away from the border with either Sierra Leone or Liberia. Second, a series of transit sites was constructed on the road from Kissidougou to Conakry to facilitate the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees to Freetown by sea. Third, a system was designed to identify and process the estimated 30,000 refugees in need of resettlement to a third country.

The relocation of refugees from the Languette and other border areas to new refugee camps was UNHCR's largest and most ambitious relocation exercise ever undertaken in Africa. It aimed specifically at ensuring the physical security of refugees and restoring the civilian and humanitarian character of the refugee population. It was widely recognized that armed elements had blended in with the refugee population and that the previous model of refugee settlements along the country's southern border was no longer sustainable. Between April and May 2001 some 60,000 refugees were moved from the Languette to the newly established camps of Kountaya (26,000 refugees), Boréah (13,000 refugees), and Telikoro (11,500 refugees) near Kissidougou. Sembakounya camp (7,500 refugees), near Dabola, was established to accommodate refugees relocated from Forécariah and Conakry (UNOCHA, 2002, p. 21). Later in 2001 and into 2002 the Kola and Lainé camps were established north of N'Zérékoré to accommodate refugees from Yomou and Diéké. Kouankan Camp, established in March 2000 before the attacks, remained open. Significantly, however, UNHCR closed Massakoundou Camp near Kissidougou in response to requests from local authorities, who had stated that the camp had become a base for rebels.

Specific activities were incorporated into the relocation exercise to help promote the civilian and humanitarian character of the new camps. The Guinean military, under the supervision of the Bureau National pour la

Coordination des Réfugiés (BNCR), was involved in the exercise, and responsible for searching the refugees for weapons before the relocation. Military escorts ensured the security of refugee convoys (some as large as 40 trucks) during the relocation.¹⁶ Lastly, the new camps benefited from more proactive planning for refugee security strategies. With the cooperation of the BNCR, a Mixed Brigade (see below) comprising some 100 elements of the police and gendarmerie was formed to maintain security in the camps.

According to a UNHCR official, 'the key strategic decision that resulted in the most significant and overall improvement of the refugees' security in Guinea was the Government's authorization and joint implementation of UNHCR's relocation proposal' (UNHCR, 2002). Visiting the camps in February 2002, a joint mission by the Commission for Human Security and the Emergency and Security Section of UNHCR's Geneva Headquarters 'quickly concluded that the general safety and security of the refugees in the six camps is incomparable to their situation in late 2000/early 2001' (UNHCR, 2002, p. 2). The mission found that the application of the strategies developed by UNHCR and the Government of Guinea resulted in the general maintenance of law and order in the camps. In particular, it was concluded that the formation of the Mixed Brigades helped focus security efforts in the camps and, along with the participation of elected refugee committees, helped ensure the civilian and humanitarian nature of the refugee camps.

Human rights organizations and refugee advocates, however, emphasize that the establishment of the new camps was not the panacea for the problems of refugee insecurity and camp militarization (HRW, 2002). In June 2001 violence erupted in Telikoro Camp, near Kissidougou, between refugees and the Brigade Mixte (BMS). Six officers were injured and 120 Sierra Leonean refugees were arrested, but the six weapons seized from the officers were never recovered. The problem of continued militarization, however, was most acute in Kouankan Camp, near Macenta, where LURD elements circulated freely. The NGO Action for Churches Together (ACT), managing Kouankan as UNHCR's implementing partner, was forced to withdraw in June 2001 after allegations that it was transmitting information to Monrovia on LURD activities based in the camp.¹⁷ Efforts to close the camp in August 2001 and relocate civilians to Kola camp were suspended due to a lack of

funding. Moreover, while 60,000 refugees were relocated, some 75,000 chose to remain in the Languette without UNHCR assistance (USCR, 2002, p. 77) because they had intermarried with Guineans, wanted to remain close to the border, or were distrustful of the refugee camp environment after their experience in 2000–01.¹⁸

Policing refugee camps

The BMS was formed by the Guinean government following the 2001 relocation exercise to ensure security in the newly established refugee camps. Drawing from both the police and the gendarmerie, the responsibilities and accountability of the BMS were established in November 2001 with the signing of a Protocol d'Accord between the government's BNCR and UNHCR. Working closely with the regional Bureau pour la Coordination des Réfugiés (BCR) offices, the BMS is responsible for policing within the camps, providing security for humanitarian personnel and activities and cooperating with elected refugee committees and the Refugee Security Volunteers¹⁹ to promote law and order in the camps. Building on the success of the 'security package' approach developed in Tanzania and Kenya, UNHCR hoped that equipping and training security personnel specifically responsible for the camps would ensure greater security within the camps.

According to the terms of the Protocol d'Accord, there was to be one BMS officer per 1,000 refugees, including a number of female officers. According to the most recent figures, this ratio has been met in all camps.

Table 5.1 The Militarization and Demilitarization of Refugee Camps in Guinea

Camp/transit centre	BMS	Refugee Volunteers	Discharged in 2004 due to misconduct	Refugees	BMS : refugee ratio
Lainé	25	40	3	25,046	1 : 1,000
Kouankan	23	35	4	22,960	1 : 1,000
Kola	7	20	3	6,177	1 : 880
Nonah	4	20	3	3,979	1 : 975
Kuntaya	16	45	3	9,908	1 : 650
Telikoro	9	45	0	6,185	1 : 680
Boréah	7	25	7	4,063	1 : 580

Source: BCR, N'Zérékoré, October 2004

While the quantity of BMS officers met the standards outlined in the Protocol d'Accord, there was a general concern that they were not operating at a sufficiently professional level.²⁰ Investigations of incidents were sporadic and inconsistent. Files and statistics were not being kept. Violent incidents between the BMS and refugees, on a smaller scale than the June 2001 incident in Telikoro camp, were documented. More disturbingly, it was found that some members of the BMS were engaged in illegal activities in the camps, including sexual exploitation of refugee women and children. It was concluded that the BMS did not benefit from the operational training required to effectively police the camp populations.

To address this training gap, the Canadian government undertook an agreement with UNHCR to deploy two Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers to southern Guinea. One officer would be responsible for training the BMS in basic policing and human rights principles. The other officer would be responsible for ensuring effective coordination among UNHCR, BMS, and BCR. Two officers were initially deployed to Kissidougou for 12 months in 2003. Two officers subsequently operated in N'Zérékoré for six months, starting in early 2004.

Canadian and UNHCR officials jointly undertook a mid-term review of the programme in July 2003 (Herrmann, 2003, pp. 1–14). They concluded that the deployment had achieved 'mixed results'. There was concern at the lack of previous training of the BMS and the fact that the RCMP programme had to start with the most basic principles of policing. The policy of rotating BMS officers out of the camps and back into regular duties also meant that the benefits of the training were not retained in the camps. Following the completion of the second deployment to N'Zérékoré in June 2004, the Canadian government was planning an independent review of the programme with a view to possibly replicating the programme elsewhere in Africa.

While gaps in the camp security arrangements remain, especially an official solution to the question of rotation, the contribution of the Canadian deployment has raised the standards of camp security in Guinea to a level unrecognizable when compared to 2001. In fact, the improvement in camp security was one of the most positive and striking findings of the 2004 visit. More specifically, the ability of the BMS to provide statistics on incidents in

the camps was a significant sign of progress. Furthermore, relations between the BMS and the refugees have improved considerably. Refugee committees and refugee women's committees in Lainé and Kouankan both stated that they now have confidence in the BMS to maintain order and professionally respond to incidents in the camps.²¹

A shortcoming of the programme, however, was that it was premised on a distinction between refugee camps and refugee-populated areas. As will be argued below, this distinction is artificial in Guinea. For any reinforcement of policing procedures in refugee camps to have a real impact on the protection environment of refugees, such efforts need to be replicated in the surrounding area. Moreover, the benefits of the training provided by the Canadian deployment will be fully realized only if the BMS is provided with both the equipment necessary to fulfil its duties in the camps and if support is provided for further training. As of October 2004, the BMS lacked the basic equipment to effectively patrol large refugee camps such as Lainé and Kouankan. Basic communication equipment was also lacking. As a result, it can take up to two hours to respond to an incident. Finally, basic materials to support further training, such as paper and pens, are not provided in the current budget. It is also significant that the statistics provided on BMS deployment in the camps showed that 10 per cent of BMS officers have been discharged from their duties in 2004 due to misconduct.

Demobilizing Young Volunteers

The presence of child soldiers among the Young Volunteers motivated the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to take the lead in developing a demobilization programme. In 2002 UNICEF appealed for USD 595,000 to support a programme seeking to address the reintegration needs of 5,000 Young Volunteers in 2002, arguing that a failure to reintegrate them would 'represent a serious threat to the country's stability' (UNOCHA, 2002, p. 59). Due to limited donor response, UNICEF was able to demobilize and train only 350 Young Volunteers from Guékédou and Kissdougou in a pilot project carried out between 2002 and 2004 (Koudougou and N'Diaye, 2004).

UNICEF made a further appeal in 2003 for USD 936,626 to support the reintegration of an additional 500 Young Volunteers and for the protection of

Guinean and refugee children from kidnapping and recruitment by rebel forces; but the programme received almost no donor support. A final appeal was made in 2004 for USD 778,400 to support four related objectives:

- to stop and prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups;
- to sensitize local authorities, law enforcement agents, and military personnel on the provisions of the Optional Protocol on Children in armed conflict as well as their rights;
- to develop a mechanism and a database to monitor the number of demobilized children; and
- to demobilize and reintegrate 1,000 Young Volunteers and child soldiers.

The appeal reported that the 3,879 remaining Young Volunteers had contributed to 'a phenomenon of youth gangs who intimidate and threaten the population and show complete disregard for any authority'. The appeal further stated that, with the exception of the demobilization of 350 Volunteers in 2002, little had been done to address this issue (UNOCHA, 2004a, p. 56). It also expressed concern that this problem could be further compounded by the return of combatants from Liberia and that this combined population could provide a fertile recruitment base for new armed groups.

While UNICEF is the only UN agency in Guinea that has been following the issue of the Young Volunteers since 2001,²² it has found it difficult to remain engaged in the issue, for two reasons. First, UNICEF is mandated to work only with children under 18, and many of the Volunteers who were children in 2001 are now adults. Second, there was very little funding from the donor community to support demobilization programmes. As a result, UNICEF's programmes for the Young Volunteers closed in June 2004. UNICEF has, however, had limited success in developing a response. Most importantly, it has convinced the Government of Guinea of the importance of the problem and prompted the Ministries of Social Affairs, Security, and Defence to form a cross-departmental working group to sustain work on the demobilization.

Controlling the borders

As demonstrated by the army's initial response to the 2000 incursions, the Guinean armed forces' ability to prevent cross-border attacks was limited, mostly due to poor training and lack of equipment.²³ In 2004 Guinea had a total active force of 9,700 personnel, consisting mainly of the 8,500-strong army. To these numbers should be added the 1,000 gendarmes and 1,600 Republican Guards (IISS, 2004). In addition to these regular forces, the Government formed the Anti-Criminal Brigade (BAC) in January 2002.²⁴ Operating under the Ministry of Security, BAC is responsible for monitoring the border areas to combat small arms and narcotics trafficking. While BAC has drawn from the elite of the gendarmerie, it is also woefully under-equipped. The BAC division in N'Zérékoré, for example, has only two vehicles to patrol the Préfecture, both of which are currently being repaired.²⁵

The attacks in 2000 prompted the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to authorize the deployment of a multinational force of two battalions to monitor the border areas between Guinea and Liberia. Following initial discussions by members of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council meeting in Abuja in October 2000 (AFP, 2000), the operation was established in December 2000, and Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal offered troops (Berman and Sams, 2003, p. 49).

Meetings in mid-January 2001 to plan the deployment, however, coincided with renewed attacks on Guékédou. Given the delays in the deployment of the force, and concerns about its ability to fulfil its mandate if deployed, Conté grew impatient and pursued a strategy of artillery attacks on northern Sierra Leone and of backing the LURD attacks on northern Liberia to create the buffer zone promised by ECOWAS. In late January 2001 the Guinean army and air force launched a series of attacks on RUF territory in northern Sierra Leone, with the tacit agreement of the government in Freetown (AFP, 2001a). On 3 February the Liberian Defence Minister confirmed that Voinjama, the capital of Lofa County and close to the Guinean border, had been attacked by LURD forces based in Guinea (AFP, 2001b). On the same day that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) deployment was reported to be in jeopardy (AFP, 2001b), local newspapers in Sierra Leone announced the surrender of 15 RUF commanders in Sierra Leone.



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Two female soldiers stand guard as UNHCR officials review a military guard in Lola, southeastern Guinea, 17 May 2003.

As Guinea's military successes, proxy and otherwise, multiplied in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Conté's support for the ECOWAS force faded and the deployment never materialized. In fact, the deployment of ECOWAS troops after March 2001 would have hindered, not helped, Guinea's objectives in Liberia. By the time the Guinean army, supported by irregular and foreign elements, regained control of southern Guinea in March 2001, Guinea had ceased to support the ECOWAS plan, and fully pursued the defeat of the RUF and Charles Taylor through military means. This strategy seemed to work. The end to the incursions into Guinée Forestière coincided with LURD's capture of Voinjama. In May 2001 reports emerged that the RUF had been forced into a ceasefire by the combined pressure of the Guinean attacks and the expansion of the activities of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Finally, on 11 August 2003 Charles Taylor stepped down as President of Liberia and went into exile in Nigeria. The following week a peace agreement was signed in Accra, ending Liberia's civil war.

Refugee-populated areas in the aftermath of conflict (2004)

Guinea's refugee population in late 2004

In August 2004 UNHCR finalized a verification exercise in Guinea's six refugee camps and one transit camp, and reported that there were 78,318 UNHCR-assisted refugees in Guinea.

Table 5.2 UNHCR-assisted refugee population in Guinea, August 2004 ²⁶		
Préfecture	Camp/transit centre	Refugees
Kissidougou	Boreah	4,063
	Kuntaya	9,908
	Telikoro	6,185
N'Zérékoré	Kola	6,177
	Lainé	25,046
	Nonah (transit centre)	3,979
Macenta	Kouankan	22,960
TOTAL		78,318

Source: UNOCHA (2004b)

This total of 78,318 represents a significant reduction in the refugee population from the 103,063 reported in April 2004 (UNOCHA, 2004b). While many refugees agreed that the statistics had been previously inflated, thereby allowing a greater number of people to benefit from UNHCR assistance, they also felt the revised statistics were too low. In Kouankan, for example, the refugee committee believed that, while the pre-verification statistic of 32,000 was inflated, the true camp population was between 27,000 and 28,000, as opposed to the 22,960 claimed by UNHCR.²⁷ As well, the BCR estimated the camp's population to be closer to 25,000.²⁸ Even if the statistics from the verification were taken to be a true representation of the camp-based population, the exact number of refugees in Guinea would remain unclear. The government estimates that tens of thousands of refugees remain unassisted outside refugee camps, while UNHCR includes in its statistics only the total number of assisted refugees.²⁹ For example, the Préfet of N'Zérékoré states that there are 44,000 refugees living in N'Zérékoré,³⁰ none of whom are reflected in UNHCR's numbers.

While the exact numbers are contentious, it is possible to generally describe the conditions of the various refugee populations in Guinea. The official repatriation programme for Sierra Leonean refugees ended in July 2004. Under the programme over 92,000 Sierra Leoneans were repatriated from Guinea with UNHCR assistance between the emergency returns in late 2000 and the end of the organized repatriation programme. A programme is now being developed for the 1,814 remaining UNHCR-assisted Sierra Leonean refugees, who are currently in the camps near Kissidougou, primarily in Boreah Camp. Hundreds if not thousands of Sierra Leoneans remain in Conakry and in other large urban areas.³¹ The majority of the Sierra Leoneans in Conakry who identify themselves as refugees claim that they cannot return to Sierra Leone, have no prospects in Guinea, and consequently seek resettlement in a third country. Guinean officials generally tolerate the continued presence of these Sierra Leoneans who emphasize that, as ECOWAS citizens, Sierra Leoneans benefit from the right to move and work freely in any ECOWAS country.³²

Given the change in the situation in Liberia since the departure of Charles Taylor in August 2003, the apparent durability of the ceasefire signed in Accra

shortly after Taylor's departure, and the stability of Gyude Bryant's transitional government, the facilitated repatriation of Liberian refugees began in November 2004. Until then Liberian refugees remained in one of Guinea's camps, primarily around N'Zérékoré and Macenta. Interestingly, many of the Liberian refugees said that they preferred their situation in late 2004 to the pre-2000 settlements. All 12 members of the refugee committee in Lainé camp said that they would rather live in the camp than in the neighbouring communities.³³ In fact, conditions in the camps, especially Lainé, are significantly better than in the surrounding villages, and refugees enjoy the freedom of movement necessary to allow them to pursue economic activity outside the camps.

Ivorian refugees in Guinea live in very different conditions. The 3,979 Ivorian refugees recognized in Guinea remain in the Nonah transit camp, more than a year after their arrival in Guinea. Unlike the camps where land is allocated and refugees are supported to build semi-permanent dwellings, the Ivorians in Nonah live in large tents housing up to 50 refugees. As a result there are greater health concerns in Nonah, with a greater number of reported skin infections and respiratory diseases than in the other camps.³⁴ There are also fewer activities in Nonah, which, coupled with uncertainties related to their status, leads to greater psychological problems among the refugees.

Secured camps?

Representatives from the government of Guinea, UN agencies, NGOs, health practitioners, civil society, and refugees themselves agreed that refugee camp militarization was no longer an issue in Guinea. The research team asked the same question of each informant it interviewed during September and October 2004: 'Do you feel that the presence of small arms or armed elements in the refugee camps in Southern Guinea is a cause for concern today?' In all 50 interviews the answer was 'no'. The BCR³⁵ and security officials³⁶ denied any incidents related to small arms in any of the refugee camps in the 12 months preceding September 2004. This was supported by health officials in Laine and Kouankan camps as well as in Nonah transit camp, where no case of small arms-related injuries has been recorded since the opening of the camps.³⁷ Members of Refugee Committees denied the use of small arms in

reported cases of intimidation, sexual violence or abductions in and around the camps.³⁸

Table 5.3 Reported incidents in Lainé, Kouankan, Kola, and Nonah refugee camps, 1 January – 31 August 2004

Camp	Theft	Rape	Fist-fights	Incitement	Extortion	Child abandonment	Petty theft	Murder	Narcotics possession	Hunting accidents	Assault causing bodily harm
Lainé	17	3	28	5	0	4	22	0	2	2	0
Kouankan	11	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kola	16	5	23	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nonah	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	44	12	59	5	3	5	22	0	2	2	1

Source: BCR, N'Zérékoré, October 2004

There has been a noticeable shift in security concerns among the refugee committees in Lainé and Kouankan camps. In 2001 many refugees expressed concerns about physical and sexual abuse, forced recruitment, and theft of limited humanitarian assistance by armed elements. In September and October 2004 refugees attributed their insecurity to their uncertain legal status, their inability to return to their country of origin, and their desire to be resettled abroad. While statistics provided by the BMS indicate that a number of crimes are still being committed in the camps (Table 5.3), the level of crime does not appear to be disproportionate to the size of the population and is not a significant concern among refugee camp inhabitants.

There was, however, also agreement that, while the refugee camps were free of small arms and armed elements, the Forest region in which the camps are located was not. It was generally held that the Forest region of southern Guinea, stretching from Kissidougou to N'Zérékoré and containing all of Guinea's refugee camps, had a problem with small arms and light weapons stemming from the events of 2000–01. Concerns were also voiced regarding the remaining Young Volunteers who have yet to be demobilized. As such, it is important to emphasize that, while refugee camp militarization does not appear to be a cause for concern in Guinea, the militarization of the refugee-

populated area—the towns and villages surrounding refugee camps—is a significant problem.³⁹

Informants also drew attention to the prevalence of hunting shotguns outside the camps, citing a recent case where a refugee from Kouankan camp sustained a non-fatal gunshot injury caused by a local. Government officials, UN representatives, humanitarian agencies, civil society, and refugees themselves, however, agree that there is no link between the prolonged presence of refugees in Guinea and the proliferation, or use, of small arms. This lack of refugee identification with the small arms trade in Guinea is also evident in the absence of reported use of small arms in refugee camps and surrounding communities.

The continued presence of armed elements

Young Volunteers

Government officials openly state that Guinea was able to withstand the incursions of 2000–01 because of the masses of Young Volunteers that came forward following President Conté's 9 September 2000 appeal. More recently, however, they have accepted that the continued presence of the Young Volunteers and the failure of efforts to demobilize them are among the greatest causes of insecurity in the Forest region.⁴⁰

The recruitment of Young Volunteers was highly decentralized. Government officials believe that each Sous-Préfecture recruited a minimum of 150 volunteers.⁴¹ Given that each of Guinea's 11 Préfectures comprises ten Sous-Préfectures, it is likely that a minimum of 16,500 Young Volunteers were recruited and armed. To this estimate, however, should be added the additional recruitment that took place in urban centres along the border and the massive recruitment that took place in Conakry. In N'Zérékoré town alone, for example, 4,500 Young Volunteers were recruited.⁴² It is on this basis that estimates on the number of Young Volunteers recruited are as high as 30,000.⁴³

Young Volunteers were promised future integration into the Guinean army as a reward for their service.⁴⁴ In a country with massive unemployment and few economic opportunities for young people, this was likely a strong motivating factor for volunteering. After March 2001, however, it became clear that not all Young Volunteers could be incorporated into the army, as the

armed forces could not afford such an increase in its numbers and not all Young Volunteers were fit for regular military service. As an alternative to full military service, the Guinean army formed marching bands—*fanfare*—in N'Zérékoré, Yomou, Lola, Macenta, Guékédou, Kissidougou, and Faranah, and filled the ranks of these bands with Young Volunteers, regardless of their musical ability.

A large number of Young Volunteers, however, were never integrated into either the army or the marching bands. A number remain in the Forest region and are still armed. The recent steep increase of the price of rice, the staple food in Guinea,⁴⁵ has led some former Volunteers to pick up their guns and turn to crime. In the words of one humanitarian worker in Conakry, 'they are suffering, they have a gun, and they are willing to use it'.⁴⁶

Research carried out by the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network identified 7,118 former Young Volunteers, many of whom have not been integrated notwithstanding the army's most recent efforts to disarm them in July 2004.⁴⁷ Based on information collected on the 1,728 Young Volunteers who registered in the Network's N'Zérékoré office in 2004,⁴⁸ it appears that 94 per cent (1,630) of the Volunteers were male, 53 per cent (990) had been integrated into the army or the *fanfare*, and 7 per cent were under 18 during the events of 2000—the youngest being eight.

LURD

Estimated to comprise between 3,000 (Brabazon, 2003, p. 7) and 8,000 (IISS, 2004, p. 375) combatants, LURD played a significant role in the fall of Charles Taylor in 2003. Despite Liberia's Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration programme (see Chapter 4 on Liberia), the continued presence of LURD fighters has had a significant impact on security in the Forest region of Guinea. Given the inactivity of LURD and the loss of a common objective for its fighters, many LURD fighters have reportedly been drifting back across the border either to benefit from humanitarian assistance⁴⁹ or to engage in criminal activity (IRIN, 2004b).

LURD elements were reportedly involved in the June 2004 outbreak of violence between the Mandingo community of N'Zérékore and the Toma and Gherze residents of the surrounding villages, which lasted for two days and

involved the use of small arms and light weapons (IRIN, 2004a). The Commandant of BAC, whose vehicle was hit by machine-gun fire during the incident, believes that LURD gunmen played a role in escalating what was initially a localized inter-group dispute.⁵⁰ The Préfet of N'Zérékoré reported that more than 20 AK-47s were seized in the aftermath of the violence, but that the marking of the weapons had been tampered with so as to make it impossible to determine the origin of the weapons.

Pro-Taylor and anti-Conté groups

Rumours abound in the Forest region about the formation of other armed groups, either pro-Taylor militias or anti-Conté factions. IRIN reported in September 2004 that pro-Taylor loyalists were recruiting former combatants in Liberia to travel to Guinea and train in the area around Mount Nimba (IRIN, 2004c). Rumour has it that the ex-combatants were each being paid USD 200 to join armed opposition to Conté.

Associated with this opposition is the little-known Movement of the Democratic Forces of Guinea (RFDG), a group reportedly led by army officers involved in a failed 1996 coup attempt against Conté (Szajkowski, 2004, pp. 147, 298) and estimated to be 1,800 strong (IISS, 2004, p. 375). RFDG elements reportedly fought beside the RUF and Liberia forces in the attacks on Guinea in 2000–01 (Szajkowski, 2004, p. 298). According to IISS (2004), RFDG has now disbanded, but so little is known about the group that this is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm. Government officials in Conakry, however, frequently mention the threat posed by exiled Guinean dissidents, and use this threat to justify limiting domestic political participation and protest. It is also possible that the RFDG existed in name only.

Small arms proliferation and trafficking

While there was general agreement that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was a significant problem in the Forest region of Guinea, it was not possible to find any reliable statistics on the scale. Nevertheless, confidential meetings with senior government officials provided a useful overview of the various sources of illegal small arms in Guinea. Most importantly, all government officials interviewed stated that there were no links in their minds

between the continued presence of refugees in Guinea and the traffic in small arms. A wide range of humanitarian and civil society representatives confirmed this view. While there is a common perception within the government that refugees played a role in the incursions of 2000–01—either by providing shelter to rebels or by acting as guides during the attacks—it is now widely held that the problem of small arms in the Forest region is not linked to the presence of refugees. Rather, the following appear to be the main sources of small arms circulating today in Guinea:

The looting of a Conakry armoury

In March 2001, 6 people died and 41 were wounded when an ammunition warehouse exploded at the Alpha Yaya Camp in Conakry (IRIN, 2001). The cause of the explosion was never reported, but it is now generally believed that the armoury was looted shortly after the blast. Arms looted from the armoury have been recovered in seizures throughout Guinea. It is generally believed, however, that some arms have remained within the country and are being used by criminal gangs. While many officials see this as the most significant source of small arms no details on the number and or types of looted weapons are available.

Young Volunteers and retired military

The second most significant source of small arms, estimated to account for roughly 5,000 small arms illegally circulating in Guinea, are those arms that were officially issued by the Guinean military but never returned at the end of service. This includes arms issued to the Young Volunteers during the 2000–01 attacks. Yet not all Young Volunteers were armed: according to a government report only 70 per cent of 2,380 Volunteers surveyed in Guékédou handled weapons and participated in combat (Republic of Guinea, 2001, p. 6). Several officials also explained that retiring police or army officers were not always required to return their service weapon upon retirement. These weapons therefore routinely leaked to criminal elements.

Local production

There is a significant local craft industry for the production of arms, mostly

shotguns. This is confirmed by the BAC seizure of 52 12-gauge craft shotguns between 2001 and 2003 (Republic of Guinea, 2001–2003). Hunting is an important source of income in the Forest region, and shotguns are a regular sight on the main roadways. There are no estimates of the scale of annual production in Guinea, and it is generally believed that these weapons are not widely used for criminal purposes.

Traffic from Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire through Guinea

The most significant seizures of small arms in 2004 occurred on the border with Mali. From February to September 2004 small shipments of small arms—typically 6 to 12 AK-47s—have been seized en route to Bamako, the capital of Mali. More prolific, however, is the traffic of weapons from Liberia to Côte d’Ivoire, fuelled by differing DDR programmes in the two countries. Current DDR programmes in Liberia offer an initial payment of USD 150 for the surrender of a weapon and a further USD 150 when the participant reports for reintegration support in his or her home area. The programme in northern Côte d’Ivoire is expected to offer two payments of USD 450. This has created a traffic of arms and combatants from Liberia to Côte d’Ivoire through southern Guinea (especially N’Zérékoré), as ex-combatants in Liberia believe that they are able to collect an additional USD 150 for surrendering a weapon without having to ever participate in the reintegration elements of the programme. This traffic has had a significant impact on the security environment in N’Zérékoré, as ex-combatants often engage in criminal activity during their journey.

Conclusion

Guinea’s refugee population, which totalled 450,000 in the late 1990s, was severely affected by the 2000–01 cross-border attacks and the Liberian civil war. Not only did both sides target refugees during the fighting, but the infiltration of armed groups into the refugee camps caused suspicion and led to further harassment and displacement of refugees.

The full impact of militarization on refugee protection in Guinea, however, can be understood only in the context of broader refugee populated areas. A

large proportion of Guinea's refugee population does not live in camps but in nearby villages. Continued small arms proliferation and the presence of thousands of armed and idle ex-combatants in the Forest region demonstrate that, while refugee camps have been relatively secured, significant concerns remain for the protection of refugees living elsewhere and for civilians in general. Furthermore, as the boundaries of refugee camps are not enforced, insecurity and small arms proliferation outside the refugee camps can have a direct impact on refugees inside the camps.

While the responses developed by national and international actors in the camps have achieved meaningful results despite very limited resources, significant threats to Guinea's stability require urgent attention. The failure to mobilize sufficient funds to disarm and reintegrate remaining Young Volunteers has the potential to threaten the country's internal security for years to come, especially given the uncertainty surrounding President Conté's succession (ICG, 2003). Guinea's stability also remains vulnerable to spillover effects from the conflict in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, including regional small arms trafficking and the movement of armed elements. In this difficult context increased border control and regional military cooperation stand out as prerequisites to avoid the suffering of the past.

List of abbreviations

ACT	Action for Churches Together
BAC	Brigade Anti-Criminalité
BCR	Bureau pour la Coordination des Réfugiés (regional branches of BNCR)
BMS	Brigade Mixte (police and gendarmerie)
BNCR	Bureau National pour la Coordination des Réfugiés
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
HRW	Human Rights Watch
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police

RFDG	Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Kromah
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USCR	US Committee for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Endnotes

- 1 The chapter is based on a more extensive report commissioned by the Small Arms Survey and the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) as part of a larger study on the militarization of refugee camps in several African countries. The study will be published during the second half of 2005. In addition to Guinea, it will comprise case studies of Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- 2 Details for this section are drawn from Amnesty International (2001), USCR (2001; 2002), LCHR (2002), and interviews with UNHCR and NGO staff in Geneva and Conakry.
- 3 Many Guinean officials believe that the refugee population at the time was, in fact, more than 1 million.
- 4 Some have argued that this stability in Guinea, relative to Sierra Leone and Liberia, masked both the political conflict within Guinea that was taking place throughout the decade, especially given the 1996 coup attempt in Conakry, and the active role that Guinea is widely regarded as having played in the conflict affecting its southern neighbours. See McGovern (2002).
- 5 During the same period, United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-K), under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah, was recruiting from the predominantly Mandingo urban Liberian refugee population in N’Zérékoré. Given that this refugee population did not live in UNHCR camps or settlements, this recruitment was largely undocumented. During the campaign of the 1997 Liberian election, ALCOP, the party formed by Kromah, drew the base of its support from refugees in southern Guinea. Based on author’s interviews with Liberian refugees in N’Zérékoré, 2001. See also Ellis (1995; 1998), and Reno (1998).

- 6 It is important to note that a number of cross-border raids, targeting humanitarian supplies, were recorded in the early 1990s.
- 7 Interviews with UN personnel, Guinea, August 2001.
- 8 Interviews with Government officials, Conakry, 27 September 2004 and 8 October 2004.
- 9 7,000 is the figure used by UNICEF in its planning for demobilization activities for the Young Volunteers. See UNOCHA (2002; 2003).
- 10 Interview with government official, Conakry, 27 September 2004.
- 11 Interviews with local residents, Conakry, Macenta, and N'Zérékoré, 2001, and with Refugee Committee, Kouankan, October 2004.
- 12 Interviews with residents in Guékédou, August 2001. It is important to note that the RUF were more clearly identified as rebels by the Guinean population, while the status of the ULIMO fighters, as rebels or defenders, was much more ambiguous.
- 13 Interviews with government officials, Conakry, 24 September 2004 and 27 September 2004.
- 14 Information gathered by UNOCHA, on file with author.
- 15 Interview with UNHCR official, Conakry, March 2001.
- 16 This security was notwithstanding a number of events during the relocation, as reported by HRW. See HRW (2002).
- 17 Interview with humanitarian workers, N'Zérékoré, September 2004.
- 18 Based on interviews with refugees remaining in the Languette, July 2001.
- 19 Refugee Security Volunteers are representatives of the refugee population who reinforce the supervisory capacity of the BMS by patrolling sectors of the refugee camps. They are not armed but are trained to document incidences and report them to the BMS.
- 20 Interview with UN officials, Conakry, 23 September 2004.
- 21 Meetings with refugee committees in Lainé and Kouankan camps, 2 October and 4 October 2004.
- 22 Interview with UN official, Conakry, 7 October 2004.
- 23 Perhaps the exception to this rule is the four Ranger companies trained by the United States partly in response to the incursions. Another underlying purpose of US assistance was to increase Guinea's military capabilities in an effort to contain Charles Taylor and the RUF. No lethal equipment was provided during the training, which the US undertook in 2002 (Berman, 2002, p. 33). This battalion was not, however, deployed to the border region as initially planned, but has been used to address internal security concerns. Interview with US Embassy staff, Conakry, 7 October 2004.
- 24 Interview with senior government official, Conakry, 8 October 2004.

- 25 Interview with BAC Commandant, N'Zérékoré, 4 October 2004.
- 26 The problem of reliable and verifiable statistics was repeated throughout the field research. A range of statistics—concerning local and refugee populations, medical data, police reports involving small arms, and details of arms seizures—were either unavailable or lacking in credibility. This problem with statistics is the result of a lack of both the necessary training and resources to gather and maintain baseline data, and has been a long-standing concern in the refugee programme in Guinea (USCR, 2002, p. 76.) As a result, statistics contained in this chapter are meant to substantiate findings derived from interviews and secondary sources.
- 27 Meeting with refugee committee, Kouankan camp, 4 October 2004.
- 28 Meeting with camp administrator, Kouankan camp, Macenta, 4 October 2004.
- 29 This is not an exception, though. Tanzania, for example, has 476,000 UNHCR-assisted refugees and some 180,000 unassisted refugees who have lived in settlements for over 30 years.
- 30 Interview with Préfet of N'Zérékoré, N'Zérékoré, 1 October 2004.
- 31 Meeting with urban refugees, Conakry, 27 September and 8 October 2004.
- 32 Meeting with government official, Conakry, 24 September 2004. While ECOWAS treaties provide for the free movement of ECOWAS citizens between member states, especially according to the 1979 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Free Establishment, this right is only for a temporary 90-day period, after which the stay of the ECOWAS citizen must be regularized according to the nationality and citizenship laws of the individual member state. The spirit of this provision has been rather loosely applied to remaining Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea.
- 33 Meeting with refugee committee, Lainé Camp, 2 October 2004.
- 34 Meeting with refugee health NGO representatives, N'Zérékoré, 30 September 2004.
- 35 Meetings with camp administrators, Lainé camp, 2 October 2004, and Kouankan camp, 4 October 2004
- 36 Meeting with UN staff, Conakry, 23 September 2004
- 37 Meetings with NGO health representatives, N'Zérékoré, 30 September 2004, Kouankan camp, 4 October 2004, and Conakry, 24 September 2004.
- 38 Meetings with refugee committee, Lainé Camp, 2 October 2004, and Kouankan camp, 4 October 2004; and meeting with Refugee Women's Committee, Lainé camp, 2 October 2004
- 39 For a useful overview of the prevailing security situation in the Forest region of southern Guinea, see ICG (2003) and Melly (2003).
- 40 Interview with government officials in Conakry and N'Zérékoré, 24 September, 27 September, and 29 September 2004.

- 41 Interview with government officials, N'Zérékoré, 29 September 2004.
- 42 Interview with the Préfet of N'Zérékoré, 1 October 2004.
- 43 Interview with government official, Conakry, 27 September 2004.
- 44 Interview with government official, Conakry, 27 September 2004.
- 45 The price of rice has almost doubled in the past year, from GNF 50,000 to GNF 90,000 (USD 25.5 to USD 45.9) for a 50 kilo bag of rice. This rapid rise led to rice riots in Conakry in June 2004. See IRIN (2004b).
- 46 Interview with humanitarian worker, Conakry, 22 September 2004.
- 47 Meeting with the President of the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network, Conakry, 24 September 2004.
- 48 It is important to note that this number represents only 38 per cent of the number of Young Volunteers reported by the Préfet of N'Zérékoré.
- 49 Significantly, however, the head of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Guinea stated that he had not heard of a single report of food assistance being leaked to LURD in the previous 12 months. Interview with Country Director and Representative, WFP, Conakry, September 2004.
- 50 Interview, Commandant of BAC, N'Zérékoré, 4 October 2004.

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CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH FIGHTING FORCES (CAFF) AND SMALL ARMS IN THE MANO RIVER UNION (MRU)

By Christina Wille

Introduction

Many West African conflicts evoke images of child fighters roaming the streets armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles. While children have reportedly participated in violence in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and to some extent in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal,¹ armed groups and state forces operating in the member states of the Mano River Union (MRU)—namely, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—especially favour the use of children. Given the regional dimension of the problem, efforts have been made to demobilize and reintegrate children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) after conflict, and lessons learned are beginning to emerge. Little is known, however, about the factors that encourage armed groups to recruit children. While it has often been stated that the availability of small arms plays a significant role,² little empirical research supports this link. Furthermore, the information available as to the types of weapons used by children is anecdotal only.

The aim of this chapter is to deepen our understanding of the links between small arms and CAFF in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. It comprises four main sections. The first section provides an overview of CAFF in MRU conflicts and describes the profiles of the children interviewed during the course of this study. The second looks specifically at recruitment from the CAFF perspective, and reflects on the role of small arms within that process. The third examines the different tasks that CAFF carried out in an attempt to determine their role and 'utility' for armed groups. The personal experiences of children during combat operations are discussed in the fourth section.

The analysis presented here is based primarily on field interviews with 270 former CAFF conducted in the three MRU states between September and November 2004. All of the children interviewed were under the age of 18³ when first recruited and spent at least several months with an armed group. Three teams of local researchers—consultants in Guinea, researchers from the Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE 24) in Liberia, and Caritas Makeni staff in Sierra Leone—conducted the interviews. These were deliberately kept informal to avoid intimidating the children. At the end of each interview, however, interviewers had to fill in a standard reporting form, which served as the basis for the quantitative data presented here.⁴

Main findings are as follows:

- Firearms play a crucial role in the recruitment of children by armed groups. Some children are forced to join at gunpoint, while for others wielding a firearm signifies that they have achieved maturity. Firearms also enable children to enrich themselves at the expense of others—again at gunpoint—and are also an important means of self-protection from other armed or state groups.
- Almost all CAFF were provided with weapons, although to a much more limited extent than adults. CAFF mainly had access to assault rifles, in particular AK-47 models,⁵ whereas adults manipulated a wider range of weapons including rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), light machine guns, and, in the case of those operating in Guinea, handguns.
- CAFF tasks were generally diverse and did not necessarily involve the use of firearms. Few reported using firearms while spying; many used them to steal food from storage facilities and villagers, as well as for guarding and soldiering. In more poorly organized and equipped groups, CAFF also portered weapons and ammunition, and maintained the firearms of superiors.
- The means by which armed groups controlled and supervised armed CAFF also differed. Within better-organized groups, strict ammunition control ensured that CAFF enjoyed only limited opportunities to discharge weapons. In groups with loose controls, CAFF deployed arms and ammunition for personal gain. Lax supervision based on favouritism enabled some CAFF to deploy their weapons when and how they saw fit.

- During periods of fighting, the rules under which CAFF may access small arms change dramatically. When armed units are under attack, commanders will provide more group members, including young recruits, with weapons for the purposes of defence and offence.
- The availability of small arms and ammunition determines to what extent commanders will consider arming CAFF. When arms and ammunition are scarce, leaders will provide weapons only to their 'best' fighters. Conversely, when weapons and ammunition are more easily available even CAFF will receive arms.
- Demographics also help explain the extent of child recruitment: children simply represent a large proportion of the population in regions where recurring conflict has resulted in dramatically increased mortality rates. In addition, armed units that lack military infrastructural support—e.g. access to trucks, housing and support staff—use children for menial tasks such as fetching water, gathering fuel, portering, cooking, and cleaning.

CAFF and conflict in the MRU

Historical overview

The use of CAFF in the region is as interconnected as the nature of the conflicts themselves. In 1989, Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire, sparking a seven-year civil war. Besides the NPFL, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO, which later split into the 'ULIMO-J' and 'ULIMO-K' factions), local self-defence forces, and remnants of the Liberian National Army also took part in the first phase of the Liberian civil war.

In 1991, the Liberian conflict spread into Sierra Leone when Foday Sankoh, the leader of the Sierra Leonean Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led a mixed group of fighters from Taylor's NPFL, Burkinabe mercenaries, and Sierra Leoneans across the border. The Taylor-sponsored RUF was quick to acquire territory. Troops from Nigeria, Guinea, and ULIMO supported the besieged Sierra Leonean government, successfully defending it against the RUF but failing to prevent a coup d'état in Sierra Leone in 1992 by the military.⁶ A number of local Sierra Leonean communities formed militias under the rubric of the Civil Defence Force (CDF) to defend against the RUF—these

included the Kamajors, Tamaboros, Donsos, Kapras, and Gbethis.

In 1996, Nigeria and other West African states brokered a ceasefire between warring Liberian factions. This led to the 1997 elections that Taylor won. In Sierra Leone, elections were also held in 1997 following another coup: this time by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which then invited the RUF to join it in forming a new government. A peace agreement followed in 1999.

Peace in Liberia did not last. In 2000, Taylor's government faced attacks by the Guinea-supported Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)⁷ and, after 2003, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and various paramilitary and militia groups supported Taylor. These included the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), the Special Security Services (SSS), and a number of RUF fighters.

In 2000, the conflict spread after Taylor-sponsored rebels launched cross-border incursions into Guinea. The Guinean military was able to defeat the attackers only after recruiting thousands of Young Volunteers and receiving military support from LURD and the CDF in Sierra Leone. Fighting came to an end in Liberia with the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement of August 2003 and Taylor's exile to Nigeria. Since the 2002 election, Sierra Leone has also been relatively stable.

Throughout this decade of fighting, the numbers of children deployed by armed forces remained largely unknown. But many NGOs (HRW, 2004; Watch List, 2004; CSC, 2004a; 2004b), have documented the extent to which armed groups and government forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone recruited and deployed children. In Liberia, a total of 11,221 children (8,704 males, 2,517 females) were admitted into the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (DDRR) programme (UNMIL, 2004; NCDDR, 2004);⁸ while in Sierra Leone, 6,850 children were demobilized, despite the fact that many more took part in the fighting (UNSC, 2004, para. 21). In Guinea, the number of children recruited remains undetermined, with estimates ranging from 7,000 to 30,000.⁹ Between 2000 and 2001, Guinean authorities recruited and organized Young Volunteers into self-defence committees following rebel incursions into the southern part of the country.

Profile of respondents

A total of 270 CAFF were interviewed for this study: 100 in Liberia, 91 in Guinea, and 79 in Sierra Leone. In Liberia, nearly half (46) of the respondents had recently belonged to a rebel force, primarily LURD (35) and MODEL (7).¹⁰ Nearly as many (39) were members of a pro-Taylor militia group, such as the Jungle Lions (11), the ATU (9), and the Small Boys Unit (SBU) (6).¹¹ Eleven Liberian respondents did not specify the name of the ‘government militia’ they were associated with. Only 12 Liberian respondents had belonged to the AFL. Only one respondent had been with two different groups (MODEL and ATU—interestingly).

A considerable number (22) of the 79 Sierra Leoneans interviewed claimed to have belonged to more than one group: indeed, seven were affiliated with three different factions. Although this study did not allow for the tracing of CAFF between armed groups, it nevertheless indicates that a number of young Sierra Leoneans had previously been active in Liberia or organizations closely linked to the country. The overwhelming majority of respondents had belonged to the RUF (65 of 79). Six had also been with the SBU or Small Girls Unit (SGU), 4 with the Jungle Lions, and 1 with the ATU. Twelve Sierra Leonean CAFF had been members of the AFRC/SLA—although 7 had also been with the RUF, the SBU, or the SGU. Eight respondents had been members of the CDFs and the Gbethis. With one exception, all of those associated with these self-defence committees had also been a member of either a rebel group (RUF) or the AFRC/SLA. All 91 Guinean Volunteers had served, or were serving as Young Volunteers.

Table 6.1 Affiliations of CAFF respondents

	Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Rebel forces	0	46	78
Militias	91 *	39	15
Government forces	0	12	0
Total	91	100 **	79 ***

*All respondents from Guinea had been part of the Young Volunteer self-defence committees, which are classified here as militia because they were government-backed.

** Five respondents did not specify the unit they had been affiliated with. Only one person had been with two different groups (MODEL and ATU, interestingly).

*** Fourteen respondents had been with both a rebel and a militia movement.

At the time of the interviews, all but three of the 79 Sierra Leonean CAFF had returned to their families after having undergone disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The three others had returned to their families without having gone through DDR. In Liberia, 32 had already returned to their families after completion of DDR, while 21 were still undergoing the process, 11 were in interim care, 20 were waiting to be selected for the programme, and 6 were employed in a public works programme. Seven had returned to their families without going through any DDR process. In Guinea, just under half (41 per cent) were still Young Volunteers at the time of the interview. The other respondents had left the self-defence committees and were either undertaking professional training or at school (38 per cent). Twenty-two per cent were working either in agriculture or business.

At the time of the interview, respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone were younger than those in Guinea. In Liberia the average age was 17 years, 18 in Sierra Leone, and 20 in Guinea. The recruitment age was the lowest in Sierra Leone. On average, respondents had been recruited at the age of 12, compared with ages 14 in Liberia and 16 in Guinea. The overwhelming majority of respondents were boys (over 80 per cent). Girls were more numerous among the Sierra Leoneans (24 per cent) and Liberians (21 per cent) than among the Guineans (9 per cent).

Table 6.2 Age at recruitment

	Youngest	Average age	Mean age
Guinea	15	16.3	16
Liberia	9	14.6	15
Sierra Leone	5	12.3	12

Interviewers selected respondents based on their willingness to talk. In many instances the interviewer and child had come to know each other through the demobilization process. This sample is therefore neither random nor representative of all CAFF in the respective countries surveyed. Nevertheless, the experiences related here are certainly more reliable and detailed than any random sampling. For most of these children, life with fighting forces has been highly traumatic and conversations regarding past

events had to be carried out in an atmosphere of trust. It is very likely, however, that a number of issues were far too sensitive to be discussed in one single conversation—even with a known adult. Particularly traumatizing events, such as experiences of sexual abuse, are therefore likely to be under-reported here.

Perspectives on the recruitment process

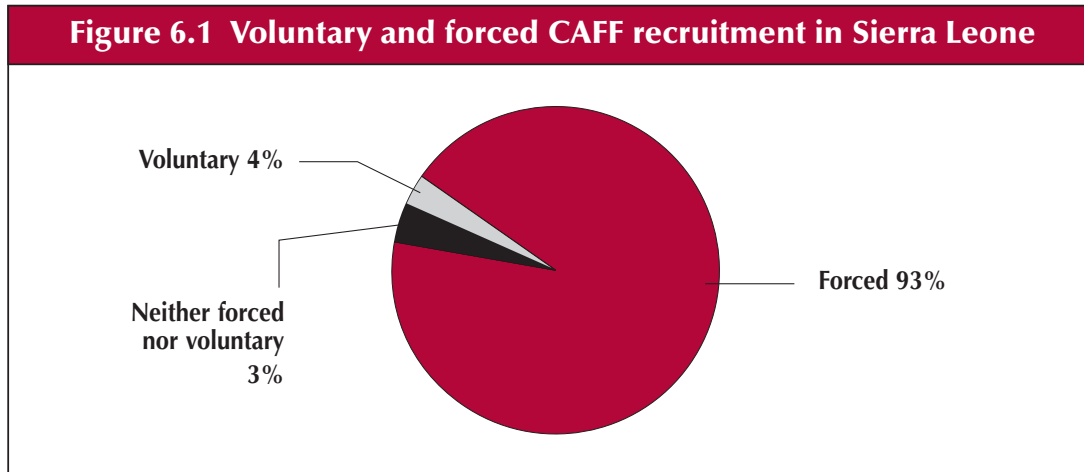
The research examines the extent to which children felt forced or coerced into the military and the degree to which they were able to make their own decisions. Children interviewed revealed the diverse role firearms played in the recruitment process: some were press-ganged at gunpoint, others were attracted by the possibility of using a firearm, and still others were prompted to join by fears for their personal security. Recruitment experiences, whether forced or voluntary, differ considerably between countries and according to circumstances. Overall, however, forced recruitment was more common (40 per cent) than strictly voluntary (20 per cent). A notable proportion (40 per cent) of children felt that they had no say even though no force was used.

Forced recruitment

Overall, more than a third of respondents (40 per cent) declared that they had been forced to join an armed unit. This did not apply in Guinea, however, where not a single Young Volunteer reported forced recruitment.

More than 90 per cent of Sierra Leonean CAFF claimed to have been forcibly recruited, in particular by the RUF. The RUF abducted children from their homes and schools and snatched them from the streets. The following accounts are typical: 'I had been sent by my parents to fetch water when the town was attacked. I was captured and abducted by RUF fighters.'¹² 'I was captured when the rebels attacked my village. I was sleeping when a rebel with a firearm entered the room. I was alone and was taken away.'¹³ Only one of the 65 respondents affiliated with the RUF did not describe the recruitment process as forced.¹⁴ There is, however, a possibility that those interviewed exaggerated owing to the fact that investigators for the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) were collecting evidence against the RUF. The excessive use of force by the RUF, however, is well-documented elsewhere, and voluntary

recruitment is generally believed to have been limited to the early years of the movement (McIntyre et al., 2002 quoting Richards, 1996).



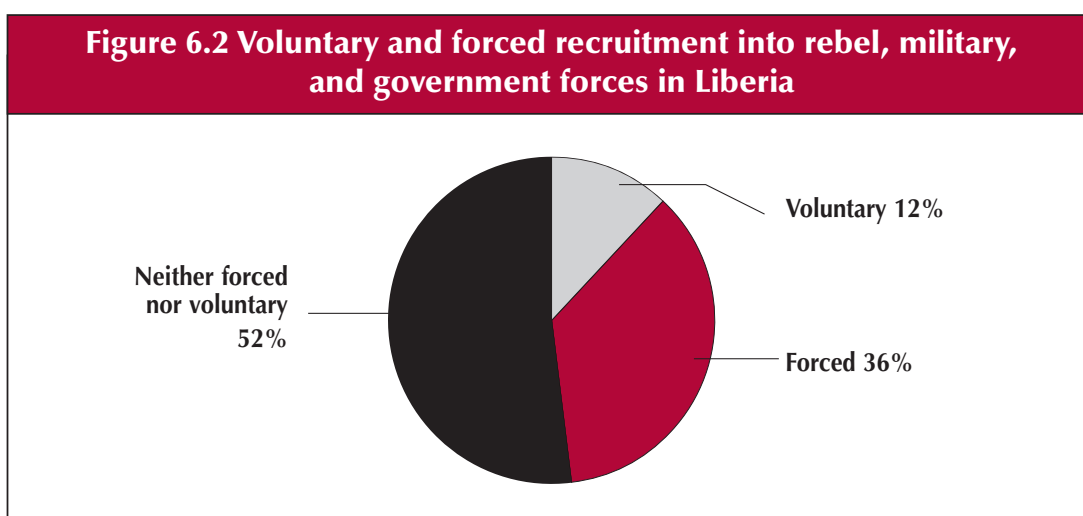
In Liberia, the proportion of CAFF who claimed to have been forced into an armed unit (36 per cent) was also considerable. Experiences were similar, even though forced recruitment was more common in pro-Taylor militia groups (49 per cent) than in the rebel groups LURD or MODEL (30 per cent). Because the survey covered a wide sampling of Liberian groups, these trends are based on interviews with only a few children and must therefore be interpreted with caution.

Children associated with the Jungle Lions revealed that officers in army uniforms carried out forced recruitments on the street. They reportedly abducted children on their way to school¹⁵ or grabbed them from vehicles.¹⁶ Four respondents mentioned the town of Gbarnga, close to the Guinean border, as the place where the Jungle Lions recruited them.¹⁷ They also named General Benjamin Yeaten, Director of the SSS and Deputy Chief of Staff of the AFL, as the person in charge.¹⁸ A then 15-year-old explained, 'I was escaping fighting between government forces and LURD in Gbarnga for Nimba County when I was captured on the road. They accused me of being a rebel. I was interrogated and tortured by the government militias. They held me for two weeks as a prisoner. Due to my obedience I was incorporated into the group.'¹⁹

LURD engaged in forced recruitment after gaining military control over any given area or before launching a major attack.²⁰ Children were seized

Table 6.3 Forced recruitment in Liberia by group			
	Reported forced recruitment	Per cent	Total respondents with group
Rebel			
LURD	9	26	35
MODEL	2	29	7
ULIMO	1	100	1
Donso	1	100	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>44</i>
Militia			
ATU	3	33	9
Jungle Lions	7	64	11
'Militia'	7	64	11
SBU	2	33	6
SSS	0	0	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>39</i>
Government forces			
'Government forces'	3	27	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>11</i>

from the road, vehicles,²¹ or camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).²² A number said they were press-ganged during the battles of Gbarnga, Monrovia, and Lofa Bridge.



Voluntary recruitment and the absence of force in the recruitment process

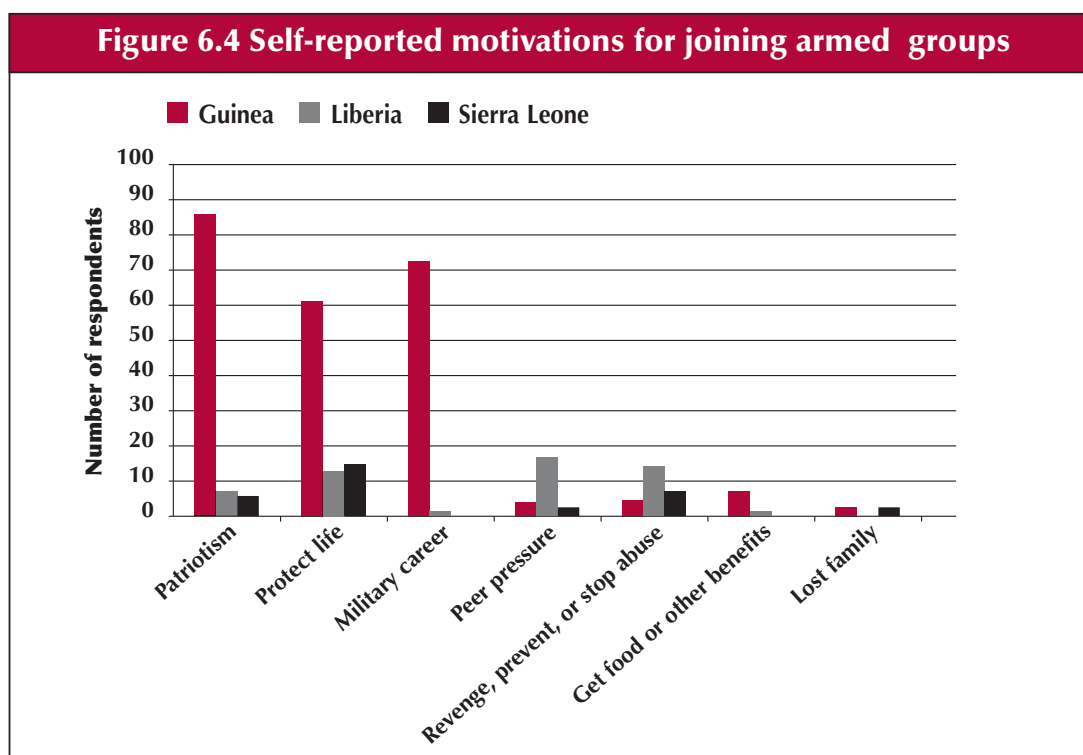
In total, fewer than 20 per cent of all children stated that they had voluntarily joined armed groups. Voluntary recruitment was the highest in Guinea, where nearly 40 per cent of respondents reported that they had joined civil defence committees as Young Volunteers. In Liberia, in contrast, only 12 per cent said they had volunteered, and in Sierra Leone only three. (See Figures 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.)



Patriotism and, in particular, the desire to defend their communities and country from invading rebels motivated Guinean CAFF. Many also harboured aspirations for a career in the Guinean army. The need for protection was also important. Less important were revenge and peer pressure (Figure 6.4).

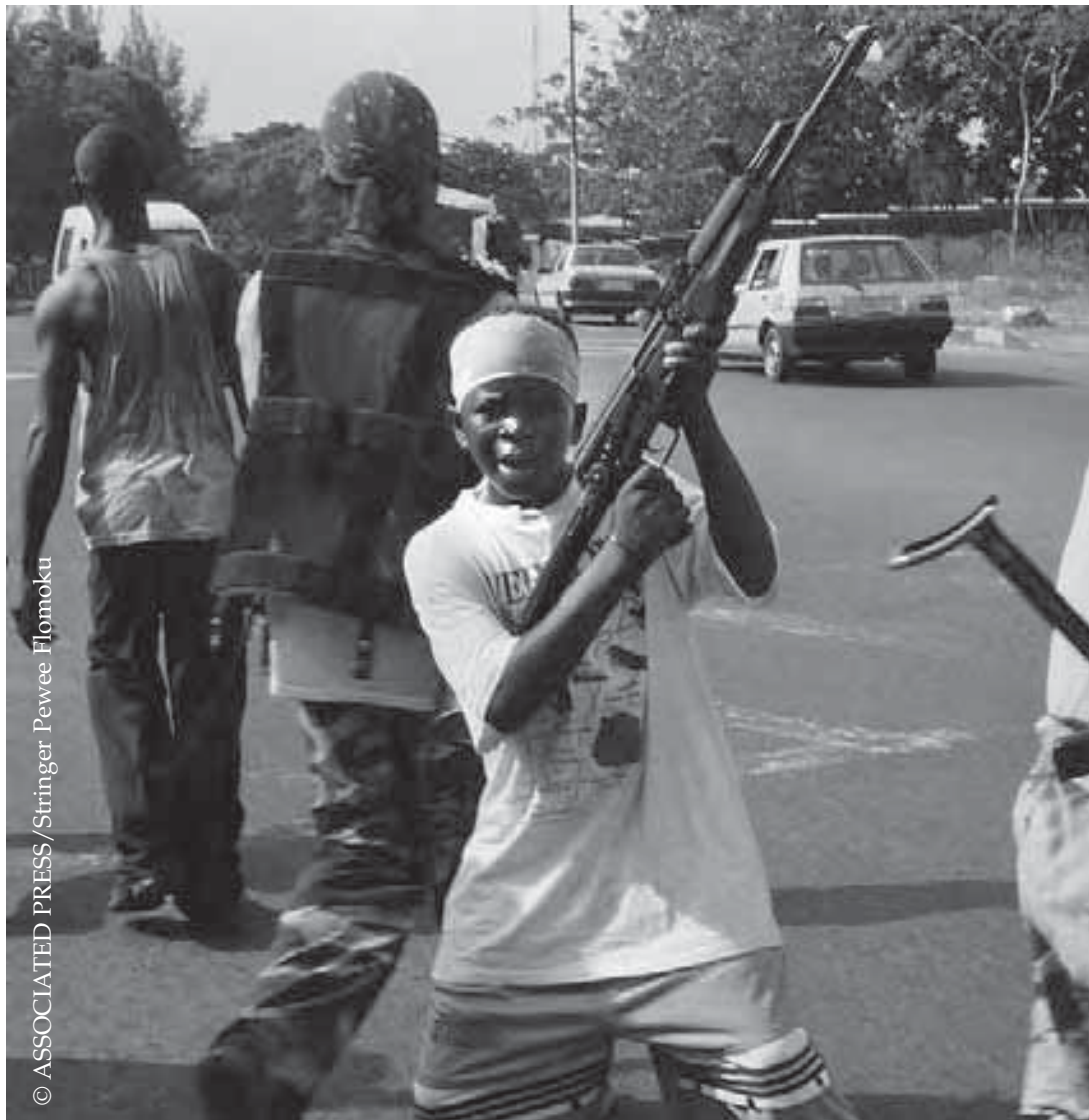
Interpreting motivations appropriately can be difficult given that these change over time. Guinean CAFF, most of whom were 16 years old when they became Young Volunteers, became aware of the privileged status that their superiors enjoyed in Guinean society. This may have influenced decisions to stay that varied from initial aims. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between CAFF motivations at the recruitment stage and at the time of the interview.

In Liberia, children described peer pressure as the most common reason why they joined an armed group²³ and alluded to material benefits rather than the patriotic ideals and sense of duty expressed by Guinean counterparts. One 16-year-old explained, 'once you become a fighter you get your own



money and other material things or anything you want.’²⁴ Access to firearms and the power associated with being member of an armed group were clearly important: ‘when you are in possession of arms you can loot and get anything you want. You can say or do anything to anybody without fear.’²⁵ ‘My friends told me to come looting with them and I was given a firearm to protect myself.’²⁶ From the available data, it appears that peer pressure was as important in all Liberian groups.²⁷

However, it is difficult to distinguish between children who joined armed groups voluntarily and those who went along because ‘that was the only thing to do’. In all three countries combined, about 40 per cent of the children appeared fatalistic—making it difficult to categorize recruitment as ‘voluntary’ even though force was not reported.²⁸ Family members often pressured children and youth to join armed units. A Liberian CAFF reported: ‘I was taken to a training base by my uncle, who was an officer in the ATU.’²⁹ Another reported: ‘My uncle encouraged me to join the [government] forces to resist LURD from entering Liberia.’³⁰ In Sierra Leone an 11-year-old told interviewers a much-admired elder brother who had been promoted as his unit’s second-in-command had influenced his own decision to join.³¹



A child fires in the air in the centre of the Liberian capital Monrovia, 19 December 2003.

Others enlisted because of increasing insecurity. For many, such decisions were not truly voluntary, but were dictated by the circumstances of the conflict. A Guinean CAFF put it as follows: 'There was little choice about it. All civil activities had stopped. We mobilized to defend our country.'³² The general calls for mobilization issued by the local Guinean administration in schools and other places led to social pressure. A then 17-year-old spoke for many when he said: 'Like all my friends, I volunteered.'^{33,34}

In Liberia, 14 CAFF explained how they joined rebel or militia groups to take revenge for killings or because they saw it as the only way to protect themselves and their families. These motivations were expressed by CAFF participating on all sides of the conflict: some joined LURD to avenge killings by government militias, while still others joined militias in response to rebel violence.³⁵ These were also the motivations that guided children in Sierra Leone to join the CDF or Gbethis militias. One interviewee explained that he had enlisted at the age of 12 after rebels killed both his parents, and that village elders had mobilized children to create a civil defence force.^{36,37} The fact that so few were in a position to make their own decisions raises questions regarding the possibility of truly voluntary recruitment.

Small arms in the recruitment process

The use of small arms was more prominent in cases of forced recruitment. The overwhelming majority (103 out of 110) who experienced forced recruitment reported being conscripted at gunpoint.

Among those CAFF who 'volunteered' few directly mentioned firearms. Motivations behind joining armed units, however, were often linked to high levels of insecurity as well as the material or career benefits that accrued from access to weapons. For most children, and for those in Guinea in particular, conflict-related insecurity played a prominent role in decisions to join armed groups. Some CAFF, particularly in Liberia, maintained they volunteered owing to the benefits associated with carrying a firearm. Small arms were described as symbols of maturity that conferred authority on their bearers. This was especially the case where impunity and lawlessness enabled children to loot, steal, and rape. Many of the children interviewed also expressed fear of firearms.

The perfect little Kalashnikov soldier? Rational choices for child recruitment into armed groups

Armed groups would not recruit children into their ranks unless they wanted to. This section explores the reasons why children themselves believed they were recruited, and also discusses how armed groups used and deployed them. The degrees to which adults supervised and controlled CAFF access to, and use of, firearms reveal how armed groups were organized. Comparisons between the three countries moreover, reveal not only common patterns but also considerable diversity. This should only serve to alert researchers to avoid making sweeping generalizations when analysing the role of children in armed conflict.

Demographics, conflict mortality, and CAFF

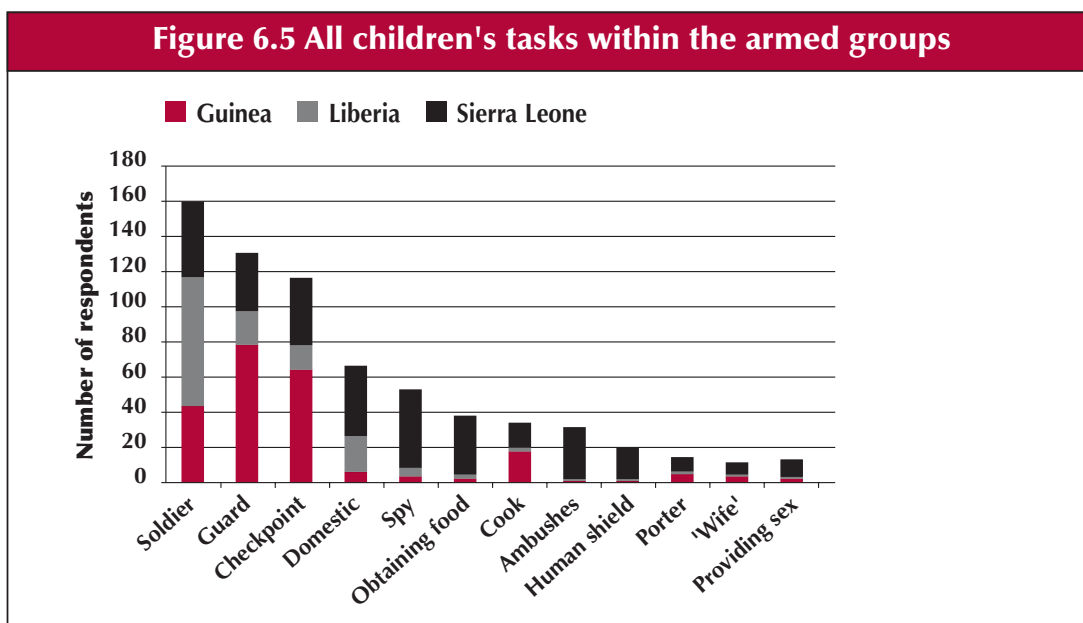
MRU countries share fundamental demographic characteristics that may contribute to the recruitment of children into conflict. Since youth make up a considerable proportion of the total population of West Africa, it is unsurprising that children are called upon to perform adult tasks at an earlier age than in societies where adults are predominant. According to UN-HABITAT (1999), more than 40 per cent of West Africa's population is aged less than 15 years (Sierra Leone 44.2 per cent, Liberia 46 per cent, Guinea 46.9 per cent)—more than twice that of Europe.³⁸ Respondents confirmed that this partly explained why they had been recruited. One Liberian child maintained that, because children were in the majority, they had no choice but to fight.³⁹ A child in Sierra Leone said, 'there are always so many children in each country, that is why the government has a special interest in them.'⁴⁰ In Guinea a child explained: 'Children were needed because there were so many of us.'⁴¹

While precise figures are non-existent, there is little doubt that MRU conflicts claimed many lives and made it necessary for all fighting forces to constantly replenish their ranks. An International Rescue Committee (IRC) study found that the mortality rate in Sierra Leone was as high as 3.7 per 1,000 inhabitants per month during the conflict: nearly three times (2.8) higher than the expected normal mortality rate (Fornah et al., 2001).⁴² CAFF accounts from Liberia provide a glimpse of the hardships that caused so many premature deaths: 'Life with the armed group was unbearable because

one had to be strong just to survive. We had to walk such long distances. Most of my friends died because they could not withstand the weather and the hunger.⁴³ According to one interviewee, the death toll from violence was the main reason why children were recruited: ‘Children are needed to replace adults who die in combat.’⁴⁴ Rebels in Liberia also sought to increase their numbers following territorial gains: ‘After Lofa County came under control we needed more people to do further advances.’⁴⁵

Military support tasks

Most CAFF undertook support duties, although these varied according to country (see Figure 6.5). For the most part, however, the majority of children reported having been ‘soldiers’—although, as will be described below, this term did not mean the same thing to all respondents. In Sierra Leone, spying, domestic work, and foraging for food were the most common tasks undertaken by CAFF. In Guinea, the majority of Young Volunteers were employed as checkpoint guards, and not a single child mentioned having to search for food.



Differences in physical and support infrastructure available to armed groups, as well as variations in military strategy and internal command structures, may help explain why CAFF duties varied. In Sierra Leone, nearly all CAFF interviewed (93 per cent) said that units were mobile and constantly

shifted from one location to the next. The majority (61 per cent) reported bunking down in remote areas without much infrastructure, and just under half (44 per cent) stayed in makeshift camps in the forest. Only a tiny minority (6 per cent) ever stayed in barracks in a town. Analysts argued that the RUF was not interested in establishing economic and social institutions or political infrastructure to support them (Rippon and Willow, 2004)—an assumption that would be confirmed by the nature of the tasks asked of the children.

This meant that a number of armed groups—and the RUF in particular—required human labour to build and maintain camps. Former child combatants from Sierra Leone reported being sent to fetch water for washing and cooking. Forty-four per cent said that they were required to steal food for themselves and the troops, which meant attacking villages and other supply facilities.⁴⁶ The dependency on manual labour partially explains why it made sense for the RUF to recruit so many CAFF.

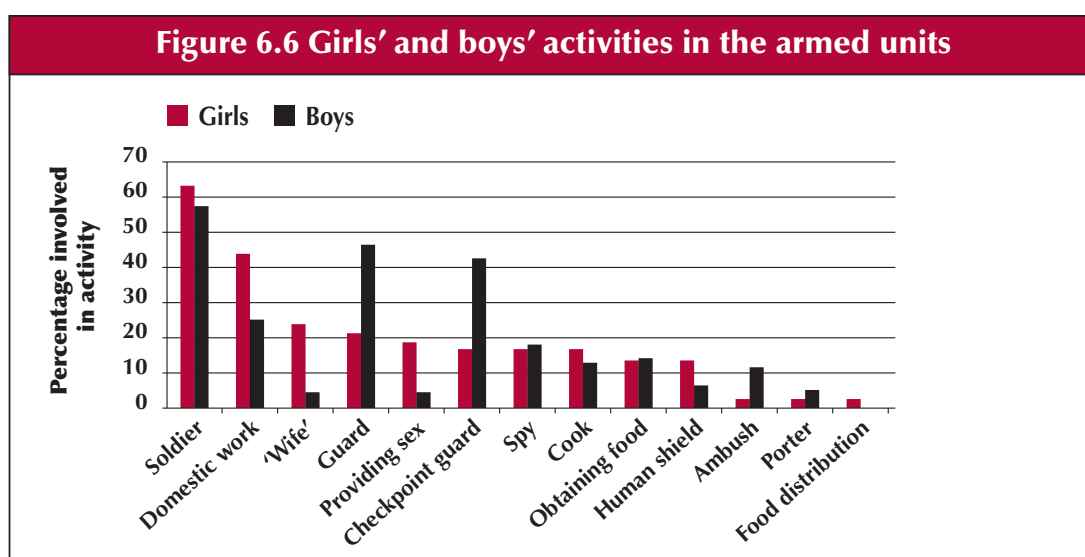
In Guinea, by contrast, the national army supported the Young Volunteers, who therefore enjoyed superior physical infrastructure. The majority were housed in barracks (71 per cent of interviewees) and most military activity took place in local communities. A small number (16 per cent) camped in the forest, and only a third (34 per cent) ever spent time in remote areas without much infrastructure. It also appears that the general physical infrastructure was professionally run, which meant that Young Volunteers could be deployed for military tasks such as guarding checkpoints, as opposed to fetching water and gathering wood.

Differences in infrastructure also influenced the support tasks requested of young recruits. In Sierra Leone, carrying firearms (72 per cent) and ammunition (69 per cent) from one camp to another were the most common gun-related tasks. In Guinea, trucks—not human labour—transported ammunition to where it was needed.⁴⁷

Gender made remarkably little difference when it came to the assignment of tasks. While armed groups recruited fewer girls,⁴⁸ boys and girls were treated similarly and differences were marked more by country than by gender. The only exception is that more girls undertook domestic work (40 per cent compared with 24 per cent) and fewer girls were employed as guards (22 per cent compared with 47 per cent). However, a higher percentage of girls than

boys claim to have been soldiers⁴⁹ and more girls were spies than were asked to cook. Overall, tasks required of girls were similar to those asked of boys in each country. However, what the limited nature of this study—undertaken primarily with male interviewers during one session only—does not reveal is the full extent of sexual abuse and exploitation usually associated with female CAFF. Although Figure 6.6 does indicate that a significant proportion of former female CAFF were sexually abused, numbers are likely to be far higher.

UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and other NGOs and international organizations have sponsored similar studies that point to the ubiquity of gender-based violence, rape, and sexual slavery of female CAFF. Girl soldiers, in contrast to their male counterparts, are more likely to be forced into relationships with commanders and fellow soldiers, i.e. to become camp wives, and suffer the unintended pregnancies, sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), and other reproductive health problems that are the inevitable consequence of multiple rapes and coerced sex.



Support tasks and access to firearms

The overwhelming majority (91 per cent) of youngsters interviewed claimed that they had access to firearms while they lived with armed units. Most commonly, CAFF had access to AK-47 assault rifles but also reported the presence of other types of assault rifles.⁵⁰ In Sierra Leone, the RUF provided CAFF with AK 47 assault rifles (29), but also G3s (19) and a few M16 rifles (7).⁵¹ In Liberia,

over half of the youth interviewed reported access to both AK-47 type weapons (54) and also Uzi sub-machine guns (23). The latter were scattered among different rebel groups and militias, suggesting considerable internal circulation of firearms between Liberian groups.⁵² Five Uzis were also recorded in Sierra Leone—all within the RUF.

Table 6.4 CAFF access to firearms

	CAFF with access to firearms	Percentage of total CAFF interviewed
Guinea	82	90
Liberia	94	94
Sierra Leone	72	91
<i>Total</i>	<i>248</i>	<i>92</i>

Few CAFF (7 per cent)—and usually only in Sierra Leone—had access to handguns (pistols and revolvers).⁵³ These appear to have been particularly popular among girls (31 per cent of all girls had access to a handgun compared with 11 per cent of boys), which may be a reflection of both differences in physical strength and the need for personal protection. ‘I was given light firearms as it was easier for me to carry them’,⁵⁴ explained a 13-year-old girl who had been abducted by the RUF at the age of seven. A particularly high proportion of girls also described feelings of insecurity over fears of attacks and sexual assaults from group members: handguns may have provided personal protection from unwanted advances.⁵⁵ In Guinea, the use of handguns—both pistols and revolvers—also distinguished adults from children. Among most armed forces, handguns are status symbols reserved for the use of senior members: foot soldiers carry assault rifles. This also appears to have been the case among Sierra Leonean armed groups, where only 16 CAFF reported having access to handguns.

The majority of children interviewed (90 per cent) reported that adults and children had access to different types of weapons.⁵⁶ It seems that heavier weaponry remained predominantly, if not exclusively, in the hands of adults. According to interviewees, access to light machine guns and RPGs was reserved for adults.⁵⁷ No child reported using man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), although ten children from Liberia and Sierra Leone said that their groups did possess these.⁵⁸ The use of RPGs by children was likewise

rare (5 out of 270) and was reported only in Liberia (4) and Sierra Leone (1). Only one child from Liberia reported using mortars.⁵⁹

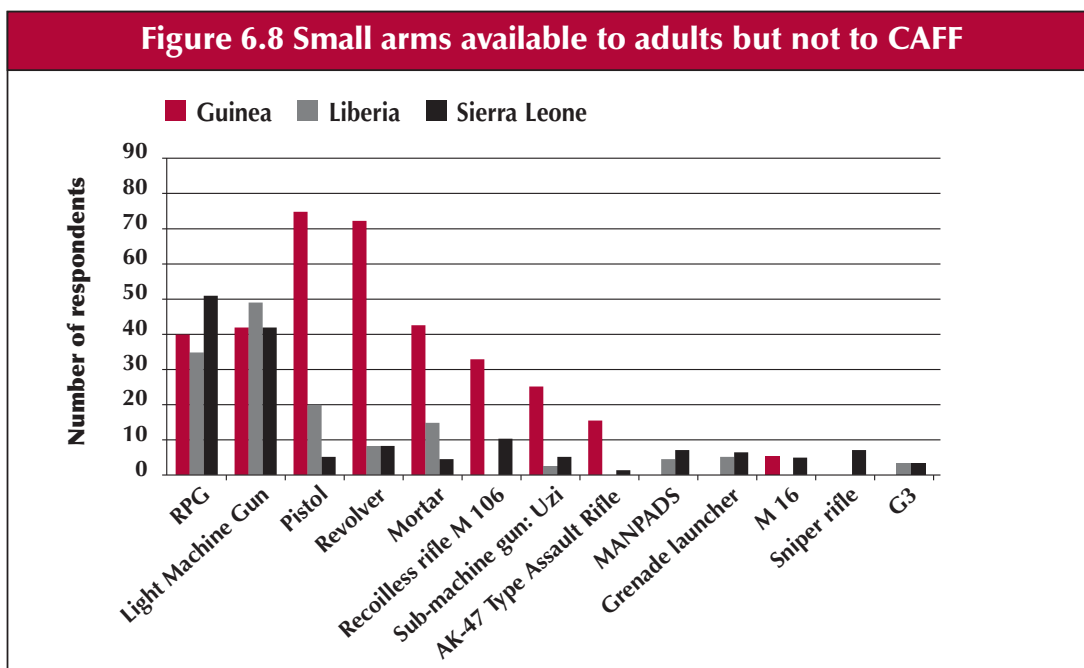
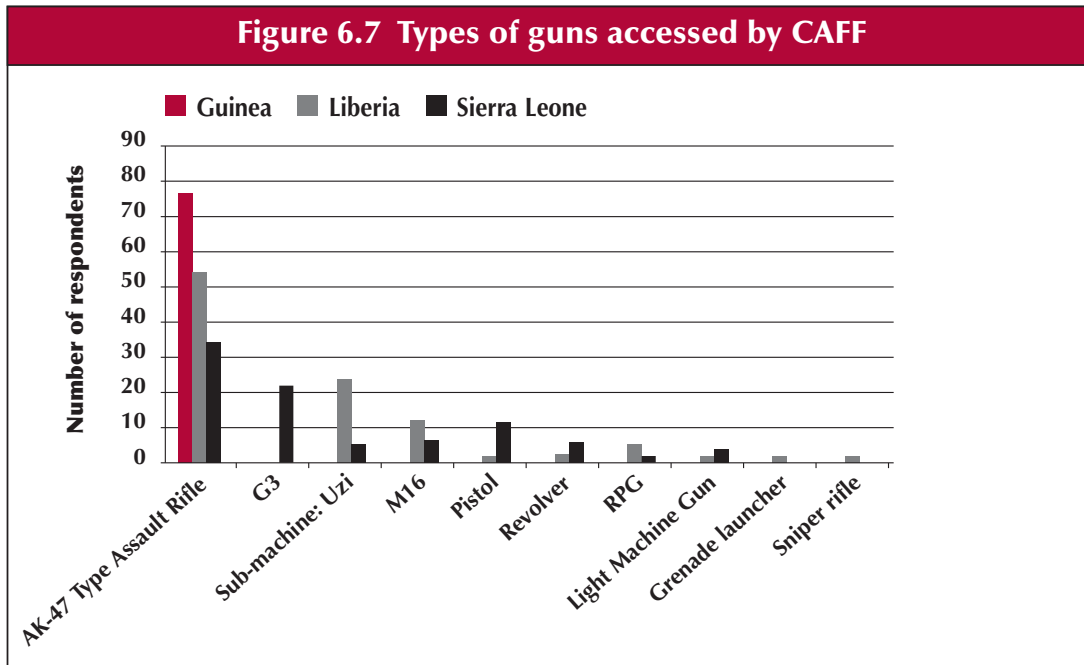
Interviewees clearly indicate that most armed groups had sufficient supplies of small arms, and assault rifles in particular. One reported: 'Arms and ammunition were always available. We were never out of them.'⁶⁰ Weapons sources varied. In Liberia, CAFF told interviewers that arms were delivered at night by helicopters and trucks. They also reported receiving brand-new weapons, some of which were still in sealed boxes.⁶¹ In Sierra Leone, children associated with the RUF described how some weapons were traded through intermediaries who smuggled arms through the forest. Many weapons and ammunition available to the RUF, however, were seized from enemies or other groups' storage facilities, or by ambushing vehicles. Young Volunteers in Guinea had very little knowledge of where weapons and ammunition came from. They were simply there.

Twenty-two respondents said that they did not have access to small arms. A slightly higher proportion of girls than boys were denied access to firearms.⁶² The most significant factor in Sierra Leone and Liberia, however, appeared to be age. Boys who were denied weapons were recruited at a much younger age than the average (9 years compared with the average of 13 years). This suggests that priority was given to more mature, physically stronger, members. No such pattern was visible in Guinea, however.

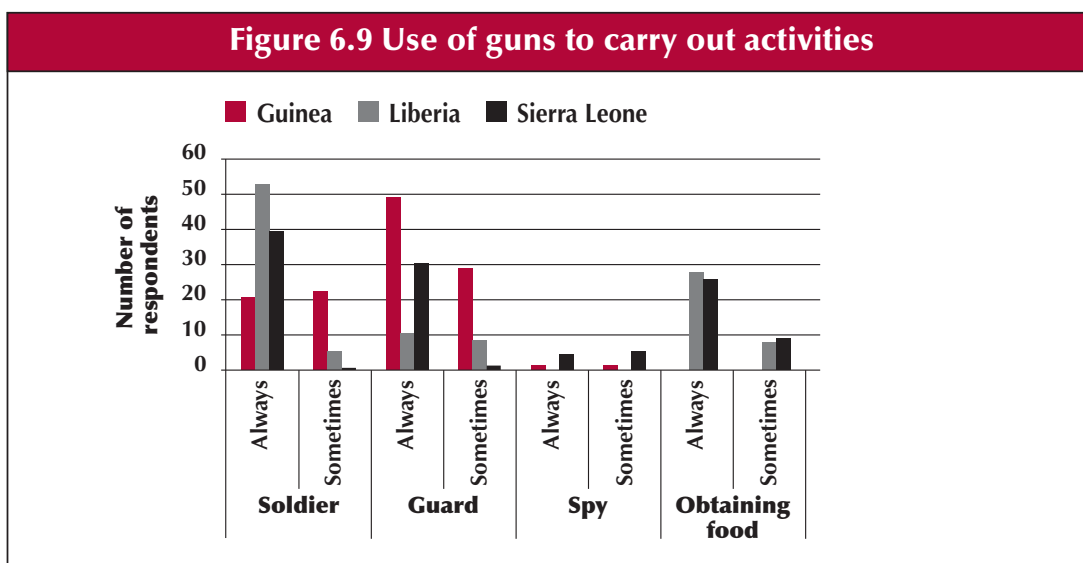
The availability of arms and ammunition is vital to any armed unit, and shortages affect the way groups procure and manage their weapons. The scarcer the ammunition, the more careful the leadership tends to be when granting access to arms. CAFF are generally perceived as more likely to waste ammunition and to make less effective use of their weapons than experienced adult fighters. Several accounts suggest that, in armed units with limited ammunition supply, ammunition is given only to the best fighters and only for very specific missions.

The widespread availability of weapons and ammunition in the MRU helps explain why armed groups there could afford to enlist large numbers of children without jeopardizing their effectiveness. Available evidence, moreover, indicates a strong reliance on foreign sources—despite the UN Security Council arms embargo and the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Import, Export and

Manufacture of Light arms.⁶³ Rebels in Mali, by contrast, who lacked financial resources and foreign backing, relied mainly on weapons seized during combat or looted from state armouries, as well as on small-scale trafficking (Small Arms Survey, forthcoming).⁶⁴ The shortage in weapons and ammunition supply may partly explain why rebels there did not recruit children, while in the MRU all parties to the conflicts did.⁶⁵



CAFF did not use firearms for all activities—nor did access to a gun mean that they kept their personal firearm with them at all times. Firearms were frequently used for soldiering, guarding and obtaining food but rarely for spying (Figure 6.9). Some CAFF were provided weapons for specific purposes and a predetermined period of time (e.g. shifts), while others had more permanent access.



Note: The information provided by children interviewed was classified according to whether they ‘always,’ ‘sometimes,’ or ‘never’ used a firearm to carry out the activities that they reported to be involved in. For visual clarity, however, only positive answers—i.e. ‘always’ and ‘sometimes’—are reported in this figure.

Children’s experiences in combat

Combat strategies and children

Among the majority of children (58 per cent) who claimed to have been a ‘soldier’, only 75 per cent used firearms. In Guinea, the proportion of CAFF who did not use small arms for soldiering was more than half (53 per cent).⁶⁶ This suggests that the military functions of children differed depending on the particular support needs of the armed group. Interviews showed that tasks varied according to whether CAFF were involved in defending or taking territory. CAFF sometimes provided psychological support to adults during combat operations. In Sierra Leone they took part in reconnaissance missions. In Liberia and Sierra Leone ‘soldiering’ included obtaining supplies—usually by force—and activities that would be classified as war crimes.

In Guinea, the primary military objective was to defend border communities. Consequently, the largest proportion of children acted as guards and manned checkpoints. Less than half of the children interviewed actually took part in combat, probably owing to the fact that self-defence was more important than reclaiming territory. Young Volunteers were integrated into civil defence units that patrolled the streets at night near the Sierra Leonean and Liberian borders where rebels often entered. 'We were organized in surveillance groups. When we heard that there had been an attack, we went out and blocked the road.'⁶⁷ Children also took part in ambushes of rebel groups that had entered Guinea and other offensives. As one Young Volunteer explained, 'the rebels entered during the night but they did not know the area. They found themselves in the middle of two battalions that ambushed them. It is not easy to tell what happened. Some were killed, others were captured and others found their way into the forest and disappeared.'⁶⁸ 'During the second attack, we encircled the rebels and many were captured and transported to the camp.'⁶⁹

According to a few accounts from Guinea, Young Volunteers also participated in recapturing border territory that had been occupied by rebels. There are some accounts of territorial advances into Liberia. Nevertheless, narratives are in most cases less detailed and tend to focus on deaths and injuries rather than on the particular duties of children during the offensive. The following account is quite typical of the way they reported their experiences: 'I fought to Freeport, Vai Town, and Gardensville for two weeks. I received a minor injury close to my eye.'⁷⁰

Judging from the different weapons available to adults and children, one can extrapolate regarding the real role of children, at least in Liberia. According to observers, both rebels and government forces in Liberia relied extensively on light weapons—as combat would usually begin with RPG shelling followed by small arms fire (Brabazon, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, adults with access to the greater firepower of RPGs and light machine guns were in control of more strategic positions and were responsible for initiating combat. They were responsible for the main round of firing, while younger recruits equipped with assault rifles advanced towards the enemy lines.⁷¹ Such a strategy is supported by a Liberian child's account: 'It takes courage to go to the front, especially when the enemy is well equipped. Our friends continued to be killed but you have to keep moving. There was a common saying among

young fighters, which was “man moving, man dropping”: whatever happens to your friends, keep moving.’^{72,73}

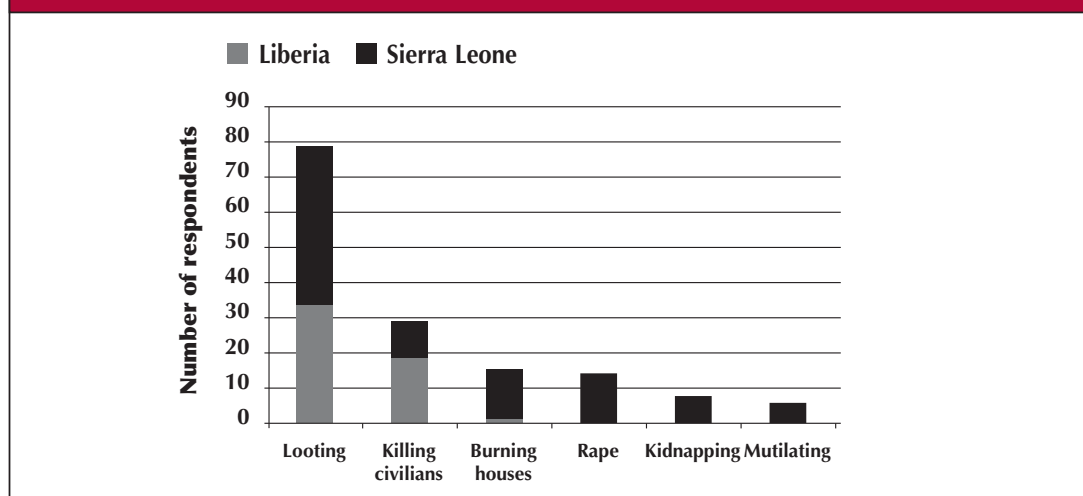
The important role played by adult leaders is evident when children talk about their memories of specific battles. A Guinean child said: ‘We came from Yomburo to support our friends from the urban commune. Thanks to the strategies of our commander and other officers we liberated Yéndé Millou.’⁷⁴ A Liberian youngster reported: ‘In Tappita, MODEL attacked us from Grnad Gedeh. The President came to supervise us and because of his presence we were very happy and we fought until I killed one of their generals called Bad Blood. I was wounded in the process.’^{75,76}

There are also several accounts from Sierra Leone of children being sent to the front line—but these suggest that children performed a psychological rather than a military function: ‘Some believed it confused the enemy to see a child in the frontline because some adults hesitated firing on a child. This gives the child time to kill the enemy adult.’⁷⁷ More typical is the following: ‘Children have luck and the one who has a child with him can succeed in anything. This is why adults decided to recruit children for the frontline.’⁷⁸ Many (more than 25 per cent of all MRU respondents) children had undergone traditional rites that supposedly protected them from bullets. Nearly half of all Sierra Leonean respondents had undergone such rituals. Others simply argued that children gave adults confidence.⁷⁹ A quarter of all CAFF interviewed in Sierra Leone said that children had been used as human shields. This was reported only once in Liberia, and not at all in Guinea.

Surprisingly, the links between CAFF activities and armed group objectives are not always evident. Observers argue that the RUF’s main purpose in Sierra Leone was to maintain control over the diamond mines (UNSC, 2000, para. 23). However, not a single respondent reported any event that could be directly related to this objective.⁸⁰ Most of the children (51 per cent) interviewed in Sierra Leone were engaged as spies. They were employed to locate ‘enemy’ positions and to familiarize themselves with the layout and particularities of towns and villages prior to attacks. Respondents believed it was difficult for government troops to identify children as spies. Girls, commonly called ‘sweet sixteen’, entered into relationships with government soldiers and were tasked with evaluating the strength of military camps.

For some CAFF in Liberia, and the majority of those interviewed in Sierra Leone, the term ‘soldier’ was related less to military confrontation than to targeted operations such as ambushing vehicles, killing civilians and captured enemies, as well as to looting.⁸¹ A considerable proportion of interviewees from Sierra Leone and Liberia admitted having been involved in looting (56 per cent in Sierra Leone), killing civilians (17 per cent in Liberia), burning houses (19 per cent in Sierra Leone), raping (18 per cent in Sierra Leone), and kidnapping (10 per cent in Sierra Leone). Not a single Young Volunteer admitted to having taken part in any atrocities or looting.⁸²

Figure 6.10 Liberia and Sierra Leone: CAFF infringing on human security



Substance abuse appears to have fuelled atrocities in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Most CAFF (89 per cent) admitted taking drugs while living with the RUF. Sixty-five per cent confirmed that their own commanders had supplied them. In Liberia, nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of all CAFF interviewed echoed the statements of counterparts in Sierra Leone. Interviewees themselves explained why: ‘Children are easily controlled and very brave when given drugs. Has no second thoughts and can always perform.’⁸³ ‘They readily commit crimes.’⁸⁴ Marijuana appears most common, but cocaine and gunpowder mixed with other drugs and ‘tablets’ were also mentioned in Liberia. In Sierra Leone children also consumed a drug called ‘brown brown’ (a mixture of cocaine and gunpowder or crack cocaine) or ‘blue boat’. Heroin and

opium were very rarely mentioned. In Guinea, children reported using alcohol (mainly palm wine), but no other drugs. Commanders did not supply the wine.⁸⁵

Controlling firearms and children in fighting forces

Comparisons between weapon control procedures in the three countries revealed considerable differences in group internal structure. In Guinea, self-defence committees were comparatively well structured, and functioned on the basis of a hierarchy and set rules. In Sierra Leone, individuals within the RUF, rather than a clear organizational hierarchy, controlled CAFF. In Liberia, accounts reveal limited control and high levels of anarchy.

These varying structures affected access to small arms. Guinean CAFF were generally handed firearms for guard duty but had to return them afterwards. The majority (85 per cent) of children interviewed reported that Guinean officers strictly guarded and controlled weapons and ammunition stockpiles, and rarely made them available to children (Figure 6.11).⁸⁶ Only those who went on combat missions were given ammunition.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Young Volunteers reported that they fired only when ordered to and were supervised by adults at all times. Only one child reported shooting during an internal dispute; and there were no accounts of shooting games—which children from Liberia and Sierra Leone did report. Eighty-five per cent of Young Volunteers said that they maintained their own firearms.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, firearms were distributed for self-defence, but also for personal use and even looting. No clear pattern emerges, however, of consistent stockpile procedures—which suggests that organizational structure varied at the sub-unit level and thus depended on individuals and context rather than culture and group-specific procedures. This is illustrated by seemingly contradictory accounts within Liberia's ATU: 'ATU's stockpiles were manned by the S4 Section of the Unit. No unauthorized person was allowed anywhere near it.'⁸⁸ 'Stockpile management existed but arms were not controlled. Indeed, some individuals received more than one firearm.'⁸⁹ Interviews indicate that the RUF consisted of loosely aligned sub-groups that differed considerably in their internal structures. Many CAFF mentioned their sub-groups by name—thus highlighting the extent to which each unit

boasted its own identity and characteristics rather than identify itself as part of a unified RUF structure.⁹⁰

Some groups were well guarded and prepared: 'Our group was well organized. They only attacked at night. The camp was situated close to the river and surrounded by armed men so that no one could leave. Our camp was never attacked.'⁹¹ 'Our group had a well-structured command. The Small Boys Unit always guarded the camp and no one left the camp without the knowledge of the commander.'⁹² Other CAFF describe unstructured and unorganized groups: 'The group that captured me was not really an organized group because they lacked a command structure, especially when everyone had taken drugs.'⁹³

CAFF also reported enormous variations in unit size: according to some respondents some groups were made up of as many as 1,000 members,⁹⁴ while still others described their group as 'very small'.⁹⁵ Command structures appeared to be based on the personality of commanders, and varied depending on the extent of internal strife and clashes between individual leaders. One child reported: 'The group was too large and there were four commanders and each commander had his own group.'⁹⁶ Several CAFF described conflicts between 'too many commanders' as one of the defining characteristics of their group.⁹⁷ A third of Sierra Leonean CAFF reported disputes and having shot at members of their own group, incidents that were reported by only 1 per cent of all respondents in Liberia and Guinea combined.

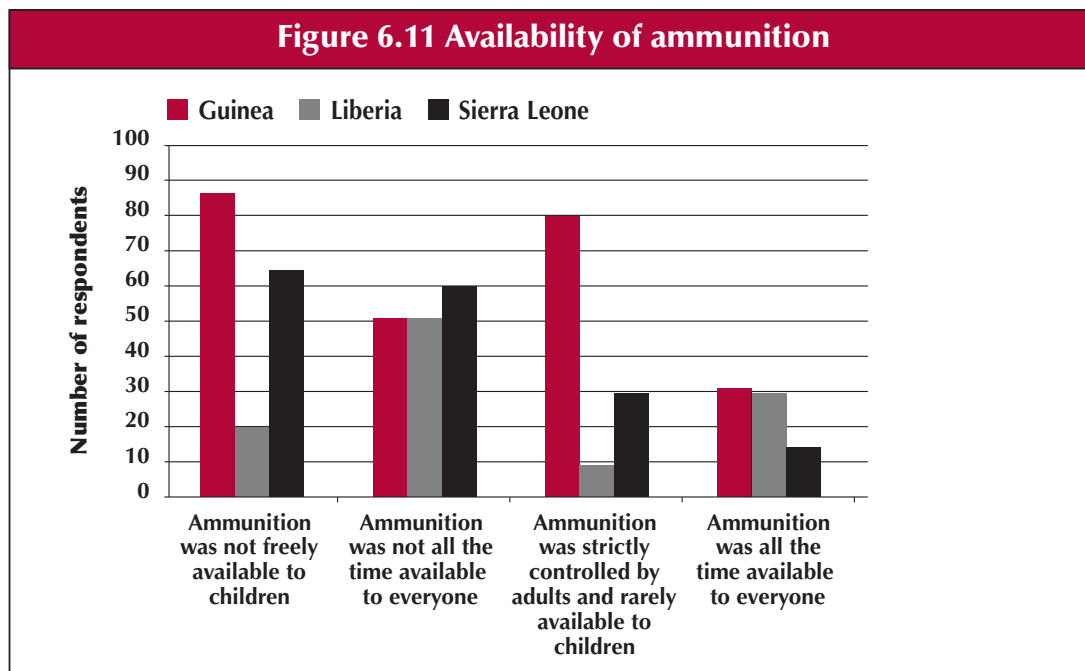
The various units of the RUF appeared to have used many CAFF as personal support for individual adults. The majority of children in Sierra Leone (70 per cent) were tasked with carrying firearms for their superiors, which was not the case in Guinea. This also meant that adults controlled children's access to small arms; only a third of respondents from Sierra Leone were allowed to maintain their own firearms.⁹⁸

The structure of CDF units in Sierra Leone also appears to have been heterogeneous. In one village, the local armed civil defence force comprised a rather small group of perhaps 30 soldiers, and belonged to the broader chiefdom level civil defence group of 1,000 people.⁹⁹ Other accounts showed that some units included up to 250 soldiers per camp. These appeared to be well run and guarded at night; food and medicine were provided and 'one could hardly hear a gun shot'.¹⁰⁰



Robert Jack, 13, child soldier for deposed Liberian president Charles Taylor poses before surrendering his AK-47 assault rifle during the first day of the disarmament programme, 7 December 2003.

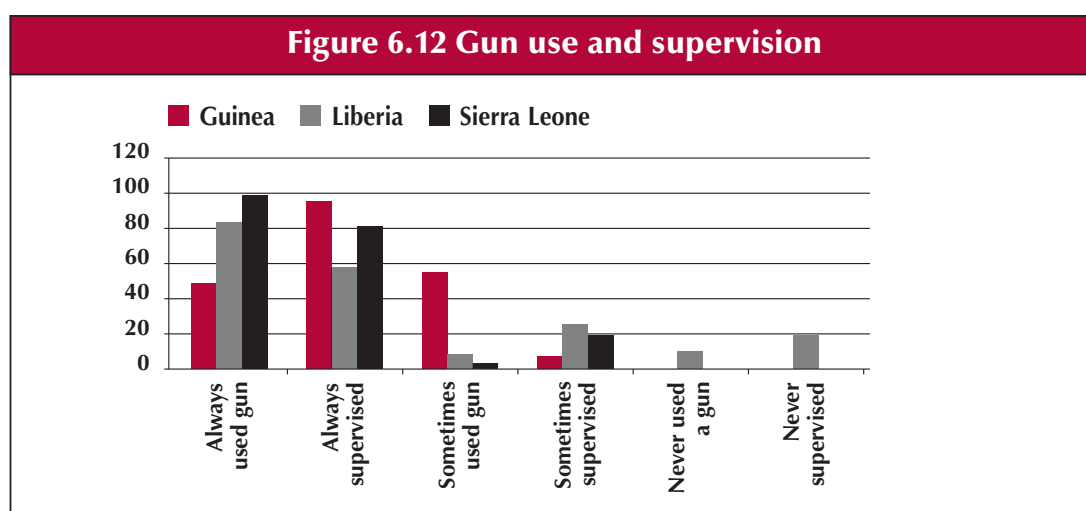
The survey suggests that organizational structure and behavioural patterns also varied within Liberian rebel groups. During the takeover of Monrovia between July and August 2003, observers claimed that LURD appeared better organized than MODEL, and that fewer LURD soldiers were drunk or on drugs and committed less looting and fewer atrocities against civilians (Itano, 2003). The 35 LURD-affiliated CAFF interviewed in this study did not entirely confirm this assessment but did reveal considerable differences in the ways sub-groups operated. Some said that 'LURD was better than other forces because it had discipline'.¹⁰¹ Others said that 'the group lacked control over its own fighters'.¹⁰² There were also varying accounts regarding troop behaviour. According to some, LURD 'was ruthless to civilians and sometimes to its own soldiers',¹⁰³ while others said that this group did not loot and kill, except in crossfire.¹⁰⁴ Reports of looting are frequent among LURD respondents (over 37 per cent),¹⁰⁵ and over half (54 per cent) admitted taking drugs. Weapon stockpile control was marginally stricter and more organized than among other Liberian groups, but adult supervision of armed CAFF was more lax (31 per cent compared with 56 per cent).¹⁰⁶



There is also evidence to suggest that rules that governed armed groups changed depending on the circumstances. 'Only senior commanders could

distribute arms and ammunition. However, changes occurred when the camp was under attack. At this point, everyone was permitted adequate ammunition to defend the camp from the capturers.¹⁰⁷ CAFF in Liberia and Sierra Leone thus found themselves in a rather unpredictable environment. This seems to explain why nearly all children in these countries reported having been punished at some point (95 in Liberia and 74 in Sierra Leone).¹⁰⁸ In Guinea, by contrast, rules were much clearer and only 28 per cent of respondents said they had ever been taken to task.

Adult supervision of armed CAFF in Liberia was looser than in Sierra Leone and Guinea. A particularly high proportion of Liberian children reported using guns for soldiering activities (82 per cent) but adults supervised just over half. A quarter of Liberian CAFF confirmed that they were sometimes supervised and a fifth said that they were never supervised when ‘soldiering with a gun’. In Guinea, by contrast, over 90 per cent maintained they were supervised when they were ‘a soldier’ and less than half provided with a firearm.



Conclusion

This chapter has shown the circumstances under which CAFF will volunteer to join armed groups and established that their motivations vary. In Guinea, Young Volunteers were incorporated into a hierarchical military environment and felt that they contributed to an important national effort. In Liberia, in contrast, children were attracted by the possibility of using firearms to loot

and exercise power. From the perspective of armed groups, recruiting children enabled adults to build upon their own power bases and to press-gang young workers for the express purpose of undertaking tasks they did not want to do themselves. Among less-endowed groups, enlisting children to take over unpleasant chores associated with running a camp made a certain amount of sense. Furthermore, as long as violence and hardship continued to cause high mortality rates, so too did commanders feel the necessity to fill out their ranks with youngsters. The demographics of young West African societies, moreover, ensured a plentiful supply of CAFF.

Prevention strategies will need to focus on potential volunteers but should also seek to reduce the pool of potential recruiters. However, successful strategies will require an understanding of the circumstances and mechanisms that lead to child recruitment. Campaigns that seek to increase awareness of the risks and dangers associated with joining armed groups will need to take into account the extent to which children are interested in taking advantage of material benefits or long-term job opportunities within a hierarchical structure. It also needs to be borne in mind that, at least in this sample, 'volunteers' constituted a minority of all CAFF interviewed.

Engaging armed groups will be more difficult. The motivations behind recruiting children during periods of conflict will be particularly difficult to undercut. A programme that targets potential recruiters before the process begins, therefore, has a greater chance of success. Many potential recruiters are former CAFF who are already familiar with the functioning of the group.¹⁰⁹ In this context, DDR programmes aimed at former CAFF are crucial owing to the fact that child participants already possess the experience and expertise necessary to eventually run their own groups.

Demobilizing CAFF requires an appropriate understanding of the internal structure of armed groups. If children are offered opportunities for advancement, or conversely, enrichment, this too will affect motivations either to join or to stay with an armed group once recruited. In Guinea, demobilizing Young Volunteers should be undertaken in cooperation with, and with the institutional support of, the national armed forces.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, it will be necessary to effectively break up relationships between former commanders and their young charges. Because

command structures were so highly personalized, it is likely that power relations between adults and CAFF continued well beyond the official end of hostilities. It will also be crucial to change CAFF attitudes. Access to firearms endowed many with a sense of power and independence that they will be reluctant to abandon—especially in view of the trauma they suffered during the war.

Finally, reducing and controlling small arms flows should be an essential component of both prevention and demobilization—more than 90 per cent of CAFF interviewed had access to firearms at some point in time. This chapter argues that armed groups would be less inclined to recruit CAFF should weapons—and in particular assault rifles—be less readily accessible. The proliferation and easy availability of small arms needs to be halted—if only for the sake of future generations who risk both their innocence and their very lives.

List of abbreviations

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
ATU	Anti-Terrorism Unit
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CEDE 24	Centre for Democratic Empowerment
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reconstruction
IDP	Internally displaced person
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MANPADS	Man-portable air defence system
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MRU	Mano River Union
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SBU	Small Boys Unit
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone

SGU	Small Girls Unit
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SSS	Special Security Services
STI	Sexually transmitted disease
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy

Endnotes

- 1 See Part II of this report.
- 2 'One consequence of the availability of small arms and light weapons and their subsequent use in conflicts around the world is the unconscionable use of CAFF' (UNICEF, 2001).
- 3 CAFF in this chapter are understood to include 'any person under 18 years of age who is part of the any kind of regular or irregular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups other than as purely family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriages. Is does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms' (UNICEF, 1997).
- 4 See Appendix 6.1. The three research teams pre-tested the interview reporting forms with five children each in July 2004. The reporting form was then improved and finalized at a methodology workshop in Bamako on 30–31 August 2004, in which six field researchers (two from each country) as well as three Small Arms Survey research staff participated. The reporting form allows for multiple answers and thus seeks to capture the complexity of the experience rather than forcing life stories into mutually exclusive categories. The form also allows the interviewers to note down the children's personal stories in short narrative boxes to illustrate the quantitative patterns identified.
- 5 'Ak-47 models' refers to all types of assault rifles similar in shape to the Russian-made Kalashnikov, including the Czech Model 26 as well as the weapon's Egyptian and Chinese versions.
- 6 'Despite the backing of 1,200 Nigerian troops and 300 Guineans, efforts by government forces to contain the insurgents fail for lack of equipment, pay and political support. Anti-Taylor Liberians in Sierra Leone and Guinea offer their military support to the Sierra Leone government and form the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia, ULIMO. Guinea reportedly begins secretly training ULIMO fighters. ULIMO advances into the diamond mining and timber areas of eastern Sierra Leone and western Liberia' (*Accord*, 2000).
- 7 See 'Liberia' in Part II.
- 8 See also Table 4.3.
- 9 See Chapter 5 of this book. The percentage of Young Volunteers recruited under the age of

- 18 remains unclear.
- 10 Other groups included ULIMO and the Sierra Leonean Donso. Two respondents did not specify the particular rebel group to which they were affiliated but said that it had been a rebel group.
- 11 Two had been with the SSS.
- 12 Interview 205.
- 13 Interview 215.
- 14 The then 14-year-old boy attached himself to the rebel group at the time when the entire population of his village was leaving in the aftermath of an attack, unaware that he was joining rebels rather than a group of refugees. Interview 202.
- 15 Interview 131.
- 16 Interview 145.
- 17 Interviews 164, 178, 179, and 195.
- 18 Interview 178.
- 19 Interview 195.
- 20 Interviews 148, 122, 126, 147, 159, and 160.
- 21 Interview 110.
- 22 Interview 107.
- 23 Of all interviewed CAFF, 17 per cent said that they had been influenced by peer pressure, and 26 per cent of those did not mention force in the recruitment process.
- 24 ATU. Interview number 105.
- 25 Interview 118.
- 26 Interview 125.
- 27 Of the 17 CAFF who described peer pressure as important factors, five had joined LURD, three unspecified militias, one MODEL, one the SBU, one the ATU, one the SSS, and one the Jungle Lions.
- 28 It is assumed that when the decision was neither explicitly voluntary (Question 9, answer b) nor forced (Question 9, answer n or o) it was difficult to describe the recruitment process as voluntary even though no force was used.
- 29 Interview 102.
- 30 Interview 134.
- 31 The respondent said that he had been with both the Gebethis militia and the RUF. It is not clear from the interview which group his brother belonged to that motivated the 11-year-old to join too. However, it is likely that the experience refers to the Gbethis militia rather than the RUF.
- 32 Interview 38.

- 33 Interview 49.
- 34 For more information on the background to mobilization in Guinea, see Chapter 5 of this book, which documents Guinean President Lansana Conté's September 2000 call for mobilization against insurgent attacks.
- 35 Of those 14 who mentioned revenge or protection as a motivating factor, six joined LURD, one MODEL, two the ATU, one the SSS, two the Jungle Lions, and two government militias.
- 36 Interview 244.
- 37 Interview 257.
- 38 In the European Union in 2002, under 15-year-olds accounted for 16.7 per cent of the population, according to Eurostat (2004, p. 8).
- 39 Interview 137.
- 40 Interview 224.
- 41 Interview 73.
- 42 There are enormous uncertainties in estimating the numbers of conflict deaths, and these figures can suggest only a possible magnitude rather than hard facts. According to databases which monitor press reports on fatalities, some 3,500 people in Liberia and over 13,000 in Sierra Leone died from the effects of direct violence during the conflicts. If the heightened mortality rate in the population of 2.8–3 deaths per 1,000 per month is anything to go by, Liberia might have experienced a population loss of 50,000 and Sierra Leone of 75,000 in each year of the conflict.
- 43 Interview 112.
- 44 Interview 222.
- 45 Interview 104.
- 46 HRW (2004, p. 25) found in Liberia that those children associated with LURD and MODEL relied solely on stealing to survive because they were not paid. However, the report does not indicate whether they received any food from armed groups.
- 47 'When we left for combat we had a truck for ammunition and one for firearms which followed' (Interview 6). 'We had a military on the terrain who noted the needs and informed the camp' (Interview 4).
- 48 Just over 80 per cent of interviewed children were male. As the sample is not representative, it may not reflect the actual proportion of girls within armed units. However, there can be little doubt that there are fewer girls than boys.
- 49 It is possible that girls exaggerated their combat experience in the interviews in the hope that this would entitle them to more benefits from DDR processes. However, the fact that the pattern is similar across all three countries despite quite different DDR processes makes such bias less likely.

- 50 Of the 270 CAFF, 165 (61 per cent) reported having access to an AK-47 type assault rifle. In Guinea, with the exception of five children, all CAFF had access only to AK-47 models. Identification of firearms was carried out by using the silhouette attached to the annex. From the picture it is not possible to determine whether CAFF were given access to a Kalashnikov or any other AK-47 type assault rifle produced elsewhere, such as Czech Model 26, whether the Egyptian or the Chinese version.
- 51 Of the 65 CAFF, 13 reported having access to more than one type. Most (nine) had access to just two different types, some (three) to three, and one to four different types.
- 52 Five children in LURD, five children in MODEL, two in the RUF, two in ATU, one in SSS, one in ULIMO, and six in unspecified government militia or 'government troop' stated that they had an UZI. One child with an UZI did not specify the group.
- 53 No young person in Guinea reported access to handguns and only three in Liberia did so.
- 54 Interview 215.
- 55 Interview 255.
- 56 All respondents in Sierra Leone and Guinea said there was a difference. However, four respondents in Guinea and five in Sierra Leone did not respond. In Liberia, by contrast, 16 persons said that there was no difference between the weapons to which adults and CAFF had access.
- 57 About half (126) of the interviewed CAFF stated that adults had access to RPGs, as compared with only five children (four in Liberia and one in Sierra Leone) who reported having used RPGs. The picture for light machine guns is similar, except that two of the three children who used light machine guns came from Sierra Leone. CAFF rarely mentioned assault rifles as the weapon type in the hands of adults; this likely reflects respondents' desire to stress weapon types to which they did not have access rather than an actual absence of assault rifles in the hands of adults.
- 58 Six children in Sierra Leone reported that adults in their group had access to MANPADS. Five were associated with the RUF. In Liberia, four children reported that adults had access to MANPADS. One was associated with LURD, three others with government militias. No interviewed child from Guinea reported MANPADS.
- 59 Of the four children who reported the use of RPGs, two were associated with LURD, one with the ATU, and one with the Jungle Lions. Given the total sample of 270 interviewed children, it seems reasonable to assume that the operation of RPGs and mortars by children was the exception rather than the norm. Children were reportedly seen by eyewitnesses to have operated RPGs during the 2003 LURD attack on Gbarnga (Watch List, 2004, p. 28). HRW (2004, p. 26) claimed that children 'typically received limited training in operating automatic weapons,

mortars and rocket propelled grenades'. Children interviewed in this study confirmed that they received very little training.

60 Interview 101.

61 Interview 110.

62 Only five of the 22 children who were not given a firearm were girls. Of the boys, 8 per cent were not handed a firearms compared with 12 per cent of girls.

63 Three reports of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia (UNSC, 2001; 2002a; 2000b) confirmed systematic flouting of the UN arms embargo on Liberia and the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium. Global Witness (2003) provided further evidence of frequent arms shipments to Liberia occurring at least two or three times a month.

64 Also see Chapter 2 on Mali and Part II of this study for details on weapons transfers.

65 This study did not seek to further explore this hypothesis, although more research on this link would be worthwhile.

66 This compares with 17 per cent in Liberia and 5 per cent in Sierra Leone of all CAFF who said that they were soldiers but did not always use a gun to be a soldier.

67 Interview 34.

68 Interview 70.

69 Interview 66.

70 Interview 128.

71 The use of children in the front line has been reported by HRW (2004, p. 19), which claimed that children 'were often the first to be sent out to fight occupying dangerous, forward positions'. The information gathered in this study supports the general conclusion that children equipped with assault rifles played an important combat role by advancing towards the enemy.

72 Interview 144.

73 The assumption is further supported by interviews carried out by HRW (2004, p. 21): 'You would be sent to the front first. You go and get killed and then the next one takes your place, it never ended.'

74 Interview 89.

75 Interview 109.

76 Other reports suggest that the highest-ranking officers stayed well clear of the fiercest fighting. Journalists reported from Monrovia that streets were deserted and that soldiers 'would occasionally run out to the entrance of a bridge and shot widely for a few seconds before running back to hide behind a wall . . . Sometimes the commanding officer would force his men onto the bridge by threatening them with his pistol' (Itano, 2003, p. 6).

- 77 Interview 114.
- 78 Interview 129.
- 79 Interview 111.
- 80 The questionnaire did not specifically ask children about this. However, it is still striking that not a single child mentioned diamonds or mines in any of the narratives.
- 81 It is unclear whether this ranking reflects the reality or simply the fact that these particular acts were highly traumatizing and therefore more likely to be remembered and reported by CAFF.
- 82 There are reports that both the army and rebels in Guinea committed atrocities but this is not reflected in the reports of the Young Volunteers.
- 83 Interview 244.
- 84 Interview 256.
- 85 Over half of all Guinean children interviewed said that people had to obtain their own drugs. Only two mentioned commanders as the source of drugs.
- 86 Interview 6.
- 87 Interview 41.
- 88 Interview 105.
- 89 Interview 109.
- 90 Nineteen groups were mentioned by name. There were: Blow-up-Boys (Interview 203), Born Naked (204 and 266), Night Combat (205), Wonders Boys (206), Scorpion (201), Rogged (202) Demba Squad (207), Black December (208), Hungry Lion (209), Kill Man no Blood (210 and 217), Bullet (211), Snake (218 and 221), Cobra Squad (219), Tiger Boys (224), Blazens (226), Tanks & Armour (234), Death Squad (235), Lion (265), Jungle Lions (269).
- 91 Interview 227.
- 92 Interview 223.
- 93 Interview 220.
- 94 Interview 231.
- 95 Interview 232.
- 96 Interview 238.
- 97 Interviews 251, 252, and 254.
- 98 The interviews carried out by HRW (2004) in Liberia also suggest that such personal structures existed within several groups active in LURD in Liberia. However, the number of children interviewed from each group was too small to allow conclusions to be drawn on typical group structures.
- 99 Interview 244.
- 100 Interviews 250 and 239.

101 Interview 125.

102 Interview 104.

103 Interview 148.

104 Interview 142.

105 This is higher than the average for all children interviewed from Liberia.

106 The conclusion that internal structures in LURD were not uniform is supported by the conclusions drawn in the HRW report on Liberia (HRW, 2002), which noted divisions between the Guinean-based political side of the movement and the field-based commanders.

107 Interview 222.

108 For Liberia, this conclusion is supported by the work carried out by HRW, which found that it remained unclear which acts would be tolerated. The report quotes one interviewed child who said that it depended partially on who made the decision as to what punishment would be used and others reported that in some units there were beatings for no apparent reason (2004, p. 21).

109 According to reports, it has been documented elsewhere that many children who fought in the 1989–97 war in Liberia returned to armed groups when fighting resumed in 2003 (Watch List, 2004, p. 30).

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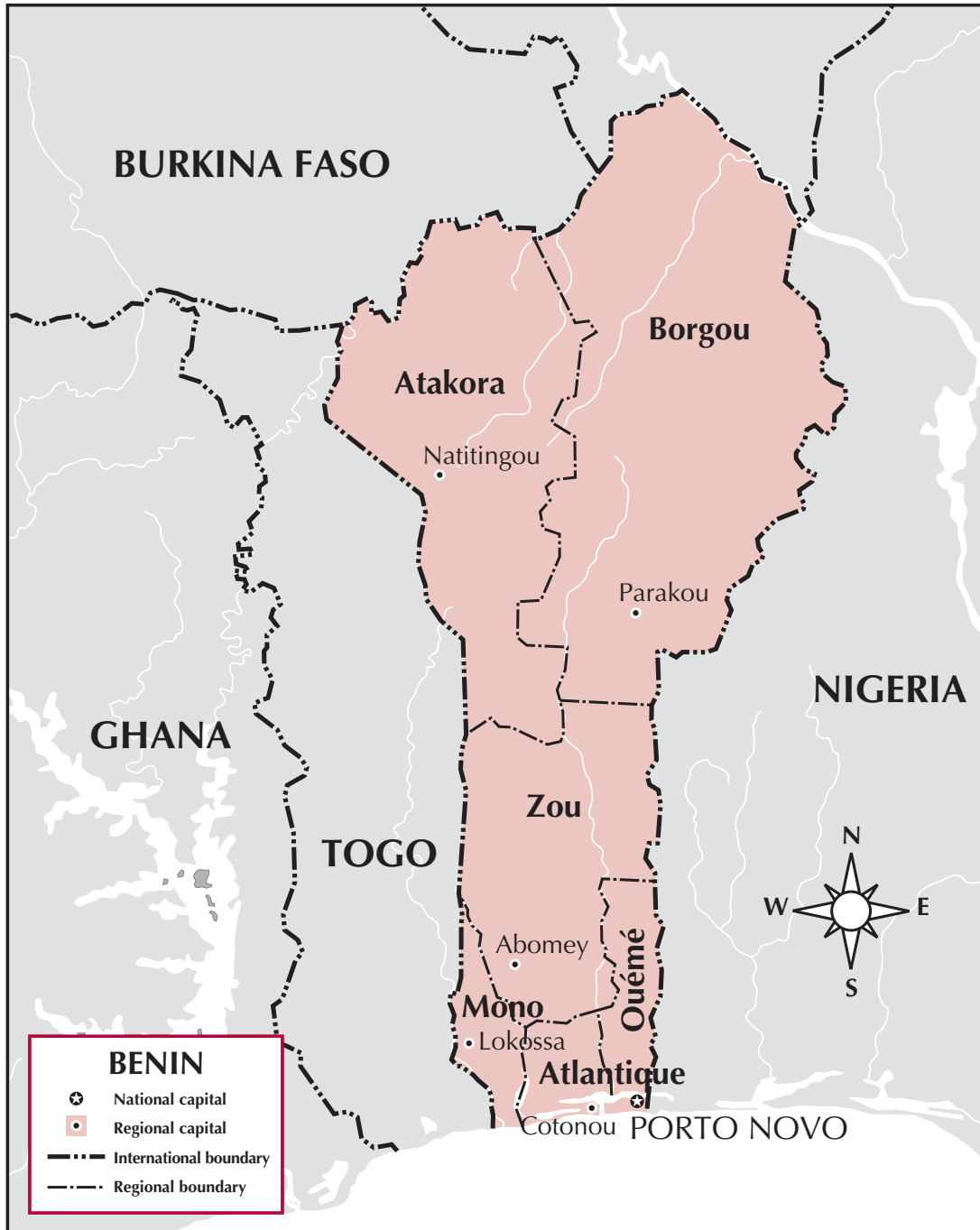
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PART II

ARMED GROUPS AND SMALL ARMS IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES (1998-2004)



BENIN

OVERVIEW

Following a series of post-independence military coups, Major Mathieu Kérékou took power in 1972 and gradually brought Benin to civilian rule. Although defeated in the 1991 elections, he returned to power following peaceful multiparty elections in 1996.¹ Today the country benefits from a political system that has remained open and pluralistic. Future stability, however, is to a large extent dependent on the country's economy, which is faltering and has contributed to rising levels of armed banditry and weapons trafficking.² Kérékou was re-elected in 2001; the next presidential elections are slated for 2006.

OUTLOOK

Unlike other countries in the subregion, Benin presently does not have a serious problem with internal displacement or refugees.³ But small arms-related insecurity is likely to become a growing problem. Throughout 2004, banditry was on the rise, with roadblocks on the highway between

Cotonou and Malanville a major problem. Though daytime travel is relatively safe, every night armed police now escort two convoys up and down the road because the trip has otherwise become simply too dangerous.⁴

Fortunately—for Benin, at least—many of the weapons circulating in the country are not staying there. For example, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reported that in 2002 Benin intercepted a shipment of 1,000 rounds of ammunition on its way from Burkina Faso to Nigeria, and in so doing arrested the leader of a network involved in the trafficking of small arms.⁵ Various press reports suggest, however, that Benin continues to be a transit point for arms and ammunition entering Nigeria.⁶ Indeed, in August 2003, Nigeria unilaterally closed its border with Benin in response to smuggling and armed robbery concerns.⁷ The border was subsequently reopened, but the problem remains.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
IRIN	United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks

ENDNOTES

- BBC News (2004).
- Other reports link the rise in crime to the economic downturn, especially following the 2003 shutdown of the illegal second-hand car trade with Nigeria (IRIN, 2004).
- At the end of 2003, Benin was host to about 5,000 refugees, including more than 1,000 from Togo, 1,000 from the Republic of Congo, nearly 1,000 from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and about 2,000 from other countries (USCR, 2004).
- IRIN (2004).
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BURKINA FASO

Gourmantches, during which 'weapons and machetes' were used.⁶

OVERVIEW

Burkina Faso's post-independence history is filled with military coups. The most recent occurred in 1987 and resulted in the country's current president, Blaise Compaoré, seizing power. Compaoré has since returned the country to civilian rule and introduced multiparty elections, which he has won twice (in 1991 and again in 1998). The country has supported armed groups operating elsewhere on the continent, including Angola,¹ Côte d'Ivoire,² Liberia,³ and Sierra Leone,⁴ but no armed groups are active within Burkina Faso. Diplomatic relations with other neighbours are also strained. Mauritania has accused Burkina Faso of assisting two army officers in a 2003 coup attempt. Burkina Faso stridently denies involvement, but Mauritanian officials remain aggrieved.⁵ Within Burkina Faso, tensions erupt periodically between the cattle-herders and agriculturalists who share the land east of the capital, Ouagadougou. In July 2004, eight people died during clashes between the cattle-herding Fulani and the land-owning

OUTLOOK

Since 1991, the opposition has boycotted or otherwise protested presidential and parliamentary elections.⁷ Many expect that Compaoré will run in 2005 for a third term (although this time for only five years) and emerge victorious. But the future looks less bright for the majority of Burkinabes. The Ivorian crisis has had profound ramifications for Burkina Faso. Several hundred thousand Burkinabe have ceased to send home much-needed remittances. To make matters worse, it is feared that more than 10 per cent of the almost 3 million Burkinabe working in Côte d'Ivoire have returned home,⁸ placing unprecedented burdens on the family and the state.⁹ Landlocked Burkina Faso no longer uses Côte d'Ivoire's ports for shipping or transport,¹⁰ which creates additional strains on an already fragile economy. Given Compaoré's record of meddling in other countries' civil wars and insurgencies, the political opposition's feeling of marginalization, the country's economic struggles, and the ease with which

small arms can be acquired in the region, armed groups could materialize in Burkina Faso.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MPCI	Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
UNITA	União Nacional Para a Independência Total de Angola

ENDNOTES

- 1 In March 2000, the Fowler Commission accused Burkina Faso of violating the UN Security Council arms embargo on Angola by diverting arms to Angola's União Nacional Para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). See UNSC (2000a, paras. 21–22).
- 2 Campoaré is widely believed to have supported the Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast (Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, MPCI). See, for example, ICG (2003a, p. 17, fn. 123; 2003b, pp. 12–14); HRW (2003). See also 'Côte d'Ivoire' in Part II.
- 3 See, for example, Huband (1998, p. 92); Global Witness (2002, pp. 8–9); UNSC (2000b, paras. 203–204). See also 'Liberia' in Part II.
- 4 Burkina Faso provided weapons to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Berman, 2000, pp. 3–10; UNSC, 2000b,

- paras. 194–95, 203–11; BBC News, 2003).
See also ‘Sierra Leone’ in Part II.
- 5 IRIN (2004c).
- 6 IRIN (2004b).
- 7 Szajkowski (2004, p. 49).
- 8 Before the Ivorian crisis, there were 2.8 million Burkinabe working in Côte d’Ivoire (WANEP and FEWER, 2003). UNHCR (2003, p. 225) estimates that as many as 365,000 of these workers have returned home.
- 9 IRIN (2005). In 2004, Burkina Faso also hosted 466 refugees, most of whom resided in Ouagadougou (UNOCHA, 2004, p. 9; USCR, 2001).
- 10 IRIN (2004a).
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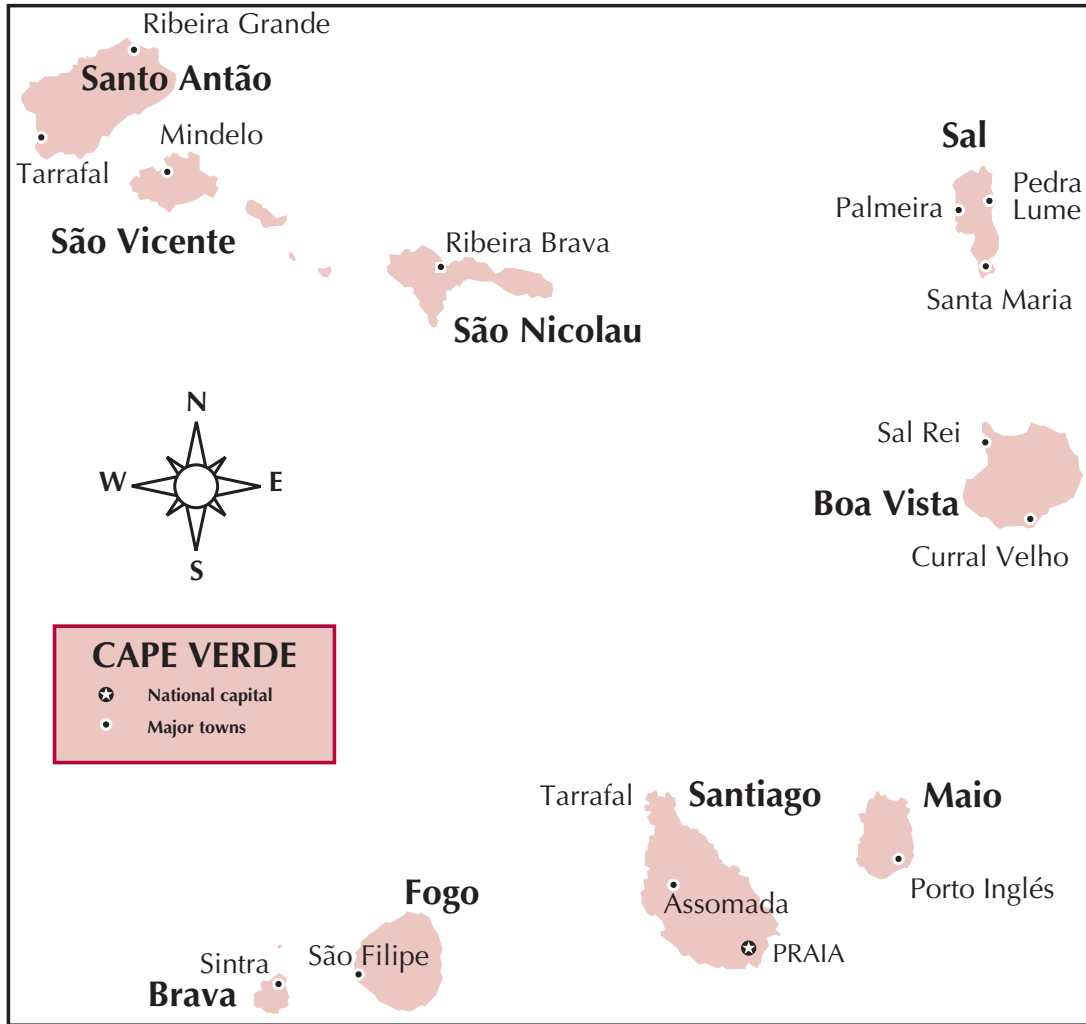
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A soldier from Cape Verde participating in a French-led peacekeeping training exercise for West Africa in December 2004.



CAPE VERDE

OVERVIEW

Cape Verde, a string of small islands in the Atlantic Ocean, conducted its armed struggle for independence from Portugal mainly on the mainland of what is today Guinea-Bissau. Thus, the influx of small arms into the country was not as significant a problem as in many other liberation wars. Cape Verde's geographical isolation has also shielded the tiny island state from subregional conflicts that have spilled over into countries sharing porous borders with war-ravaged neighbours. Compared with the problems of rising poverty,¹ drug abuse, and child prostitution,² small arms trafficking is not a significant issue in the country—although recent reports suggest that armed robbery is on the rise.³ Because the government of Cape Verde does not believe it has a small arms problem, it has opted to forgo the establishment of a national commission,⁴ but it has a parallel structure that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recognizes.⁵

OUTLOOK

Cape Verde has also recently experienced a rise in armed violence and social ills—despite the fact that since 1992 it has been home to a functioning multiparty democracy, and the military stays well out of the political fray. Its reputation as a critical transshipment point for drugs—cocaine, heroin, and cannabis—smuggled from Latin America to West Africa and Europe⁶ raises concerns that existing infrastructures could support gun trafficking should the demand for it arise. Indeed, both arms and drug smugglers tend to rely on the same well-worn smuggling routes.⁷

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECOWAS Economic Community
of West African States

ENDNOTES

- 1 IRIN (2003).
- 2 IRIN (1999).
- 3 Written correspondence with Mohamed Lamine Coulibaly, Regional Conflict Resolution Adviser, Oxfam GB, 11 January 2005. This situation is partly due to the island's position as West Africa's only direct air connection with South America via Brazil, a drug exporting country that also hosts many Cape Verde nationals (Reeve, 2004).
- 4 Written correspondence with Carlos Reis, Advisor to the Minister of Defence of Cape Verde, 1 April 2005.
- 5 Bah (2004, p. 37).
- 6 Reeve (2004).
- 7 Some arms have allegedly been trafficked to the Casamance region of Senegal. See Ebo (2003, p. 33).

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Cherif Ousmane, a top Ivorian rebel commander, leads his troops over the Cavally River during a patrol, 17 May 2003.



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

OVERVIEW

After the death of founding President Félix Houphouët-Boigny on 7 December 1993, Côte d'Ivoire plunged into a power struggle and recurrent political instability. Controversies over restrictive nationality laws and their implications for eligibility to national elections, which resulted in the disqualification of prominent leaders such as Alassane Ouattara of the Rally of Republicans (Rassemblement des républicains, RDR), served to heighten tensions, which culminated in the overthrow of President Henri Konan Bédié by General Robert Gueï in December 1999. Deadly clashes followed the disputed results of the 2000 presidential elections.¹ The Ivorian Supreme Court eventually declared Laurent Gbagbo the winner over the main contender, General Gueï. The situation, however, remained dangerously volatile.

On 19 September 2002, a group of about 800 soldiers from the Ivorian National Armed Forces (Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire, FANCI) launched a coup attempt against

President Gbagbo, during which General Gueï was killed. After failing to capture Abidjan, the country's commercial capital, the mutineers retreated northward to the city of Bouaké, about 100 km north of the political capital Yamoussoukro, where they were joined by disgruntled soldiers and civilians. In late September, they formed the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, MPCI).² French troops prevented rebels from seizing either capital, but the MPCI captured other cities in the northern and central regions. The group finally declared a ceasefire on 17 October 2002. On 28 November 2002, however, two other rebel groups emerged—the Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West (Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest, MPIGO), and the Movement for Justice and Peace (Mouvement pour la justice et la paix, MJP) and seized cities in the western region. Eventually, on 13 January 2003 in Lomé, the MJP and the MPIGO concluded a ceasefire with the Ivorian government.

On 24 January 2003, in Linas-Marcoussis, France, the three rebel groups reached an accord with all major Ivorian political parties to

create a new 'government of national reconciliation' that incorporated representatives of the rebel movements, now unified under the umbrella name 'Forces nouvelles'. The government of reconciliation's programme included preparing transparent national elections, investigating human rights violations, organizing the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-rebels, as well as restructuring the 20,000-strong³ FANCI.⁴ On 4 April 2004, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) was established with a mandate to monitor the ceasefire and to assist the new government in the DDR process.⁵ The 1,300-strong Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) was quickly 'blue-hatted' to help establish ONUCI, whose mandated strength is 6,240.⁶ An estimated 4,000 French troops are stationed outside the UN mission, but may provide support to ONUCI as a rapid intervention force.⁷

The implementation of the Linas Marcoussis agreement was slow and difficult, however, and this caused the suspension of Forces nouvelles participation in the government of reconciliation in September 2003 and

again in March 2004.⁸ West African leaders, ECOWAS, and the United Nations mediated a series of meetings between the Marcoussis signatories in an effort to relaunch the peace process. This resulted in the signing of the so-called Accra III agreement on 30 July and in the government of reconciliation resuming its functions. Accra III called on President Gbagbo to undertake constitutional reforms expanding eligibility to the presidency by the end of September, with all parties committing themselves to starting DDR by 15 October 2004.⁹ Neither deadline was respected, however, and the Forces nouvelles ministers suspended their participation on 28 October 2004.¹⁰

ARMED GROUPS

Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI)

Origins/composition:

The rebel group formed shortly after the 19 September 2002 coup attempt for the express purposes of forcing the resignation of President Gbagbo; holding inclusive national elections; reviewing the constitution; and ending southern domination.¹¹

Movement members initially consisted of army mutineers involved in the September 2002 coup attempt.¹² A number of northerners enrolled after the MPCCI gained control of the northern half of the country. Members of western ethnic groups, such as the Yacouba¹³ and foreigners from Mali and Burkina Faso, also joined.¹⁴ The MPCCI also allegedly recruited Liberian combat veterans from refugee camps in Ghana.¹⁵ MPCCI members had increased from 800 combatants in 2002 to approximately 5,000 in early 2003¹⁶ after it folded with the MJP and the MPIGO into the Forces nouvelles umbrella coalition. By late 2003, the MPCCI had reportedly grown to 7,000–10,000 fighters and included more than 1,000 traditional 'dozo' hunters recruited from northern Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali.¹⁷

Leadership:

Guillaume Soro, an ex-leader of the Student and School Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (Fédération étudiante et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) student association (see Young Patriots), is the MPCCI's political leader and general secretary. Louis Dacoury-Tabley is another important political leader—until 1999, Gbagbo's right-hand man and for-

merly an influential member of the Ivorian president's Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI).¹⁸ Several local military commanders hold prominent positions—among them, Chérif Ousmane, the 'strong man' of Bouaké. Most MPCCI commanders were originally members of the FANCI or were under the orders of Sergeant Chef Ibrahim Coulibaly (also known as 'IB') in the presidential guard under the Gueï junta. Throughout 2001–02, many were exiled to Ouagadougou.¹⁹

Areas of control/activity:

Northern and central regions of the country, in particular the towns of Bouaké and Korhogo.

Sources of financing/support:

The MPCCI used resources from territory seized (cocoa, cotton) to finance its rebellion.²⁰ Financial support also reportedly came from former Liberian President Charles Taylor,²¹ wealthy businessmen close to Ouattara's RDR, political-financial networks close to the president of Burkina Faso, and French multinationals and cocoa traders.²² In 2002 and 2003, numerous reports pointed the finger at Burkina Faso as backing the MPCCI.²³ Dacoury-Tabley, in particular, visited Ouagadougou before the coup, and had developed close

relations with Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré during the years when the latter financed the FPI.²⁴ Some funds came from armed robberies—in particular, hold-ups at branches of the Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO). On 27 August 2002, in Abidjan, the MPCCI seized more than CFA Franc 2 billion (USD 3.87 million).²⁵

Status:

Following the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement on 24 January 2003, the group joined the Forces nouvelles umbrella coalition, which it now largely dominates.

Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West (MPIGO)

Origins/composition:

On 28 November 2002, the MPIGO emerged in the west of the country to avenge the death of General Gueï²⁶ and to defend the rights of the Yacouba ethnic group.²⁷ A number of Liberian President Charles Taylor’s most senior commanders organized the group, which also included Ivorians who had previously fought for General Gueï.²⁸ The MPIGO was mainly composed of English-speaking Yacouba,²⁹ many of them Sierra Leoneans and Liberians.³⁰ The group

claimed they were not bound by the October 2002 ceasefire signed between the MPCCI and the government. In 2003, the total combined strength of the MPIGO and the MJP was estimated at approximately 2,000.³¹

Leadership:

N’dri N’Guessan, also known as Felix Doh (MPIGO), signed the ceasefire agreement of 13 January 2003. Doh was killed in April 2003.³²

Areas of control/activity:

The MPIGO attacked towns and villages in the western part of the country,³³ and the group controlled the areas around Binhouye. In November 2002, the insurgents captured the city of Danane in the western part of Côte d’Ivoire (near the Liberian border). They then took control of Bangolo, which is located 40 km south of Man,³⁴ but failed to capture the port of San Pedro—vital for the export of cocoa and coffee.³⁵

Sources of financing/support:

Charles Taylor’s Liberia allegedly trained and armed the MPIGO.³⁶ While the MPIGO, the MJP, and the MPCCI often cooperated, analysts note that Taylor created and actively supported the MPIGO in order to create a strategic buffer against the MPCCI. The MPCCI had among its

ranks a number of armed Liberians who had previously opposed his presidency.³⁷ Along with his forces, the Sierra Leonean warlord Sam Bockarie, who had briefly broken away from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, also assisted the MPIGO until just after the death of Felix Doh in April 2003.³⁸

Status:

The MPIGO signed a ceasefire agreement with the French troops and the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement in January 2003,³⁹ after which it became part of the Forces nouvelles coalition.

Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP)

Origins/composition:

On 28 November 2002, the MJP emerged simultaneously alongside the MPIGO; both had very similar objectives.⁴⁰ Like the MPIGO, the group claimed it was not bound by the October 2002 ceasefire signed between the MPCCI and the government. MJP leaders said they broke from the MPCCI after the latter engaged in peace talks with the government—although the MJP reportedly retained close contact with the MPCCI leadership⁴¹ and cooperated on a number

of occasions with Soro's movement.⁴²

The MJP was composed of Sierra Leoneans and Liberians,⁴³ as well as traditional 'dozo' hunters.⁴⁴ In 2003, the total combined strength of the MPIGO and the MJP was estimated to be approximately 2,000.⁴⁵

Leadership:

Commander Gaspard Déli (MJP) signed the ceasefire agreement of 13 January 2003.

Areas of control/activity:

The MJP was present around the town of Man.⁴⁶

Sources of financing/support:

Although Charles Taylor is believed to have created and backed both the MPIGO and the MJP,⁴⁷ the latter was believed to have very close ties with the MPCCI,⁴⁸ while the MPIGO was reported to be closer to Taylor.⁴⁹

Status:

In January 2003, the MJP signed a ceasefire agreement with French troops and the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement,⁵⁰ and then joined the Forces nouvelles rebel coalition.

Forces nouvelles

Origins/composition:

Shortly after the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accord, the MPCCI, the MPIGO, and the MJP joined forces

under the umbrella Forces nouvelles movement. In practice, however, the MPCCI largely dominates the group. This was because the MJP and the MPIGO were severely weakened following the August 2003 fall of Liberia's President Charles Taylor and because of power struggles within the Forces nouvelles itself—particularly between the MPCCI and the MPIGO.⁵¹ Between February and April 2003, the MPCCI's Chérif Ousmane led several operations to purge the Forces nouvelles of Taylor-backed Sierra Leonean and Liberian mercenaries (who were apparently committing too many abuses, were too undisciplined, and were selling territories to the enemy). This coincided with the controversial killing of MPIGO leader Felix Doh on 28 April.⁵² In late 2004, the Forces nouvelles were at an estimated strength of 20,000⁵³ to 26,000.⁵⁴

Leadership:

Guillaume Soro is the secretary-general of the Forces nouvelles. Soro (MPCCI), Gaspard Déli (MJP), and Ben Souck (MPIGO) signed the Accra III agreement on 30 July 2004.⁵⁵ Sergeant Chef Ibrahim (aka 'IB') Coulibaly, a top MPCCI military commander exiled in Burkina Faso and then France,⁵⁶ has been Soro's main oppo-

nent within the Forces nouvelles. Soro appears to have gained the upper hand following IB's arrest in Paris in August 2003 and deadly clashes between pro-Soro and pro-IB factions in Khorogo and Bouaké in June 2004. These resulted in at least 22 deaths, including that of key IB backers.⁵⁷ Following these incidents, reports circulated that IB had given up his initially hard-line stance, and was warming to Gbagbo.⁵⁸

Areas of control/activity:

The Forces nouvelles effectively control and provide basic administrative and social services in the northern half of the country, north of the ONUCI- and French-controlled 'zone of confidence'. Their main strongholds include Bouaké (effectively their military headquarters), Man, and Danane.

Sources of financing/support:

Forces nouvelles-administered roadblocks, with levy fees in the range USD 180–270 for trucks travelling from Bouaké to Korhogo, are an important source of funding.⁵⁹ Rebels also stole CFA Franc 20 billion (worth at the time USD 38.73 million) from a bank in Bouaké in September 2003,⁶⁰ which Soro has reportedly used to provide MPCCI members with a monthly allowance of CFA Franc 5,000 (USD 9.68).⁶¹

Status:

Active.

***Group of Patriots for Peace
(GPP/CPP/FLN)***

Origins/composition:

The Group of Patriots for Peace (Groupe des patriotes pour la paix, GPP), also known as Convention des patriotes pour la paix (CPP) or Front de libération nationale (FLN), is an umbrella organization comprising half a dozen pro-government militias⁶² that emerged during the September 2002 crisis to support President Gbagbo. Although the group is believed to include some members of the Bété, President Gbagbo's ethnic group,⁶³ experts point out that the GPP is not as ethnically oriented as other militia groups, such as the FSCO or the FLGO (see below).⁶⁴ In late 2003, it was estimated that the GPP was made up of some 6,000 young Ivorian men organized into units of 500–700.⁶⁵

Leadership:

Moussa Touré Zeguen and Charles Groguhé (an ex-FESCI leader).⁶⁶

Areas of control/activity:

The GPP has been active throughout southern Côte d'Ivoire, and particularly in Abidjan's Adjame district. In

early 2005, however, buses reportedly transported GPP members from Abidjan to the western part of the country.⁶⁷ It is important to note that these movements coincided with the 28 February 2005 attack on Forces nouvelles positions in Lougoulé (north-west of Abidjan) by about 100 armed men belonging to the previously unheard of Ivorian Movement for the Liberation of Western Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement Ivoirien pour la Libération de l'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, MILOCI).⁶⁸

Sources of financing/support:

The Ivorian government and security forces allegedly support the GPP.⁶⁹ In late October 2004, former FANCI officers reportedly provided training, including the handling of military firearms, to some 1,600 GPP volunteers at a training camp situated in Abidjan's Adjame district.⁷⁰ Groguhé has claimed the GPP was heavily armed and supported by numerous military and political elites.⁷¹ Zeguen, on the other hand, claims the GPP is 'unarmed', although he admits that weapons are 'everywhere' and easy to find.⁷²

Status:

Active. The GPP was not part of the Linas-Marcoussis process,⁷³ but the Accra III agreement did extend DDR

coverage to all paramilitaries and militias.

Front for the Security of the Centre-West (FSCO)

Origins/composition:

The 14,000-strong Front for the Security of the Centre-West (Front pour la sécurité du Centre-Ouest, FSCO), is another pro-Gbagbo militia that emerged following the September 2002 crisis.⁷⁴ As previously stated, it includes many Bétés, President Gbagbo's ethnic group.⁷⁵ Although allegedly backed by circles close to the Ivorian presidency, it appeared disgruntled in mid-2004 when it threatened to bar Gbagbo's entourage from the centre-west town of Gagnoa.⁷⁶

Leadership:

Bertrand Gnatoa.⁷⁷

Areas of control/activity:

The FSCO is based in Gagnoa,⁷⁸ the closest town to Gbagbo's home village and the Ivorian president's electoral stronghold.⁷⁹

Sources of financing/support:

In March 2004, Gnatoa claimed that the FSCO received training from the FANCI.⁸⁰

Status:

Active.

Front for the Liberation of the Great West (FLGO)

Origins/composition:

The Front for the Liberation of the Great West (Front pour la Libération du Grand Ouest, FLGO) is the most important of several pro-Gbagbo militias active in the far western part of the country. It is made up of a mix of Ivorian and Liberian nationals,⁸¹ recruited primarily among the Ivorian Guéré or Wê in the west of the country and in Abidjan, and among their ethnic cousins, the Liberian Krahns (see MODEL, below).⁸² Local Guéré elected officials in Abidjan were reportedly involved in recruiting young men for the FLGO.⁸³ The FLGO is estimated to be 7,000-strong.⁸⁴

Leadership:

Mao Gloféi Denis.⁸⁵

Areas of control/activity:

The FLGO is active in the far west of the country, notably in the towns of Guiglo and Toulépleu.⁸⁶

Sources of financing/support:

The Ivorian government and security forces allegedly support the FLGO.⁸⁷ Mao Denis is reportedly in regular contact with the Gbagbo presidency; he is also third assistant to the mayor of Guiglo.⁸⁸ The FLGO allegedly fought alongside Liberian rebel

movement MODEL in 2003 in the final push against Charles Taylor.⁸⁹

Status:

Active.

**'Young Patriots'
(FESCI/UPLTCI/COJEP)**

Origins/composition:

'Young Patriots' is the umbrella term for the young Ivorian pro-government activists drawn from student networks such as FESCI,⁹⁰ as well as from political parties, including the ruling FPI.⁹¹ The Union for the Total Liberation of Côte d'Ivoire (Union pour la libération totale de la Côte d'Ivoire, UPLTCI) claims to have more than 70,000 members.⁹² Other large movements include the 25,000-strong Pan-African Congress of Young Patriots (Congrès panafricain des jeunes patriotes, COJEP). Although their leaders usually claim that their movements are unarmed, they are closely connected to armed militias such as the GPP, the FSCO, or smaller armed units such as the Bees, Gazelles, Ninjas, and Panthers,⁹³ and their members represent an important recruitment pool for these armed groups. FESCI students, for instance, were reportedly given weapons and money and transported from the uni-

versity in assigned public buses just days before the November 2004 crisis and the resulting stand-off between French troops and crowds of Young Patriots in Abidjan.⁹⁴ Patriot movements draw their membership from the large pool of unemployed young men in the southern half of the country, who are willing to participate in protests for small fees ranging from CFA F 1,000 to 5,000 (USD 2–10). Recent estimates suggest there may be as many as 150,000 Young Patriots.⁹⁵

Leadership:

Prominent Patriot leaders include Serge Kuyo (FESCI), Charles Blé Goudé (COJEP, former FESCI leader 1998–2001), and Eujène Djué (UPLTCI, former FESCI leader 1994–95).

Areas of control/activity:

Young Patriots are present in the southern half of the country, and especially in Abidjan. In early 2005, however, buses reportedly transported Young Patriots and GPP members from Abidjan to the western part of the country, which both Blé Goudé and Djué had visited recently, illustrating the volatility in that region.⁹⁶ These movements appeared to coincide with the 28 February 2005 attacks on Forces nouvelles positions in Lougoualé (northwest of Abidjan) by about 100 armed

men belonging to the newly formed MILOCI, and with the gathering of 500 youths around Bangolo on 1 March.⁹⁷

Sources of financing/support:

The Ivorian government and security forces allegedly provided training and weapons to Young Patriots.⁹⁸ In Abidjan, 15,000 militia members reportedly received training from elements of the FANCI as well as Angolan and Israeli mercenaries.⁹⁹

Status:

Active.

*Liberian mercenaries
(Lima/MODEL)*

Origins/composition:

The Ivorian army¹⁰⁰ as well as pro-government militias such as the FLGO¹⁰¹ relied on Liberian mercenaries in their fight against the rebels. French officers refer to these as ‘Lima’ after the radio call sign ‘L’ for Liberia, a term subsequently used by the Ivorian government to give the impression of a gulf between it and these ‘Liberians’. Liberian mercenaries based in Côte d’Ivoire formed the backbone of the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL, see Liberia) that emerged in mid-2003 to fight Charles Taylor alongside the

Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).¹⁰² Many fighters were allegedly recruited from areas close to the Liberian border (where many Liberian nationals had lived for several years), including the Nicla refugee camp, where young refugees reportedly were offered CFA F 10,000 (about USD 17 at the time) to become fighters.¹⁰³ Most of them were ethnic Krahn (the Liberian cousins of the Ivorian Guéré or Wê—see FLGO) who had fled Liberia after the first civil war of 1989–97.¹⁰⁴ In early 2003, an estimated 1,500–3,000 such Liberian fighters were operating in Côte d’Ivoire, 1,000 of whom subsequently left for Liberia to fight with MODEL and LURD against Taylor.¹⁰⁵

Leadership:

Liberian mercenaries reportedly served under the command of pro-government militias¹⁰⁶ and the FANCI.¹⁰⁷

Areas of control/activity:

Liberian fighters operated in the west of the country, where they were involved in military operations against the MJP and the MPIGO.¹⁰⁸ MODEL occupied the towns of Toulépleu and Bloléquin in 2003.¹⁰⁹

Sources of financing/support:

The network of those close to President Gbagbo financed and sup-

ported Liberian mercenaries. Gbagbo is said to have armed Liberians and contributed to the formation of MODEL in early 2003.¹¹⁰

Status:

The demobilization of non-Ivorian fighters was not addressed in the Linas-Marcoussis agreement.¹¹¹ While most Liberian mercenaries are believed to have returned to Liberia in mid-2003 to fight in that country's civil war¹¹² and have since enrolled in that country's DDR programme, Ivorian groups such as the FLGO reportedly still included a number of Liberian fighters as of mid-2004.¹¹³ In 2004, a number of MODEL fighters were said to have turned to gold, rubber, and wood trafficking around Guiglo.¹¹⁴

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

MJP holdings include a wide array of small arms, including AK-47s, MAT-49s, PPShs, semi-automatic rifles such as the MAS49 or the FN M1949, and Colt-type revolvers.¹¹⁵ MPCCI and MPIGO stockpiles are believed to contain weapons similar to that of the MJP's.¹¹⁶

Liberian mercenaries were reportedly armed with AK-47s,¹¹⁷ while GPP members have been spotted carrying 12-gauge shotguns as well as AK-47 assault rifles.¹¹⁸ In the western part of the country, pro-government militias such as the FLGO reportedly use 12-gauge shotguns and other small arms.¹¹⁹

Light weapons:

The MPCCI appears to have anti-tank grenade launchers and surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles.¹²⁰ The MPCCI also obtained artillery for air defence in October 2002.¹²¹

Sources

Domestic:

Many rebel group weapons come from captured government armouries.¹²² The MPCCI claimed to have seized army weapons stocked in Bouaké, Korhogo, as well as arms hidden by deserting soldiers in 2000.¹²³ Pro-government militias have obtained weapons from Ivorian security services. The International Crisis Group reports that militia groups involved in the March 2004 violent repression of an opposition rally had received weapons from police commissariats. Ninety-five per cent of these weapons were subsequently returned to the presidential palace.¹²⁴

Although there is no information available on the local manufacture of small arms, there are reports that Ghanaian blacksmiths have been 'invited' to Côte d'Ivoire to demonstrate their gun-making skills.¹²⁵

Foreign:

Allegations point to Burkina Faso as one MPCI weapons source. According to the International Crisis Group, 'Western intelligence services have proof that a portion of the arms used in the original attacks came from the Burkinabe Presidential Guard stocks'.¹²⁶ Most MPIGO and MJP arms came from Monrovia under Taylor's presidency.¹²⁷ Ex-MODEL fighters reportedly cross the militia-patrolled border between Liberia into Côte d'Ivoire to exchange their weapons for motorcycles.¹²⁸ The UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Côte d'Ivoire on 15 November 2004,¹²⁹ which was further strengthened on 1 February 2005.¹³⁰

Recovered

DDR:

The government of national reconciliation's National Commission for DDR (Commission nationale de désarmement, de démobilisation, et de réinsertion, CNDDR) is in charge

but DDR had still not started as of December 2004. In October of that same year, the CNDDR estimated that about 30,000 armed combatants would take part, including 26,000 Forces nouvelles and 4,000 FANCI.¹³¹ In addition, the CNDDR estimated that 10,000 militia members would need to be included in the initiative.¹³² While the Accra III accord provides for the participation of paramilitaries and militias in DDR, one major challenge will be how to deal with Liberian combatants remaining in Côte d'Ivoire.

Other:

In late October 2004, the Forces nouvelles announced the seizure of a large consignment of weapons and ammunition in Bouaké, including some 80 AK-47 assault rifles, nine RPG-7s, and 20 hand grenades, which they accused President Gbagbo of sending to supporters of Ibrahim 'IB' Coulibaly.¹³³ In March 2003, French forces confiscated 72 AK-47 assault rifles from Lima fighters in Bangolo. These weapon types were found to match those used by the Ivorian National Security Forces.¹³⁴

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

Reports indicate the MPCI, the MPIGO, and the MJP all recruited and used children associated with fighting forces (CAFF). Human rights organizations reported a strong presence of Liberian child combatants, particularly among those groups fighting in the west of the country.¹³⁵ In January 2003, the United Nations expressed fears that Ivorian rebels could recruit Burkinabe children.¹³⁶ Government armed forces also allegedly recruited children from Liberian groups MODEL and LURD, as well as from refugee camps and transit centres in Abidjan and Nicla.¹³⁷ Discussions undertaken by UNICEF and Save the Children in 2003 suggested that the MPCI, the MPIGO, and the MJP agreed in principle to demobilize CAFF.¹³⁸ In October 2004 UNICEF had identified some 3,000 CAFF affiliated with the Forces nouvelles for participation in the DDR programme.¹³⁹

Functions:

CAFF reportedly played 'supporting roles' in the fighting.¹⁴⁰

Displacement

IDPs:

As of October 2003, there were an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Côte d'Ivoire;¹⁴¹ by October 2004, the Global IDP Project estimated that the lower end of 500,000 IDPs was likely more accurate, with 350,000 now identified.¹⁴²

Refugees abroad:

During the fighting in 2002–03, some 20,000 Ivorian nationals fled to Liberia; 2,000 to Guinea; 1,000 to Mali; and nearly 2,000 as asylum seekers to industrialized countries. An estimated 80,000 immigrants who lived in Côte d'Ivoire also fled the country.¹⁴³ As of October 2004, Côte d'Ivoire had some 65,000 refugees living abroad.¹⁴⁴

Refugees hosted:

About 50,000 refugees from other countries, mostly Liberia, remained in Côte d'Ivoire in 2003.¹⁴⁵

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

There exist numerous reports of rebel groups, government armed forces, and pro-government militias killing civilians¹⁴⁶ during the conflict¹⁴⁷ and following the Linas-Marcoussis talks.¹⁴⁸

A number of NGOs and news reports have documented the discovery of mass graves containing up to 120 bodies.¹⁴⁹ Amnesty International has accused the MPCJ of killing dozens of paramilitaries and children in October 2002.¹⁵⁰ Liberians and Sierra Leoneans fighting for the MPTIG and the MJP reportedly perpetrated acts of indiscriminate violence, killings, and pillaging throughout the west of the country.¹⁵¹ Pro-government militias are accused of killings,¹⁵² especially of immigrants,¹⁵³ and were allegedly involved in the bloody repression of an opposition rally in March 2004¹⁵⁴ during which 200 were killed and 400 wounded.¹⁵⁵ Pro-government militias have been accused of torture,¹⁵⁶ especially of immigrants.¹⁵⁷ Sexual violence and exploitation are reportedly widespread, particularly owing to the fact that conflict has forced many families to separate—thus leaving women and children on their own and without protection.¹⁵⁸ In 2003, Young Patriot militias reportedly harassed and assaulted peasant farmers of foreign origin (Burkinabe and other West African migrants) in the west and south-west of the country,¹⁵⁹ as well as residents of several of Abidjan's *quartiers populaires* such as

Abobo, Adjame, Koumassi, Marcoury, and Yopougon.¹⁶⁰ According to Human Rights Watch, in the western region Liberian forces and government and rebel fighters have all set upon civilians and perpetrated executions, rape, forced labour, looting, and other crimes.¹⁶¹ Pro-government militia human rights abuses continued into late 2004, with incidents in Abidjan, Yamassoukro, Bloléquin, Guiglo, Tai, and other locations.¹⁶²

Other:

A UN commission described the bloody government crackdown of the March 2004 opposition rally as 'the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians and the committing of massive human rights violations' and as 'a carefully planned and executed operation by the security forces, i.e. the police, the gendarmerie, the army, as well as special units and the so-called parallel forces, under the direction and responsibility of the highest authorities of the State'.¹⁶³ In January 2005, the United Nations confirmed that it had drawn up a list of people accused of human rights abuses in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the official list had not been released as of mid-February 2005, Radio France Internationale (RFI) reported that it contained 95 names, including

President Gbagbo's wife (Simone Gbagbo) and defence and security advisor Bertin Kadet, COJEP leader Charles Blé Goude, and Forces nouvelles leader Guillaume Soro.¹⁶⁴

OUTLOOK

The peace process experienced a serious setback on 4 November 2004, when President Gbagbo launched an offensive against the rebel-held north and the city of Bouaké in particular. The presence of French soldiers added another dimension to the conflict. Politicians exploited their advantage by inflaming anti-French passions, which were further fuelled when French soldiers killed at least 20 people by firing into an angry crowd in Abidjan.¹⁶⁵ Following an Ivorian offensive that left nine French soldiers dead, the French contingent destroyed the entire Ivorian air force on the ground.¹⁶⁶

As of late 2004, the country remained effectively divided into two zones, and the disarmament of combatants appeared improbable in the absence of an unexpected political breakthrough. South African President Thabo Mbeki secured promises from all sides to restore the

peace process, but, as of December 2004, mistrust still permeated negotiations.¹⁶⁷ As the International Crisis Group noted, 'the political impasse is exceptionally lucrative for almost everyone except ordinary citizens'. This complicated efforts to restore peace and to bring widespread prosperity to the country.¹⁶⁸ In light of the renewed fighting throughout the country, ONUCI's force commander asked for a new mandate providing for broader powers.¹⁶⁹ UN Special Representative to Côte d'Ivoire, Albert Tevoedjre, resigned, citing lack of progress towards peace.¹⁷⁰

Increased international pressure following the November 2004 violence resulted in President Gbagbo's late December 2004 decision to ban street marches and demonstrations in Abidjan until June 2005. It also resulted in the Ivorian National Assembly's decision to adopt key provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, including a contentious amendment to article 35 of the Constitution relating to the eligibility of candidates to the presidency.¹⁷¹ President Gbagbo has stated his intention to submit the proposed constitutional amendment to a national referendum¹⁷² but it is unclear whether these signs of progress will

be pursued should international attention evaporate.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the presence of an estimated 150,000 Young Patriots in the southern part of the country represents a significant threat to the country, as they vastly outnumber the 45,000 troops of the FANCI and Forces nouvelles combined.¹⁷⁴

As of mid-April 2005, Mbeki-led mediation resulted in hopeful signs of progress, however, including a commitment from all parties to start disarming in mid-May, and President Gbagbo's decision to allow Alassane Ouattara to participate in the October 2005 presidential elections.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCEAO	Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CNDDR	Commission nationale de désarmement, de démobilisation, et de réinsertion
COJEP	Congrès panafricain des jeunes patriots
CPP	Convention des patriotes pour la paix
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOMICI	ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FANCI	Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire
FESCI	Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire
FLGO	Front pour la Libération du Grand Ouest
FLN	Front de libération nationale
FPI	Front Populaire Ivoirien
FSCO	Front pour la sécurité du Centre-Ouest

		ENDNOTES
GPP	Groupe des patriotes pour la paix	
IDP	Internally displaced person	1 UNSC (2003a, paras. 2–4).
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy	2 UNSC (2003a, paras. 8–9).
		3 ICG (2004, p. 25)
		4 <i>Accord de Linas-Marcoussis</i> (2003).
		5 UNSC (2004a).
MILOCI	Mouvement Ivoirien pour la Libération de l'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire	6 As of 30 November 2004, ONUCI had 6,208 total uniformed personnel, including 5,842 troops, 153 military observers, 213 civilian police supported by 231 international civilian personnel, and 155 local staff. See UNDPKO (2004).
MJP	Mouvement pour la justice et la paix	
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia	7 IRIN (2004b).
		8 IRIN (2004a).
MPCI	Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire	9 UNSC (2004c, para. 15).
		10 UNSC (2004d, para. 12).
MPIGO	Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest	11 UNSC (2003a, para. 10).
		12 Szajkowski (2004, p. 84).
ONUCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire	13 ICG (2003b, p. 15).
		14 UNSC (2003a, para. 46).
		15 ICG (2003b, p. 19).
RDR	Rassemblement des républicains	16 UNSC (2003a, para. 46).
		17 ICG (2003b, p. 14).
RFI	Radio France Internationale	18 ICG (2003b, p. 10).
		19 ICG (2003b, p. 10).
RUF	Revolutionary United Front	20 ICG (2003b, pp. 15–16).
		21 ICG (2003b, p. 15).
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	22 ICG (2003a, p. 15; 2003b, p. 12).
		23 See ICG (2003a, p. 17, fn. 123; 2003b, pp. 12–14); HRW (2003a).
UPLTCI	Union pour la libération totale de la Côte d'Ivoire	24 ICG (2003b, p. 10).
		25 ICG (2003b, p. 10).
		26 Global Security (2004); ICG (2003; 2004).

- 27 AFP (2003).
- 28 ICG (2003b, p. 18).
- 29 Global Security (2004).
- 30 ICG (2003b, p. 18).
- 31 UNSC (2003b, para. 49).
- 32 Zajtman (2003).
- 33 ICG (2003).
- 34 Global Security (2004).
- 35 ICG (2003).
- 36 ICG (2003a, p. 17; 2003b, p. 18); Global Witness (2003, p. 31).
- 37 ICG (2003a, p. 17; 2003b, pp. 18–19).
- 38 Bockarie was killed in May 2003, less than two weeks after Doh (ICG, 2003).
- 39 *La Documentation française* (2004).
- 40 AFP (2003).
- 41 AFP (2003).
- 42 ICG (2003b, pp. 20, 51).
- 43 ICG (2003).
- 44 AFP (2003).
- 45 UNSC (2003b, para. 49).
- 46 UNSC (2003a, para. 47).
- 47 ICG (2003a, p. 17; 2003b, p. 18); Global Witness (2003).
- 48 ICG (2003a, p. 17; 2003b, pp. 20, 51).
- 49 ICG (2003a, p. 17; 2003b, pp. 18–19).
- 50 *La Documentation française* (2004).
- 51 ICG (2003b, pp. 24–25).
- 52 ICG (2003b, pp. 24–25).
- 53 ICG (2004, p. 25).
- 54 Ivorian National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration estimate, quoted in AUPSC (2005, para. 14).
- 55 *Accord dit d'Accra III* (2004).
- 56 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, March 2005.
- 57 ICG (2004, p. 22).
- 58 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, February 2005. See also IRIN (2004e).
- 59 ICG (2004, p. 23; 2005, p. 6).
- 60 *Le jour* (2003).
- 61 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 62 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 63 ICG (2003b, p. 45).
- 64 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, March 2005.
- 65 ICG (2003b, p. 43).
- 66 ICG (2004, pp. 6, 25).
- 67 ICG (2005, pp. 17–18).
- 68 UNSC (2005b, para. 5); ICG (2005, p. 18)
- 69 OHCHR (2004, para. 72); ICG (2005, p. 5).
- 70 IRIN (2004f).
- 71 ICG (2003b, p. 44).
- 72 IRIN (2004f).
- 73 UNOCHA (2004, p.7).
- 74 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 75 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, March 2005.
- 76 ICG (2004, p. 19).
- 77 ICG (2004, pp. 6, 25).
- 78 ICG (2004, p. 19).
- 79 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, March 2005.
- 80 ICG (2004, p. 19).

- 81 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 82 ICG (2003b, pp. 2, 17).
- 83 ICG (2003b, pp. 2, 17).
- 84 UNSC (2005b, para. 12).
- 85 IRIN (2004f).
- 86 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 87 ICG (2005, p. 5).
- 88 ICG (2004, p. 18).
- 89 ICG (2003b, p. ii).
- 90 ICG (2004, p. 7).
- 91 HRW (2003b).
- 92 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 93 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004. See also ICG (2003b, p. 17).
- 94 ICG (2005, p. 10).
- 95 ICG (2004, p. 25).
- 96 ICG (2005, p. 18).
- 97 UNSC (2005b, para. 5); ICG (2005, p. 18)
- 98 ICG (2004, p. 6, fn.19); UNOCHA (2004, p. 7).
- 99 ICG (2004, p. 25).
- 100 UNSC (2003b, paras. 56–57).
- 101 ICG (2004, pp. 6, 15).
- 102 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 103 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 104 ICG (2003b, pp. 1–2).
- 105 ICG (2003b, p. 23) ; UNSC (2003b, paras. 56–57).
- 106 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 107 UNSC (2003b, paras. 56–57).
- 108 UNSC (2003b, paras. 56–57).
- 109 ICG (2003b, p. 24).
- 110 ICG (2003b, pp. 1–2).
- 111 UNOCHA (2004, p. 7).
- 112 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 113 ICG (2004, p. 6).
- 114 ICG (2004, p. 21).
- 115 Confidential written correspondence with diplomat with military experience based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 116 Confidential written correspondence with diplomat with military experience based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 117 UNSC (2003b, para. 56).
- 118 ICG (2003b, p. 44).
- 119 ICG (2004, p. 19)
- 120 ICG (2003b, pp. 11–12)
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- 122 Confidential written correspondence with senior diplomat with military experience based in West Africa, May 2004.
- 123 ICG (2003b, p. 11).
- 124 ICG (2004, p. 6, fn.19).
- 125 See Chapter 3 on craft production in Ghana.
- 126 ICG (2003b, p. 11).
- 127 ICG (2003b, p. 12).
- 128 ICG (2004, p. 15).
- 129 UNSC (2004b, p. 2).
- 130 UNSC (2005a).
- 131 AUPSC (2005, para. 14).

- 132 UNSC (2005b, para. 12).
- 133 IRIN (2004e).
- 134 UNSC (2003b, para. 57).
- 135 CSC (2004).
- 136 IRIN (2003a).
- 137 CSC (2004); Amnesty International (2003).
- 138 CSC (2004).
- 139 AUPSC (2005, para. 14).
- 140 UNSC (2003a, para. 46).
- 141 Global IDP Project (2003).
- 142 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 143 USCR (2003).
- 144 UNOCHA (2005, p. 9).
- 145 USCR (2003).
- 146 IRIN (2003b).
- 147 IRIN (2002a).
- 148 UNSC (2003a, para. 60); UNSC (2004d, paras. 41–47).
- 149 IRIN (2002b); Global Witness (2003, p. 40); Global IDP Project (2004).
- 150 Global Witness (2003, p. 40).
- 151 ICG (2003a, p. 18; 2003b, pp. 25–26).
- 152 IRIN (2004c).
- 153 Global Witness (2003, p. 39)
- 154 IRIN (2004d).
- 155 Ivorian Human Rights Movement estimate. The official death toll is 37, while the opposition claims that between 350 and 500 people died in the protest. See IRIN (2004b).
- 156 IRIN (2004c).
- 157 Global Witness (2003, p. 39).
- 158 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 159 HRW (2003b, p. 1).
- 160 Confidential written correspondence with Côte d'Ivoire expert, February 2005.
- 161 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 162 UNSC (2004d, para. 43).
- 163 OHCHR (2004, para. 72).
- 164 IRIN (2005).
- 165 Soudan (2004).
- 166 IRIN (2004g)
- 167 IRIN (2004h)
- 168 ICG (2004).
- 169 IRIN (2004g).
- 170 IRIN (2004h).
- 171 UNSC (2005b, paras. 6, 8).
- 172 UNSC (2005b, para. 8).
- 173 See ICG (2005).
- 174 ICG (2004, p. 25).

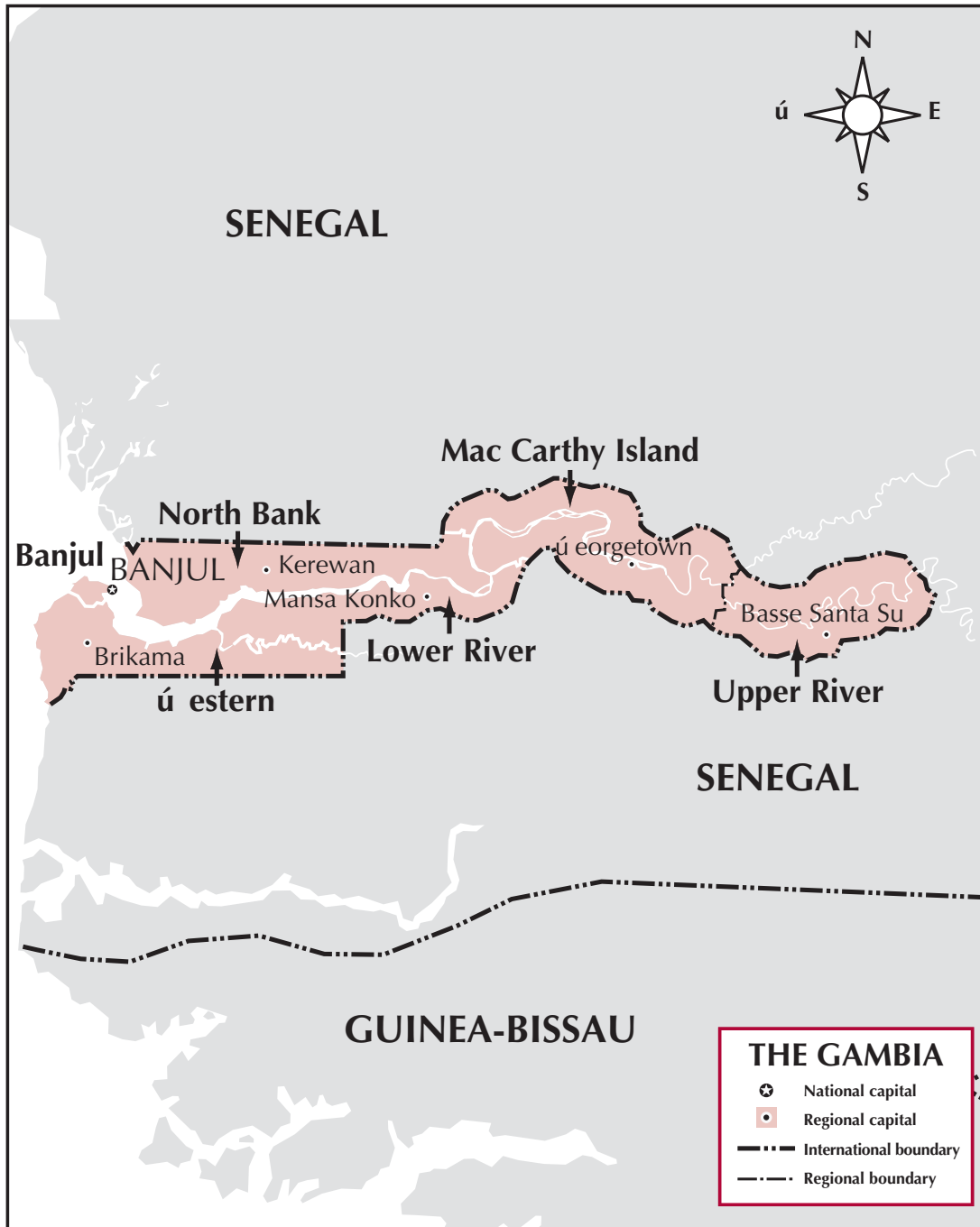
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THE GAMBIA

OVERVIEW

The Gambia attained independence from the United Kingdom in 1965, and for the next 29 years it enjoyed relative political stability. In 1994, Captain Yahya Jammeh staged a coup and won subsequent elections held in 1996 and 2001. In 2001, his ruling party captured all but three seats in the ensuing legislative elections, which the main opposition party boycotted. President Jammeh is currently also defence minister.¹ While President Jammeh launched several anti-corruption initiatives in late 2004, including 'Operation No Compromise',² the government maintains tight control over the country's media.³ Freedom of expression watchdogs have linked several cases of intimidation and harassment of the local press to a group of armed thugs known as the Green Boys and widely reported to be affiliated with the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC).⁴

In addition to unrest generated by internal politics, the Gambia's stability is vulnerable to spillover from conflicts waged in neighbouring

countries.⁵ The country's proximity to Guinea-Bissau and the Casamance region of Senegal has made it particularly permeable to small arms traffickers. Although there are no active Gambian armed groups, in the 1990s weapons smuggled through the Gambia from Libya and Iraq reportedly reached Senegal's Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance, MFDC).⁶ In 2004, a number of MFDC fighters were reported to still be in the country,⁷ and an increasing proportion of armed criminal violence is being perpetrated with weapons trafficked in from Casamance.⁸ The export of diamonds, which are not produced in the Gambia and therefore may be linked to the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, is also engendering concerns over security.⁹

ARMED GROUPS

Green Boys

Origins/composition:

The Green Boys are pro-government activists widely reported to be affiliated with the ruling APRC.¹⁰ The group was originally known as the

'22 July Movement' after the coup that brought President Jammeh to power on 22 July 1994. Members of the movement reportedly received firearms and religious training in Libya in the mid-1990s. The 22 July Movement was officially disbanded in 1999 but thereafter named Green Boys after the APRC's flagship colour. It has subsequently been involved in several cases of harassment (usually preceded by threats conveyed by letters, faxes, or phone calls) against journalists and press outfits that criticize government policies or members of Jammeh's close political circle.¹¹

Leadership:

Little is known about the Green Boys' hierarchy or size, and the government is extremely cautious about commenting on their existence.¹² At the 23 July National Assembly session, Hamat Bah, leader of the opposition National Reconciliation Party (NRP), claimed that two members of the national guard were among the six gunmen that set fire to the *Independent's* printing press on 12 April 2004. He further stated that one of them sustained burns during the operation and subsequently received medical treatment at the residence of the presidential guard

commander. The Gambian authorities neither investigated nor verified these claims, however.¹³

Areas of control/activity:

Primarily Banjul and its surrounding municipalities.

Sources of financing/support:

The Green Boys are allegedly linked to the ruling APRC.¹⁴

Status:

Active. Freedom of expression organizations have linked the Green Boys to at least four cases of harassment of journalists and press institutions in 2004.¹⁵

OUTLOOK

President Jammeh reiterated his commitment to tackle corruption in early 2005.¹⁶ Freedom of the press, however, has become a particularly sensitive issue. The latest incident to date occurred on 16 December 2004, when Reporters sans frontières (RSF) and Agence France Presse (AFP) correspondent Deyda Hydara was killed in a drive-by shooting two days after the Gambian National Assembly passed two pieces of repressive media legislation, which Hydara along with other local journalists had strongly opposed.¹⁷ As of

12 April 2005, the investigation was foundering amid local journalists' requests that the authorities examine the possible involvement of the Green Boys.¹⁸

Jammeh's grip on the country's internal affairs will likely tighten in the run-up to the next general election, scheduled for 2006,¹⁹ and the opposition remains divided.²⁰ The presence of armed elements and the existence of gun smuggling networks in the country, however, illustrate that the Gambia's political stability should not be taken for granted.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Agence France Presse
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
MFDC	Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance
NRP	National Reconciliation Party
RSF	Reporters sans frontières

ENDNOTES

- 1 CSC (2004).
- 2 IRIN (2004a; 2004b).
- 3 US Department of State (2005).
- 4 CPJ (2005a); RSF (2005b); OPC (2004).
See also Camara (2005).
- 5 In 2003, UNHCR reopened its office in the Gambia in response to an influx of migrants from neighbouring countries. In 2004, the Gambia hosted 7,465 refugees, mostly from (in order of refugee population) Sierra Leone, Senegal, Liberia and various countries of Central Africa. Three thousand one hundred of these benefit from UNHCR assistance (UNHCR, 2003, p. 225; UNOCHA, 2004, p. 9).
- 6 Evans (2004, p. 8); Szajkowski (2004, p. 435); Musah and Thamson (1999, p. 133).
- 7 Evans (2004, p. 8); Szajkowski (2004, p. 435); Musah and Thamson (1999, p. 133).
- 8 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 9 Several key actors in the illicit Liberian diamond trade have recently moved to the Gambia. Gambian businessmen, however, have been involved in the diamond trade since even before the Sierra Leonean civil war. Written correspondence with Martin Evans, Research Associate, University of Leicester, 21 February 2005. See also CSC (2004) and Ebo (2003, p. 33).
- 10 CPJ (2005a); RSF (2005b); OPC (2004).

- See also Camara (2005).
- 11 RSF (2005b); CPJ (2005a).
 - 12 One exception, however, is police spokesman Supt Jallow's 27 December 2003 statement that seven members of the Green Boys, whom he said were 'part of those who went for training in Libya', had been arrested in connection with the assassination attempt against Ousman Sillah, a prominent Gambian lawyer working on a corruption scandal involving president Jammeh's former right-hand man, Baba Jobe. Interview with Léonard Vincent, Reporters sans frontières, Paris, 20 April 2005, by telephone.
 - 13 RSF (2005b).
 - 14 RSF (2005b); CPJ (2005a).
 - 15 These include death threat letters addressed to the managing editor of the *Independent* (13 January) and to the president of the Gambia Press Union (7 July), and the burning of the *Independent's* printing press (12 April) and of the house of the BBC's correspondent in the Gambia (15 August) (CPJ, 2005a; RSF, 2005a, 2005b; OPC, 2004). See also Camara (2005).
 - 16 IRIN (2005).
 - 17 RSF (2005a, 2005b); IRIN (2004c); CPJ (2005a).
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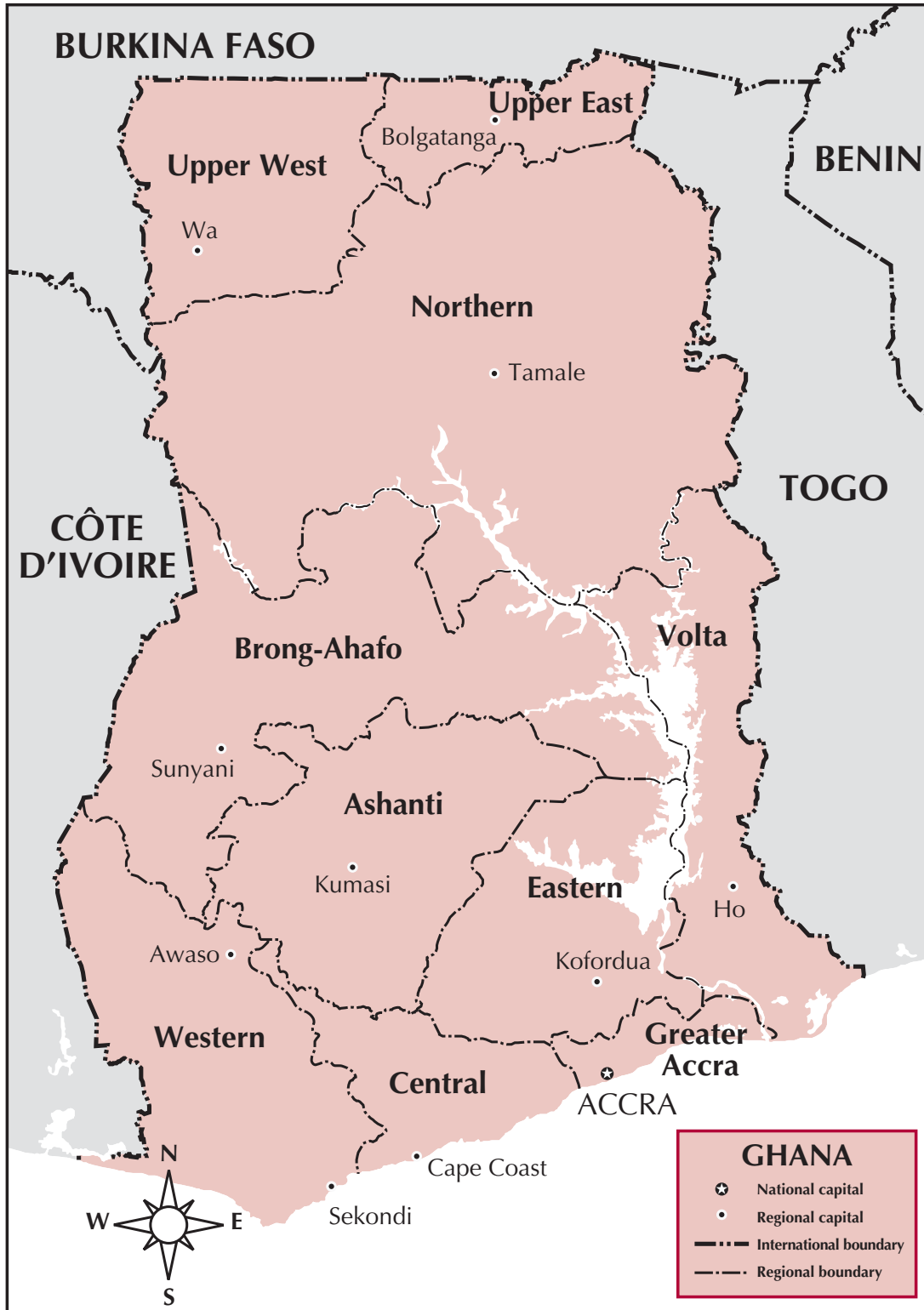
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Former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings, 9 March 1995.



GHANA

OVERVIEW

Despite a post-independence history filled with political turmoil and military coups, Ghana is widely seen as a beacon of prosperity and peace in a troubled region. In recent years the country has made significant strides both politically and economically. The year 2000 marked the first peaceful transfer of presidential power between civilian governments since independence was granted in 1957. The winner, John Agyekum Kufuor, was re-elected in December 2004. His tenure has been buoyed by rising prices for the country's two main exports, gold and cocoa, and consequent economic growth.¹

And yet Ghana is home to several long-standing ethnic, religious, and economic conflicts. Perhaps the greatest source of these is the chieftaincy disputes that continue to flare up intermittently in the country's north. Many of the 100 or so ethnic groups that populate Ghana are made up of several clans. Heading these are traditional chiefs who wield significant power and prestige, and continue to instil fierce allegiance among follow-

ers. Disputes over succession, changing cultural practices, and the duties and obligations expected of individual chiefs have sparked outbursts of bitter fighting.² In 1994, inter-ethnic violence between the Nanumba and the Konkomba in the north was particularly acute and led to thousands of deaths, the displacement of more than 100,000 people, and the massive destruction of property.³ Other issues, such as land use and ownership, have also given rise to conflict.⁴

Fuelling concerns over increased violence is the proliferation of small arms, which many fear may exacerbate existing tensions. In addition to displacement and huge numbers of deaths, 1994 saw the increased trafficking of small arms and light weaponry into the country.⁵ Ghana's own past, moreover, may be coming back to haunt it.

In the 1980s, after leading his second successful coup d'état, Jerry Rawlings' regime established and armed People's Defence Committees (PDCs) and Workers' Defence Committees (WDCs), militias that were largely drawn from Rawlings' grass-roots support base. These groups were later renamed Committees for the Defence of the Revolution.⁶ Equipment included thousands of

AK-47 assault rifles, the whereabouts of which are still unknown—although some speculate that many could still be stored in caches.⁷ Another significant source of small arms is the long-standing and increasingly advanced local tradition of illicit gun manufacturing⁸ (see Chapter 3). Retired General Emmanuel Erskine, the chairman of the Ghana Action Network on Small Arms (GANSA), reports that there could be as many as 40,000 small arms circulating beyond the reach of the state.⁹ According to the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports this assertion. IRIN adds that many experts believe the actual number of illicit weapons in Ghana to be significantly higher.¹⁰

OUTLOOK

A combination of ethnic rivalries, proximity to more conflict-prone neighbours, and the increasing availability of small arms threatens Ghana's economic and political progress. Many of the issues that triggered the 1994 violence remain unresolved. Chief among these are

the unequal representation of various local ethnic groups in the Northern House of Chiefs and issues related to the Northern Region's land tenure system.¹¹ Unlike its neighbours, Ghana has not had to contend with huge numbers of refugees fleeing regional wars and insecurity. In 2004, Ghana hosted only 44,000 refugees,¹² most of them Liberians.¹³ Already, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has opened up new illegal arms routes from the north-eastern part of that country into northern Ghana.¹⁴ Should the situation in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorate further, this number could rise significantly and create additional security challenges. The unexpected presidential transition and accompanying political turmoil in neighbouring Togo are also a cause for concern.

So pressing is the threat posed by small arms proliferation that President Kufuor's government identified their removal as a top priority. In 2001, the Ghanaian police offered immunity from prosecution to anyone who turned in an illegal weapon. The disarmament programme lasted six months and resulted in the collection of 2,000 firearms.¹⁵ In July and again in October 2004, the government launched yet another crackdown on

illicit weapons, and police destroyed several hundred during a series of public bonfires.¹⁶ More, however, needs to be done.

The Dagbon chieftaincy dispute in the Yendi area of the Northern Region exemplifies the gravity of the situation. Over the years, the traditional power rivalry between the alternating Andani and Abudu clans¹⁷ has been exacerbated by political interference in the succession arrangements as each clan has aligned itself with one or the other of the two dominant political figures or political parties in Ghana.¹⁸ In March 2002, Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II, the Dagbon king, was assassinated and some 30 members of his Andani clan also killed. The king was decapitated and other body parts were taken.¹⁹ His palace was destroyed. The Andanis held the Abudu responsible, and many felt strongly that the government was also complicit in their king's death.²⁰ Tensions ran so high between the two clans that the government immediately declared a region-wide state of emergency and dispatched the military to quell the violence. The government did not fully lift these measures until August 2004.²¹

While the security situation may have improved, the underlying

tensions that led to the uprisings persist, and there is reason to believe that the protagonists will once again resort to armed violence to settle scores or defend their interests. The highly contentious issue of the succession has yet to be resolved, and the king awaits proper burial. Both are potential flashpoints.²²

According to a 2003 White Paper drafted by the government commission investigating the events of 2002, the military authorities found AK-47 and G-3 assault rifles among the various arms caches and also uncovered 'evidence of the existence of training camps for weapon handling'.²³ The situation remains explosive. In 2003, IRIN reported allegations that both sides had been arming themselves for a possible showdown.²⁴ Again, in 2005 an informed observer cautioned that supporters of both the Abudu and Andani camps are now well armed and are adding to their stockpiles with weapons smuggled in from Côte d'Ivoire.²⁵

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDR	Committees for the Defence of the Revolution	6	Written correspondence with Abdel-Fatau Musah, peace and security expert, 15 April 2005.
GANSA	Ghana Action Network on Small Arms	7	Musah (1999, pp. 116 and 132).
IRIN	United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks	8	Aning and Florquin (2004); Ebo (2003, pp. 33–34). See also Chapter 3.
PDC	People’s Defence Committee	9	NISAT (2002).
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	10	IRIN (2004b).
WDC	Workers’ Defence Committee	11	Confidential written correspondence with expert based in northern Ghana, 18 February 2005.

ENDNOTES

- 1 IRIN (2004c).
- 2 Aning, Addo and Sowatey (2002).
- 3 See UNSCRI (2004); confidential written correspondence with expert based in northern Ghana, 18 February 2005; Musah (1999, p. 132).
- 4 Aning, Addo, and Sowatey (2002).
- 5 Confidential written correspondence with expert based in northern Ghana, 18 February 2005. Musah (1999, p. 132) notes that not only were weapons smuggled into Ghana from Burkina Faso and Togo, but government security forces diverted guns from the state’s armouries to support protagonists.
- 6 Written correspondence with Abdel-Fatau Musah, peace and security expert, 15 April 2005.
- 7 Musah (1999, pp. 116 and 132).
- 8 Aning and Florquin (2004); Ebo (2003, pp. 33–34). See also Chapter 3.
- 9 NISAT (2002).
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- 11 Confidential written correspondence with expert based in northern Ghana, 18 February 2005.
- 12 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 13 UNHCR (2003, p. 226).
- 14 Written correspondence with Abdel-Fatau Musah, peace and security expert, 15 April 2005.
- 15 Bah (2004, p. 41). See also Chapter 3.
- 16 IRIN (2004b).
- 17 For background on the Andani and Abudu power struggles, see IRIN (2002a).
- 18 Written correspondence with Abdel-Fatau Musah, peace and security expert, 15 April 2005.
- 19 GoG (2002).
- 20 IRIN (2002b).
- 21 Over the years, the curfew had been rolled back in some areas, but had remained in Tamale and Yendi (IRIN, 2004a).
- 22 IRIN (2004a).
- 23 GoG (2002).
- 24 IRIN (2003).
- 25 Confidential interview with knowledgeable Ghanaian source, Bamako, 17 March 2005.

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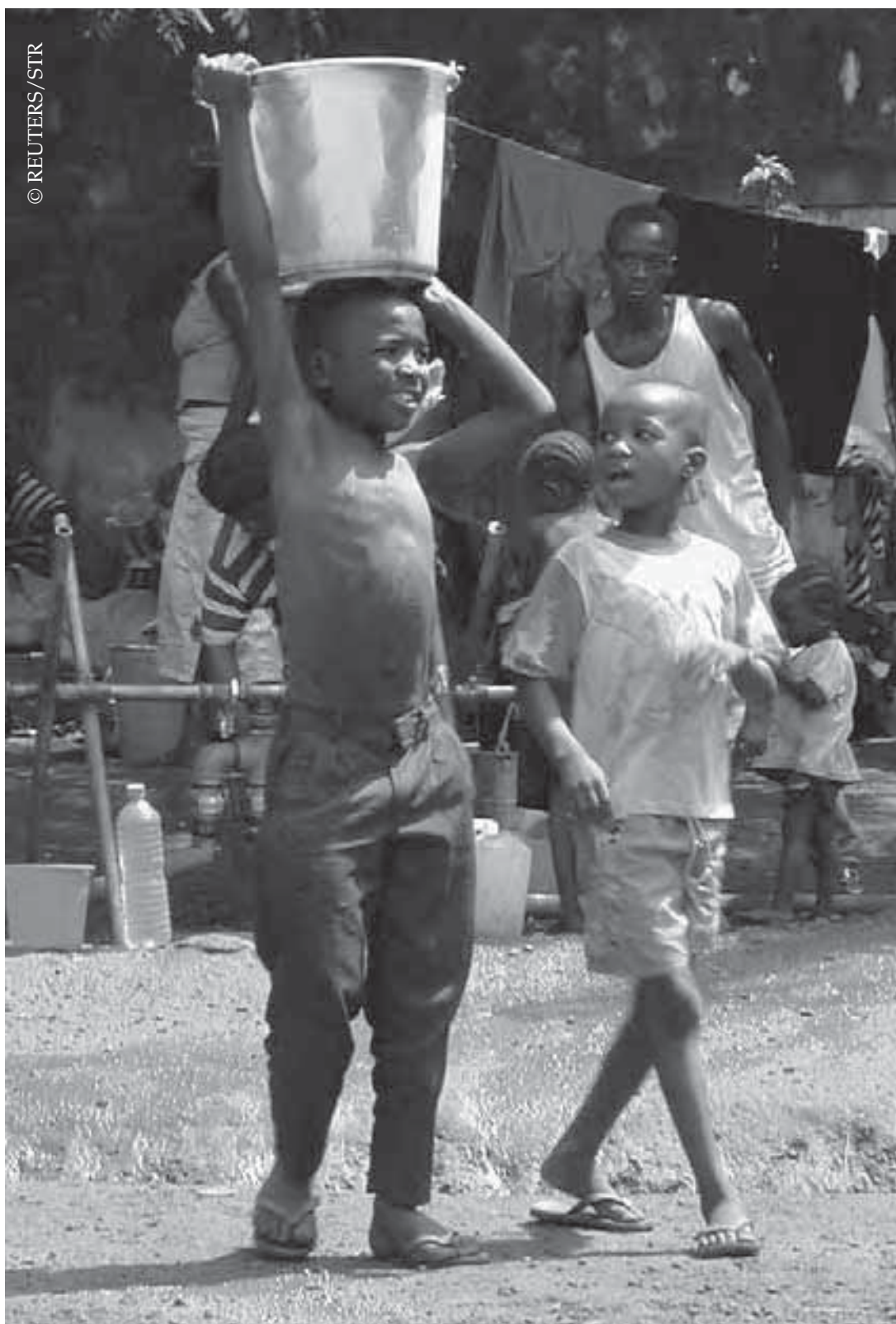
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Two refugee boys carry a bucket of water in Conakry, 12 February 2001. Guinea provided shelter for more than 500,000 refugees in the late 1990s.



GUINEA

OVERVIEW

Since Guinea achieved independence in 1958, Sékou Touré and Lansana Conté are the only two leaders to have ruled the country. Although Guinea is one of the few countries in the region not to have experienced civil war, events in the last decade have threatened the country's stability. An army mutiny in 1996 and deadly cross-border attacks in 2000–01 by Liberia-sponsored rebels raised fears that Guinea could face the same fate as neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.¹ The volatile regional context led more than one million refugees from these countries to flee to Guinea in the last decade and facilitated the infiltration of armed groups into the country.

Guinea's involvement in the region's conflicts appears to have had an even greater destabilizing effect. Guinean military support to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD),² and the presence of LURD rebels and Sierra Leonean Kamajors in Guinean refugee camps³ is likely to have motivated Liberian President Charles Taylor in

2000–01 to sponsor cross-border attacks by the RUF, Liberian fighters, and Guinean dissidents called the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Guinea (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée, RFDG).⁴

ARMED GROUPS

Guinean dissidents/Movement of the Democratic Forces of Guinea (RFDG)

Origins/composition:

Guinean dissidents known as the RFDG fought alongside Sierra Leonean (from the Revolutionary United Front, RUF) and Liberian fighters during the 2000–01 cross-border attacks.⁶ The total attacking force was estimated to be 1,800-strong.

Leadership:

Army officers involved in a failed 1996 coup attempt against Conté reportedly led the RFDG.⁷ The group's spokesman, Mohamed Lamine Fofana, claimed the group's leaders were dissident Guinean military officers who fled the country after the failed 1996 mutiny.⁸ The International Crisis Group reports, however, that Taylor instigated the 2000–01 attacks.⁹

Areas of control/activity:

RFDG raids affected a number of towns located along Guinea's southern border with Sierra Leone and Liberia, including Macenta, Guéckédou, Kissidougou, Pamélap, N'Zérékoré, and Madina Woula.

Sources of financing/support:

The RFDG was backed by Taylor¹⁰ and the RUF (see Sierra Leone).¹¹

Status:

The Guinean military, with the assistance of LURD, was able to repel the 2000–01 attacks only after recruiting an estimated 7,000–30,000 young Guinean volunteers and using massive military force as was illustrated by the January 2001 bombing and partial destruction of Guéckédou.¹² In September 2004 Guinean dissidents, on the other hand, were reportedly paying Liberian fighters USD 150–200 to join them in a bid to overthrow the Guinean government.¹³

Young Volunteers**Origins/composition:**

Responding to a public appeal by President Conté, approximately 7,000¹⁴ to 30,000¹⁵ Young Volunteers were mobilized to counter the 2000–01 attacks by RFDG, RUF, and Liberian fighters.¹⁶ While the Guinean military

handled most of the recruitment process, local authorities, such as the mayor of N'Zérékoré, played a key role.¹⁷

Leadership:

Guinean military/government.

Areas of control/activity:

The Volunteers were recruited in the areas threatened by the rebel attacks (Guéckédou, Kissidougou, Faranah, Dabola, Mamou, Kindia, Forecariah, N'Zérékoré). They are also present in Conakry.

Sources of financing/support:

The Guinean military armed and supported the Volunteers during the crisis.

Status:

Out of the 9,000 ex-Volunteers identified by UNICEF, 3,879 have yet to be demobilized.¹⁸ Others were integrated into the army or into marching bands, or went back to civilian life.¹⁹ A joint UNICEF and Guinean government pilot disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme reintegrated some 350 Young Volunteers.²⁰

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

There is no precise data available on the quantities or weapon types distributed by the army to the Young Volunteers. In the town of Guéckédou, which was heavily affected by the 2000–01 attacks, 70 per cent of 2,380 surveyed Volunteers were armed and participated in combat. Ministry of Security data on 222 weapons seized in 2001–03, however, suggests the presence of AK-47s and SKS assault rifles, hunting rifles, 12-gauge shotguns, carbines, Makarov, TT30 pistols, revolvers, and craft pistols.²²

Light weapons:

LURD reportedly seized nine SA-7/Strella-2 surface-to-air missiles from dissidents involved in the 2000-01 incursions.²³

Sources

Domestic:

The Guinean military armed the Young Volunteers, although not all were given a weapon; 70 per cent of the 2,380 Volunteers were armed and

participated in combat.²⁴ Guinea's Anti-Crime Brigade seized 52 craft 12-gauge shotguns between 2001 and 2003,²⁵ which would appear to confirm reports of the existence of illicit small arms production workshops in the country.²⁶

Foreign:

Liberia and the RUF provided armed fighters to fight alongside the RFDG.²⁷ The Guinean military armed the Young Volunteers.

Recovered

DDR:

There has been little effort to disarm ex-Volunteers. As of March 2004, an estimated 2,000 Volunteers had reintegrated in civilian life,²⁸ although the fate of their weapons remains unclear.²⁹ These include the 350 Young Volunteers who participated in a joint UNICEF and Guinean government pilot DDR programme. UNICEF has launched an appeal to demobilize an additional 1,000 Young Volunteers in 2004.³⁰ How to disarm and demobilize former LURD rebels who remain in Guinea³¹ is another concern.³² The Guinean government denies their presence and there is no reliable estimate of their current number.

Other:

The Guinean government, with US support, destroyed 21,906 obsolete small arms and light weapons as well as 89,889 rounds of ammunition between 26 September and 11 November 2003. These included AK-47s, portable anti-tank guns, and, 278 Strela-2 surface-to-air missiles.³³

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES**CAFF****Extent of recruitment:**

An undetermined number of children, some as young as 12, joined the Young Volunteers in 2000–01.³⁴ There are reports that LURD recruited Liberian children as young as 10 in Guinean refugee camps.³⁵ In November 2003, UNICEF estimated that approximately 2,000 Guinean children, of whom about 400 were girls, were in need of demobilization; by March 2004, 350 former Young Volunteers had received vocational training.³⁶

Functions:

See Chapter 6.

Displacement**IDPs:**

The 2000–01 cross-border attacks led to the internal displacement of 250,000 Guineans.³⁷ In May 2003, due to the proximity of the fighting in Liberia, there were approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Guinea, primarily residing in the country's forest region.³⁸ In 2004, their number declined to an estimated 82,000.³⁹

Refugees abroad:

Four thousand one hundred and eight Guineans found asylum in industrialized countries in 2002, while 3,421 refugees who had been living in Guinea did the same.⁴⁰

Refugees hosted:

Due to shared borders with countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea has hosted more than a million refugees over the last ten years.⁴¹ As of September 2003, there were more than 280,000 refugees in Guinea, 60 per cent of whom lived outside camps; 140,000 were Liberian, 30,000 came from Sierra Leone, 7,000 from Côte d'Ivoire, and more than 100,000 were Guinean returnees fleeing fighting in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.⁴² UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme

for Sierra Leonean refugees lasted from December 2000 to July 2004 and assisted 92,944 people to return to their homeland. An additional 1,732 Sierra Leonean refugees have been allowed to remain in Guinea and integrate locally.⁴³ These numbers went down to a total of 73,000 hosted refugees in 2004.⁴⁴

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

Rebels involved in the 2000–01 attacks perpetrated killings and rapes against civilians and refugees in Guinea during the cross-border attacks.⁴⁵ The RUF is among the additional armed groups who have perpetrated rape, murder, and beatings of refugees and civilians in Guinea.⁴⁶ A UNHCR/Save the Children–United Kingdom assessment team reported widespread sexual abuse of refugee and IDP children. Among the alleged exploiters are humanitarian aid workers.⁴⁷

Other:

Some ex-Young Volunteers are organized in youth gangs and intimidate and threaten the population.⁴⁸ Tougher anti-crime measures implemented by the government since December 2003 appear to have reduced banditry by the ex-Volunteers.⁴⁹

OUTLOOK

The effectiveness of the peace processes currently under way in neighbouring countries will undoubtedly influence the security climate in Guinea. The large number of unattended ex-combatants present in the country also threatens regional stability. Although officials do not lack the will, the resources for disarmament and reintegration are inadequate despite the fact that former Volunteers represent a potential pool of fighters that could threaten future stability. Indeed, reports are now surfacing of young Guineans joining armed groups in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁰

The remaining presence of former LURD rebels in Guinea is equally worrying.⁵¹ Finding themselves underemployed in Liberia, they cross the border freely into Guinea, where they have reportedly incited ethnically based violence and generally contribute to regional instability.⁵² Rumours abound of Taylor loyalists recruiting fighters in Liberia's Nimba county in an effort to destabilize the Guinean government. This only fuels concerns regarding who will succeed President Conte, who is reportedly in bad health.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces	7	Szajkowski (2004, pp. 147, 298).
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration	8	<i>Le Monde</i> (2000).
IDP	Internally displaced person	9	ICG (2003).
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy	10	ICG (2003, p. 18).
RFDG	Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée	11	UNSC (2001, para. 132).
RUF	Revolutionary United Front	12	ICG (2003, p. 18).
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	13	IRIN (2004b).
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	14	Seven thousand is the figure used by UNICEF in its planning for demobilization activities for the Young Volunteers. See UNOCHA (2002; 2003a).
		15	See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
		16	Confidential interviews with Guinean military officials, Ministry of Social Affairs representatives, and UNICEF officials, Conakry, March 2004. As many as 30,000 Volunteers responded to the government's appeal. See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
		17	ICG (2003, p.18).
		18	UNOCHA, (2003b, p. 56).
		19	See Chapter 5 on refugee camp militarization in Guinea.
		20	UNOCHA (2003b, p. 18).
		21	Republic of Guinea (2001, p. 6).
		22	Republic of Guinea (2003).
		23	Brabazon (2003, p.9); UNSC (2003, para. 112).
		24	Republic of Guinea (2001).
		25	Republic of Guinea (2003).
		26	Confidential interview with Guinean official, Conakry, March 2004.
		27	ICG (2003, p. 18).
		28	Confidential interview with Guinean Ministry of Social Affairs official,

ENDNOTES

- 1 BBC News (2000).
- 2 UNSC (2003a, paras. 67–68; 2003b, paras. 39–40); ICG (2002, p. 11); HRW (2003).
- 3 ICG (2003, p. 1).
- 4 ICG (2003, p. 18).
- 5 UNSC (2003a, paras. 67-68) ; Szajkowski (2004, p. 298).
- 6 IISS (2002).
- 7 Szajkowski (2004, pp. 147, 298).
- 8 *Le Monde* (2000).
- 9 ICG (2003).
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- 12 ICG (2003, p. 18).
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- 14 Seven thousand is the figure used by UNICEF in its planning for demobilization activities for the Young Volunteers. See UNOCHA (2002; 2003a).
- 15 See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
- 16 Confidential interviews with Guinean military officials, Ministry of Social Affairs representatives, and UNICEF officials, Conakry, March 2004. As many as 30,000 Volunteers responded to the government's appeal. See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
- 17 ICG (2003, p.18).
- 18 UNOCHA, (2003b, p. 56).
- 19 See Chapter 5 on refugee camp militarization in Guinea.
- 20 UNOCHA (2003b, p. 18).
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- 23 Brabazon (2003, p.9); UNSC (2003, para. 112).
- 24 Republic of Guinea (2001).
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- 26 Confidential interview with Guinean official, Conakry, March 2004.
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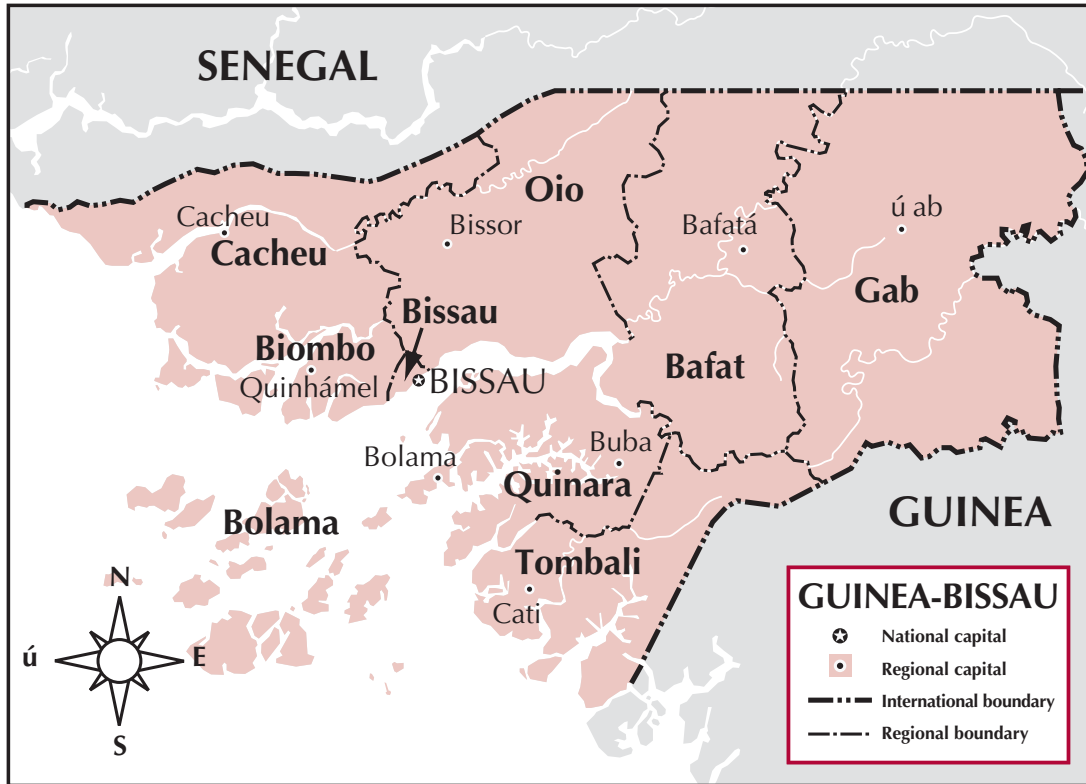
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GUINEA-BISSAU

OVERVIEW

In June 1998, a military junta led by former Chief of Staff Ansumane Mané mutinied against the government of President João Bernardo Vieira over allegations of Mané's collaboration with Senegalese rebels of the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC).¹ The outbreak of civil war prompted the dispatch of about 2,000 Senegalese and 400 Guinean troops to Bissau in support of the government,² followed by the deployment of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping force between December 1998 and February 1999.³ Fighting resumed in May 1999, however, with the military junta rapidly taking over the government.

A fragile calm returned to the country in late 1999, and presidential elections in January 2000 resulted in a successful transition from military to democratic rule, bringing President Kumba Yala to power. In November 2000, the government made several hundred arrests following another attempted coup by Mané, who was killed later that month by forces loyal

to the government.⁴ The new president was unable to unite the country, and a further military coup in September 2003 ousted Yala and led to the appointment of a transitional government headed by interim President Henrique Pereira Rosa. Parliamentary elections were held in March 2004.⁵ The African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) won the most seats, while former President Yala's party, the Party of Social Renewal (PRS), came second. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 19 June 2005.

Small arms proliferation is an acute problem in Guinea-Bissau, and a threat to the country's fledgling democratic process. Many arms circulating today originated from the country's war of independence against Portugal. Independence fighters kept their weapons as trophies after winning the war in 1974. Based on their number, experts estimate that liberation struggle veterans still possessed approximately 20,000 small arms in early 2004, mainly AK-47 assault rifles, captured NATO firearms, and old hunting rifles.⁶ Again, as many as 10,000 small arms were distributed to civilians during the 1998–99 civil war, primarily Kalashnikov assault

rifles of Ukrainian and Bulgarian origin, and handguns.⁷ As a result Guinea-Bissau has served as a source of weapons for parts of West Africa, including MFDC rebels in the Casamance region of Senegal.⁸

ARMED GROUPS

Military junta/Mané followers

Origins/composition:

Members of the national armed forces who mainly made up the military junta were backed by veterans of the liberation struggle and young men recruited to the junta's cause, as well as fighters from the MFDC. The junta numbered 15,000–17,000 combatants during the civil war, but the core of hard-core Mané followers that remained active after 1999 numbered only 100–200.

Leadership:

Ansumane Mané, former Chief of Staff, was killed by government forces in November 2000 after a failed coup attempt.¹¹

Areas of control/activity:

Mané followers were based along the Senegalese border.¹²

Sources of financing/support:

MFDC fighters fought alongside Mané during the civil war.¹³

Status:

Defunct since Mané's death.¹⁴ Deadly clashes on the Senegalese border between the Bissau-Guinean army and armed elements were reported in early 2004, however.¹⁵

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

AK-47 and other Kalashnikov assault rifles, handguns, captured NATO firearms, and old hunting rifles.¹⁶

Light weapons:

Rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), mortars.¹⁷

Sources

Domestic:

Most of the weapons in circulation today were looted from state stockpiles during the liberation struggle or during the 1998–99 civil war.¹⁸

*Recovered***DDR:**

It is estimated that approximately 20,000 combatants fought during the civil war. These included 3,000–5,000 supporters of former President Vieira, and 15,000–17,000 fighters supporting the military junta of Ansumane Mané.¹⁹ As of March 2005, 7,182 ex-combatants had participated in the International Organization for Migration (IOM)-supported demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration programme. Of these, 2,406 completed the process and an additional 2,031 were expected to be reintegrated by June 2005. In April 2005, the programme was applying for an extension to December 2005 to reintegrate the remaining ex-combatants.²⁰ Guinea-Bissau's demobilization and reintegration programme, however, does not have a disarmament component.

Other:

The Bissau-Guinean National Commission on Small Arms was elaborating voluntary weapons collection schemes in early 2004.²¹ The United Nations Secretary-General dispatched a fact-finding and project development mission to Guinea-Bissau from 7 to 11 March 2005 to assess levels of small arms proliferation in the country

and design project proposals to mitigate the threat.²²

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES*CAFF***Extent of recruitment:**

An estimated 600 children fought during the 1998–99 civil war.²³ There are reports that children 'well under the age of 16' participated.²⁴

*Displacement***IDPs:**

The 1998–99 civil war led to the internal displacement of between 300,000 and 350,000 civilians, the majority of whom have now resettled.²⁵ Nevertheless, both the high prevalence of landmines and lack of economic opportunity complicate the resettlement process.²⁶

Refugees abroad:

The 1998–99 civil war forced 13,000 Bissau-Guineans to flee the country.²⁷

Refugees hosted:

Guinea-Bissau hosted about 7,000 refugees at the end of 2002, including some 6,000 from Senegal, and up to 1,000 from other countries, primarily Liberia and Sierra Leone.²⁸ The country hosted 7,551 refugees in 2004.²⁹

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

Reports, such as those of Amnesty International, suggest that the military junta committed human rights abuses during the civil war, including beatings of prisoners, killings, and looting.³⁰

OUTLOOK

Guinea-Bissau remains in a potentially explosive situation given huge salary arrears inherited from the previous government and continued military influence over the country's politics. On 6 October 2004, 650 soldiers who had participated in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) staged a mutiny and shot dead army Chief of Staff Correia Seabra.³¹ They claimed to be motivated not by political considerations but by grievances over salaries, poor living conditions, and corruption within the military hierarchy.³² At the mutineers' request, Seabra was replaced by General Tagme Na Way, and the UN provided the government with funds to pay the disgruntled soldiers USD 1,028 for each month served with UNMIL (a total of USD 2.2 million).³³

The UN expressed concerns that the mutiny was also motivated by ethnic considerations, with Balantas seeking to control the army.³⁴

The reorganization of the armed forces is high on the new government's agenda. Ongoing ethnic imbalance, non-payment of salaries, and the poor quality of military infrastructure all have the potential to further destabilize the country.³⁵ Na Way began his tenure by appointing 65 new senior officers who better reflected the ethnic and political balance of Bissau itself. Many of the new appointees were officials who were purged during the five years of upheaval in the country.³⁶ Military reforms planned with the assistance of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, which are designed to dramatically reduce the size of the army, closing more than half of the country's 25 military bases, will likely add to the number of disgruntled former fighters, however.³⁷ Given the country's recent history of political unrest, disarmament and weapons collection will be critical elements for achieving peace and security.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MFDC	Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde
PRS	Party of Social Renewal
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher
UNMIL	UN Mission in Liberia

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Picture taken 19 September 2003 in Bissau showing Guinea-Bissau's former army chief of staff and interim president, General Verissimo Correia Seabra. Correia Seabra was killed 6 October 2004 during unrest by mutinous soldiers.



LIBERIA

OVERVIEW

In 2000, three years after Liberia's devastating eight-year civil war ended, the country again found itself embroiled in armed conflict. President Charles Taylor, the erstwhile leader of the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL), faced challenges from two new rebel groups: the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD, composed of groups that lost the 1989–96 civil war) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL, which formed in 2003). The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the country's other security forces (including various paramilitary and militia groups) fared poorly against the rebels. By June 2003, war had engulfed most of the country, and the capital, Monrovia, was under siege, creating a humanitarian disaster.

The three parties engaged in negotiations in Ghana. On 17 June they concluded a ceasefire agreement (which was violated even before coming into force) and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra on 18 August.

Taylor went into exile in Nigeria on 11 August 2003. The peace agreement provided for the disarmament of ex-combatants and the formation of a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) that was to lead the country to elections scheduled for October 2005. As of 28 February 2005, a total of 16,503 international personnel were deployed in Liberia as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).¹

ARMED GROUPS

Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

Origins/composition:

LURD was formed in Freetown in February 2000 by Liberian exiles, who felt frustrated by and excluded from the implementation of the 1997 Abuja Peace Accords and were opposed to the rule of Charles Taylor.² It is primarily composed of ethnic Mandingos and some Krahn. These same ethnic groups constituted the majority of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), which fought Taylor's NPFL during the civil war.³ The

Mandingos have ancestral roots in Guinea, where they are called Malinké. In addition, 500 Kamajor fighters from the Sierra Leone-Liberian border region joined LURD, largely on a contract basis, for a payment of as much as USD 300 each. More than 33,000 self-proclaimed LURD ex-combatants participated in the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (DDRR) programme, including children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) and women associated with fighting forces (WAFF).⁵ This is in sharp contrast with expert estimates which give a range of between 3,000⁶ to 8,000⁷ fighters.

Leadership:

Sekou Damate Conneh was the first LURD leader.⁸ In 2004, however, just as LURD began to disarm, a leadership crisis emerged within the organization as Conneh and the Minister of Justice in the NTGL, Kabineh Jan'éh, each sought to be recognized as the group's Chairman. On 27 July 2004, Jan'éh was named the acting Chairman after the LURD Military High Command suspended Conneh. ECOWAS, however, announced in October 2004 that it technically recognized Conneh as the LURD Chairman.⁹ Days later, a LURD elec-

tion was held without Conneh and Jan'éh was elected and sworn in as the new Chairman.¹⁰ Support for both leaders is strong and there is clear dissension amongst the former LURD fighters, which has led to outbreaks of violence.¹¹ According to one senior official at the National Commission for DDRR (NCDDRR), the division within LURD is so significant, that should the group ever rearm, it would likely splinter into two distinct armed factions.¹²

Areas of control/activity:

LURD's stronghold is Lofa county, in the north-west of the country. An undetermined number of LURD combatants were based in Guinea's Forest region during the civil war, including the Kouankan refugee camp¹³ and the towns of Macenta,¹⁴ Guéckédou, and Nzérékoré.¹⁵ During the war, LURD was active throughout the country and even took Monrovia's port.

Sources of financing/support:

Guinea reportedly provided weapons as well as logistical and medical support to LURD,¹⁶ including mortar rounds and other ammunition manufactured in Iran.¹⁷ Former members of Sierra Leone's Civil Defence Force (CDF), Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and West Side Boys have also fought alongside LURD.¹⁸

Status:

LURD signed the CPA in Accra and participated in the DDRR process.¹⁹ It officially disbanded on 3 November 2004 following the end of the disarmament process, but remains very much an organized faction and is still considered powerful and potentially dangerous, despite its leadership problems. There is speculation among Liberians that LURD may not fully disband until after the scheduled October 2005 presidential elections.

Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)

Origins/composition:

MODEL is mainly composed of ethnic Krahn who split from LURD in March 2003.²⁰ A number of fighters had previously fought in Côte d'Ivoire as mercenaries.²¹ More than 13,000 self-proclaimed MODEL ex-combatants participated in the DDRR programme, including CAFF and WAFF,²² which is in sharp contrast with expert estimates of 1,000 fighters.²³

Leadership:

Thomas Yaya Nimely, the leader of MODEL, is currently the transitional government's foreign minister.²⁴

Areas of control/activity:

MODEL was active in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Liberia, which border Côte d'Ivoire.

Sources of financing/support:

The Krahn are related to Côte d'Ivoire's We ethnic group. MODEL fighters frequently crossed the Ivorian border for logistical support and participated in the Ivorian conflict on President Gbagbo's side.^{25, 26}

Status:

MODEL participated in the DDRR programme but remains well organized.²⁷

Former Government of Liberia (GoL) militias and paramilitaries

Origins/composition:

Taylor created a number of militias and paramilitary groups (e.g. the Anti-Terrorist Unit, the Special Security Services and the Special Operations Division) to defend his government after the 1997 elections. These armed groups included fighters of the pre-1997 civil war as well as new and younger recruits, including child soldiers from Liberia and others affiliated with the RUF.²⁸ More than 15,000 self-proclaimed GoL paramilitaries and militias partici-

pated in the DDRR programme, including CAFF and WAFF.²⁹

Leadership:

Taylor loyalists.

Areas of control/activity:

Taylor's security groups and militias were active throughout the country.

Sources of financing/support:

Charles Taylor/Liberian government.

Status:

In December 2003, 12,664 AFL and ex-militia/paramilitary fighters showed up at the first phase of the DDRR programme.³⁰

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

LURD and MODEL fighters used self-loading pistols, M72 AB2 automatic rifles, FN FAL rifles, AKM and AK-47 assault rifles, M-16 rifles, SKS rifles, PKM light machine guns, RPK and RPD machine guns, and Chinese M-60 type 7.62 mm light machine guns.³¹ The AFL and pro-government groups mainly used Chinese-made AK-47s.³²

Light weapons:

Both rebel and government forces relied extensively on light weapons

for tactical reasons. Combat would quite systematically begin with rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs) shelling followed by small arms fire during the second phase.³³

The June–July 2003 offensive against Monrovia is a well-documented example of heavy mortar shelling by LURD.³⁴ Other light weapons in the hands of rebels included RPO-type grenade launchers, British-made 60 mm and 81 mm mortars, and DSHK 12.7 mm heavy machine guns, as well as SA-7/Strella surface-to-air missiles.³⁵ The AFL and pro-government groups used universal and general-purpose machine guns and RPG's.³⁶

Sources

Domestic:

LURD captured FN FAL rifles, AKM assault rifles, RPO-type grenade launchers, and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles from government forces or government-backed armed groups.³⁷ LURD also obtained weapons from 'unpaid military or police personnel from both Liberia and Guinea'.³⁸

Foreign:

Guinea reportedly provided weapons, ammunition, and logistical and medical support to LURD.³⁹ Some of the 81 mm mortar rounds LURD com-

batants used in the June–July 2003 Monrovia attacks were reportedly shipped from Iran to Guinea and then smuggled to LURD.⁴⁰ LURD has also allegedly used United Arab Emirates-made mortar ammunition, which is likely to have somehow leaked from Guinean stockpiles.⁴¹ Where roads permitted it, arms and ammunition were transported in trucks from Guinea to LURD bases in Liberia. In less accessible areas, LURD reportedly forced civilians to carry ‘boxes of ammunition and brand new weapons’ from ‘a non-military vehicle, a warehouse, or in one case from inside the military outpost in Ouet-Kama’ in Guinea to LURD bases in Kolahun and Bopolu in Lofa county.⁴² MODEL has reportedly received much of its arms and uniforms equipment from Côte d’Ivoire.⁴³

The Liberian government also admitted acquiring significant quantities of weapons from the Ex-Yugoslavia from June to August 2002 through the Belgrade-based Temex brokering company, using false Nigerian end-user certificates.⁴⁴ Regionally, Burkina Faso and Libya have allegedly served as transshipment points for arms transferred to the Liberian government.⁴⁵ Brokers in

Hong Kong and mainland China allegedly facilitated the transfer of Chinese-made weapons to Liberia’s largest, Taylor-controlled logging enterprise, the Oriental Timber Company.⁴⁶ The Taylor government used extra-budgetary revenue and logistics (ships, ports, etc.) of the logging and mineral extraction industries to import weapons in contravention of the UN arms embargo directed at the country.⁴⁷ Since the end of the war, however, external support appears to have ended.⁴⁸

Recovered

DDR:

A first disarmament campaign conducted from November 1996 to February 1997 collected 7,797 serviceable and 1,782 unserviceable weapons.⁴⁹ A UN Panel of Experts reports that 19,000 weapons were collected from 1997 to 1999, but it is not clear where this figure comes from.⁵⁰ However, it is known that between July and October 1999 over 20,000 weapons were destroyed in Liberia by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), which included those turned in during the disarma-

ment and demobilization (DD) programme of 1996–97.⁵¹ In December 2003 an UNMIL-led DDR programme was launched and approximately 13,000 government soldiers and militia were disarmed, surrendering 8,686 weapons in the process.⁵² DDR was then suspended owing to ex-combatant misunderstandings regarding benefits and disturbances caused by ‘disgruntled elements’.⁵³

The programme was re-launched on 15 April 2004, and DD was completed by 31 October 2004. A total of 102,193 ex-combatants were disarmed and a total of 27,804 weapons and 7,129,198 rounds of ammunition were collected.⁵⁴ Weapons collected included 20,458 rifles and sub-machine guns, 690 machine guns, 641 pistols, 1,829 RPGs, and 178 mortars.⁵⁵ There was some concern, however, that heavy weapons were not being turned in and were instead being smuggled across Liberia’s borders,⁵⁶ notably to Côte d’Ivoire, where reintegration packages were expected to exceed by three times what was offered in Liberia (USD 900 vs. USD 300).

Other:

ECOMOG recovered 3,750 weapons between February and August 1997 during cordon and search operations; these were likely among the

20,000 weapons destroyed in 1999.⁵⁷ The Liberian DDR Strategy and Implementation Framework called for a community arms collection programme, to be implemented following the completion of Liberia’s formal DDR process.⁵⁸

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

MODEL, LURD, and former government armed forces all recruited and used child soldiers.⁵⁹ According to the UN, government militia groups and rebels recruited up to 15,000 child soldiers, forcibly or voluntarily.⁶⁰ A total of 11,221 children (8,704 males, 2,517 females) were admitted into the DDR programme.⁶¹

Functions:

Child soldiers in Liberia were used on the front lines of combat, perpetrating killings, mutilations, rape, and looting. Often known as ‘wives’, girls served as fighters in all three groups and also cooked, cleaned, carried supplies, and served as spies.⁶²

Displacement

IDPs:

In 2004, there were 531,616 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Liberia.⁶³

Refugees abroad:

Although 50,000 Liberian refugees have already returned to Liberia since August 2003, approximately 300,000 remain scattered across West Africa (primarily in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone).⁶⁴

Refugees hosted:

When the ceasefire was broken in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2004, thousands of Ivorian refugees began fleeing into neighbouring Liberia. Within the first few days, estimates of the new refugees ranged from 3,000 to 5,000 and were climbing.⁶⁵ Liberia hosted a total of 26,000 refugees in 2004.⁶⁶

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

Government troops and pro-government militias have perpetrated killings, torture, and rape.⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch has reported that rape has been so pervasive throughout the Liberian conflict as to be termed a weapon of war; victims ranged-

from girls under eight years of age to elderly women in their seventies.⁶⁸

Other:

Abuses committed by LURD were reportedly less widespread and systematic than those by pro-government forces. Nevertheless, they included summary killings, abduction, rape, forced recruitment of men and children, and forced labour.⁶⁹ MODEL also subjected civilians to forced labour, and engaged in the widespread looting of civilian property, sometimes accompanied by rape and other forms of sexual violence.⁷⁰

OUTLOOK

Shortcomings aside, the DDRR process has successfully enabled Liberia to take significant steps on the path towards peace and stability. There is little doubt, however, that many legitimate ex-combatants were left behind, many still with arms. This assessment appears to be shared by many Liberians, and prior to the closure of disarmament, both LURD and MODEL representatives made public appeals for DD to be extended. Their concerns were reinforced in late November 2004 when ex-com-

batants in Zwedru reportedly erected road blocks and harassed UN personnel to protest the closure of the DD process.

Funding shortages may aggravate the situation by postponing adequate reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. As of 1 November 2004, a total of USD 30.4 million had been pledged, while the actual amount received was USD 24.3 million—approximately 80 per cent of the total. With the caseload of ex-combatants disarmed far exceeding the original estimate of 38,000, the projected budget for DDRR was shattered.⁷¹ Long years of destruction and turmoil will make recovery—political, economic, and social—an arduous process as well. Security, in particular, remains a significant concern. Assuming the elections are peaceful, the post-election process will require a robust and sustainable security sector reform process and a commitment to keep engaged long after the elections.⁷²

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DD	Disarmament and demobilization
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reconstruction
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
GoL	Government of Liberia
IDP	Internally displaced person
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NCDDRR	National Commission for DDRR
NPFL	National Patriotic Front for Liberia
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher

RUF	Revolutionary United Front	13 HRW (2002b). 14 ICG (2003c, p. 18).
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy	15 UNSC (2001, para. 167). 16 ICG (2002, p. 11); Global Witness (2003). 17 HRW (2004d).
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia	18 Brabazon (2003, p. 8). 19 IRIN (2004a).
UNOL	UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia	20 UNSC (2003, paras. 56–57). 21 Confidential written correspondence with Western diplomat based in West Africa, May 2004.
WAFF	Women associated with fighting forces	22 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004). 23 ICG (2003b, p. 11). 24 IRIN (2004a). 25 CSC (2004); see also Amnesty International (2003).

ENDNOTES

- 1 These included 14,738 troops, 205 military observers, 1,074 civilian police and 486 international civilian personnel (UNDPKO, 2005).
- 2 ICG (2002, p. 4). Other sources claim that LURD formed in July 1999 (Brabazon, 2003, p. 2).
- 3 Brabazon (2003).
- 4 Szajkowski (2004).
- 5 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004).
- 6 Brabazon (2003, p. 7).
- 7 IISS (2004).
- 8 IRIN (2004a).
- 9 The Analyst (2004).
- 10 The News (2004).
- 11 UNSC (2004c, par. 10).
- 12 Interview with NCDDRR official in Monrovia, 20 November 2004.
- 26 ICG (2003a, p. 14). See also 'Côte d'Ivoire' in Part II.
- 27 IRIN (2004a). See chapter 4.
- 28 HRW (2004c).
- 29 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004).
- 30 UNSC (2004a, para.19).
- 31 UNSC (2003); Global Witness (2003); Brabazon (2003); ICG (2003b).
- 32 Global Witness (2003, p. 24).
- 33 Brabazon (2003, p. 9).
- 34 HRW (2003).
- 35 UNSC (2003, para. 114); Brabazon (2003, p. 9); HRW (2003).
- 36 Global Witness (2003, p. 24).
- 37 Brabazon (2003, pp. 8-9).
- 38 UNSC (2002, para. 93).
- 39 UNSC (2003, para. 68); ICG (2002, p. 11); HRW (2002a, p. 10); HRW (2003b, pp. 18–25).

- 40 HRW (2003, p. 15).
- 41 UNSC (2002, para. 94); HRW (2003B, pp. 18–25).
- 42 HRW (2002a, p. 10).
- 43 ICG (2003b, pp.10–11).
- 44 UNSC (2003, paras. 69–70, Table 1).
- 45 Global Witness (2003, p. 22); UNSC (2000, paras. 203–04).
- 46 Global Witness (2003, p. 21).
- 47 Global Witness (2004a, p.10).
- 48 Confidential written correspondence with informed source, May 2004.
- 49 UNSC (1997a, Annex II). See also Chapter 4.
- 50 UNSC (2004d, para. 64). See Table 4.2 in Chapter 4 for a different breakdown of weapons recovered since 1996.
- 51 PCASED (1999). For a breakdown of these weapons, see Table 4.2 in chapter 4.
- 52 UNSC (2004a, para. 19).
- 53 UNSC (2004a, para.19).
- 54 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004).
- 55 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004). See Table 4.3 in Chapter 4 for a breakdown of DDRR statistics.
- 56 UNSC (2004b, p. 5).
- 57 UNSC (1997b, para. 16).
- 58 Draft Interim Secretariat (2003, p. 16).
- 59 CSC (2004, pp. 24-25).
- 60 IRIN (2003).
- 61 UNMIL (2004); NCDDRR (2004). See Table 4.3 in chapter 4.
- 62 HRW (2004b). See also Chapter 6.
- 63 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 64 IRIN (2004b).
- 65 UNHCR (2004).
- 66 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 67 HRW (2002a, pp. 4–7).
- 68 HRW (2003a); Global IDP Project (2004).
- 69 HRW (2002a, pp. 7–9).
- 70 HRW (2004a).
- 71 See chapter 4. Funding figures drawn from UNDP (2004).
- 72 Colombant (2005).

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MALI

OVERVIEW

From 1990 to 1996 northern Mali faced an insurgency that stemmed from long-standing separatism among the nomadic Tuareg and Arabs as well as government marginalization and repression of the north of the country.¹ The Tamanrasset Accords (1991), the National Pact (1992), and several accords in 1995 finally led to the termination of conflict and to the demobilization of 12,000 ex-combatants.² The 1996 Flame of Peace ceremony in Timbuktu saw the symbolic incineration of 3,000 small arms. In 1999, the government initiated further decentralization and increased autonomy for northern Mali. In addition to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), the government of Mali, with support from Belgium, conducted a weapons-for-development programme from December 2000 to June 2003,³ which collected and destroyed 850 weapons, 12,548 rounds of ammunition, and 230 grenades.⁴

Despite Bamako's ground-breaking approach to disarmament and peace, northern Mali is still plagued

with gun trafficking and persistent insecurity. For example, the Algeria-based armed group known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat, GSPC) reportedly travelled to northern Mali in 2003–04 to obtain mortar launchers, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and surface-to-air missiles.⁵ Weapons are trafficked to the country from its Sahelian neighbours, Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger,⁶ originating from as far away as Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.⁷ Within Mali, sources include weapons stolen or sold from government armouries⁸ and craft production.⁹ Recent kidnappings,¹⁰ vehicle hijackings,¹¹ as well as outbreaks of inter-tribal conflicts¹² demonstrate that northern Mali still has a small arms problem.

OUTLOOK

While the state's treatment of the Tuareg has certainly improved since the days of President Traoré, when the central government marginalized the north, harsh environmental conditions (drought and competition for land in the worsening climate of the

Sahel) are factors that still afflict Malian society.¹³ Community-based violence in the north of the country has not vanished. In September 2004, an outbreak of violence between the Arab and Kounta tribes resulted in 13 deaths; clashes between the two groups have been ongoing for the past five years.¹⁴ On the other side of the country, the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has had deleterious spillover effects, effectively stopping cross-border traffic and bringing the local economy and utility-dependent services (such as health care) to a halt.¹⁵ However, the refugee situation remained manageable. In 2004, Mali was host to 10,009 refugees,¹⁶ primarily from Mauritania (6,150), while the Ivorian conflict generated an influx of 1,504 refugees in March 2003.¹⁷

The 2003–04 GSPC incursions have drawn international attention to northern Mali. The US government has provided military training and support to the Malian armed forces, including desert-specific vehicles and equipment through the US Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), which also covers Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.¹⁸ Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Mauritania have also adopted regional measures such as the creation of a bureau for

intelligence gathering in Tamanrasset, Algeria, in addition to the establishment of bilateral initiatives that aim to improve border monitoring.¹⁹

These initiatives do little, however, to provide alternative livelihoods for the northern population, whose limited wealth comes primarily from international smuggling and transport, activities that will be threatened by enhanced border security.²⁰ The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) coordinated meetings in Timbuktu in April 2005 among officials from Mali, Mauritania, and Niger to devise an integrated approach to tackle the cross-border nature of security problems and the relationship between the lack of security and the lack of development in these areas.²¹ The case of Mali not only illustrates the regional context of the small arms problem but also demonstrates that effectively combating the scourge requires the active participation of neighbouring states and enhanced support from the international community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
GSPC	Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa

ENDNOTES

- 1 See Chapter 2.
- 2 Humphreys and ag Mohamed (2003, p. 28).
- 3 Interview with Colonel Sirakoro Sangaré, President of the Malian National Commission on Small Arms, 22 March 2005, by telephone.
- 4 GoM (2003).
- 5 Smith (2004).
- 6 Small Arms Survey focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 7 Maliweb (2004).
- 8 Confidential written correspondence with international researchers with expertise on northern Mali, January and February 2005. A recent report by the International Crisis Group mentions that ‘Several officers at the Malian army garrison were punished in 2003 when commanders from Bamako discovered that most of its armoury had

been sold’ (ICG, 2005, p. 19).

- 9 Kante (2004).
- 10 Sylla (2005).
- 11 IRIN (2004a).
- 12 IRIN (2004a).
- 13 Kivimäki (2003); Keita (2002); Poulton and ag Youssouf (1998).
- 14 IRIN (2004a).
- 15 IRIN (2004b). See also Chapter 2.
- 16 UNOCHA (2004, p.9).
- 17 UNHCR (2003, p. 226).
- 18 Smith (2004); ICG (2005, p. 30).
See also Chapter 2.
- 19 ICG (2005, p. 30).
- 20 ICG (2005, p. i)
- 21 Written correspondence with Andrew Gilmour, Political Advisor of the UN Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in West Africa, 8 April 2005.

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NIGER

OVERVIEW

In 1992, the nomadic Tuareg in the north and Toubou in the east engaged in an armed rebellion against the Nigerien state. Their aim was greater political representation and a more equitable distribution of national resources. A fragmented guerrilla war ensued in the Air, Azawak, Kowar, and Manga regions, which prompted local Arab and Peulh communities to establish self-defence militias to prevent both Tuareg and Toubou rebels from stealing cattle and property in order to fund their war effort. Three peace accords, in Ouagadougou (1995), Algiers (1997), and N'Djamena (1998), followed by the adoption of a new constitution in 1999 and elections in 2000, restored peace in what remains one of the world's poorest countries.

Presidential elections in December 2004 resulted in the re-election of Mamadou Tandja, the first Nigerien leader to finish his tenure without being ousted in a military coup.¹ Even though drought and underdevelopment are the most serious challenges facing the country today,² peace in

Niger should not be taken for granted. A ten-day army mutiny in August 2002³ and reports in late 2003 of sporadic fighting between Toubous and Tuaregs in the Tesker area underscore the fragility of Niger's peace process.⁴ Furthermore, in March 2004 the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat, GSPC) clashed with Nigerien forces in the north of the country.⁵ Nigerien authorities reported that the GSPC had been collaborating with Nigerien armed bandits and was 'using hideouts and caches left over from the Tuareg rebellion'.⁶

ARMED GROUPS

Tuareg and Toubou rebel groups

Origins/composition:

Soon after the resolution of the 1992 guerrilla war, the formerly united Air and Azawak Liberation Front (Front de libération de l'Air et de l'Azawak, FLAA) dissolved into as many as 13 Tuareg and Toubou rebel groups that wound up splitting along tribal lines in order to contest adherence to the successive peace agreements.⁷ The

Union of Armed Resistance Forces (Union des forces de la résistance armée, UFRA, a coalition of three groups), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara (Forces armées révolutionnaires du Sahara, FARS), and the Democratic Front for Renewal (Front Démocratique du Renouveau, FDR) were among the last groups to agree to peace in 1997 and 1998 respectively.⁸ More than 7,000 ex-combatants registered to take part in the country's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme.⁹

Leadership:

The FLAA was led by Rhissa Ag Boula,¹⁰ the UFRA by Mohamed Anacko, the FARS by Chahai Barkay, and the FDR by Issa Lamine.¹¹

Areas of control/activity:

The rebellion was active in the regions of Air, Azawak, Kawar, and Manga. The Tuareg and Toubou live in the desert areas bordering Algeria, Chad, Libya, and Mali. The FDR was mostly active in the Kawar region, which is home to Niger's largest oilfield, much of which extends into Libya.¹²

Sources of financing/support:

As their own resources decreased, Toubou and Tuareg rebels stole cattle and goods from other communities to purchase arms and finance their war effort.¹³

Status:

Reintegration is ongoing. None of the rebellion's armed groups remain active today.¹⁴

Arab and Peulh self-defence militias**Origins/composition:**

Arab and Peulh communities organized self-defence militias to protect property and cattle from insurgents seeking to finance their war effort. The Vigilance Committee of Tassara (Comité de vigilance de Tassara, CVT), the Self-Defence Committee (Comité d'Autodéfense, CAD), and the Peulh and Arab militias were the principal self-defence groups.¹⁵

Leadership:

The CVT was led by Najim Boujima, the CAD by Boubacar Ahmed, the Peulh Militia by Maazou Boukar, and the Arab Militia by Hamid Ahmed.¹⁶

Areas of control/activity:

The CVT and the CAD were based in Azawak, and the Peulh and Arab militias operated in the Manga region.¹⁷

Sources of financing/support:

Arab and Peulh communities.

Status:

None of the self-defence militias remain active today.¹⁸

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

Small arms collected during the N'Guigmi 'Arms for Development' pilot project included old mousqueton rifles, MAS 36, SIG, AK-47s, and FN FAL automatic weapons.¹⁹

Light weapons:

Rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), grenades.²⁰

Sources

Domestic:

Very rudimentary craft small arms can be found in N'Guigmi.²¹

Foreign:

Armed Chadian rebels who entered Niger in the early 1990s sold weapons to Nigerien rebels.²² Weapons were also smuggled in from other neighbouring countries, including Nigeria, Libya, and Algeria.²³ During the rebellion, assault rifles reportedly cost between two and four camels.²⁴

Recovered

DDR:

The 1,243 weapons surrendered as part of the peace agreements²⁵ were subsequently destroyed at a Flame of Peace ceremony on 25 September 2000 in Agadez. As of March 2004, however,²⁶ 3,160 of the 7,014 ex-combatants registered remained to be demobilized and reintegrated due to a lack of funding.²⁷

Other:

Personnel with the pilot UNDP 'Arms for Development' project collected 160 weapons between January 2002 and December 2003 in N'Guigmi, 103 of which were destroyed in March 2003.²⁸ As of September 2003, a total of 1,188 weapons had either been surrendered voluntarily to the National Commission on Small Arms or seized by the authorities.²⁹ Five additional mini-Flames of Peace resulted in the destruction of 100 weapons each (500 total) in Diffa (21 July 2001), Agadez (27 July 2001 and 9 October 2002), and N'Guigmi (5 March and 24 August 2004).³⁰

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

Contrary to their Malian counterparts, Tuareg rebels in Niger reportedly had child soldiers among their ranks.³¹ The extent of recruitment is unclear, however.

Displacement

Refugees abroad:

About 200,000 refugees reportedly fled from Niger and Mali in the early 1990s.³² By 2000, most Nigerien refugees had repatriated.

Refugees hosted:

Niger hosted 328 refugees in 2004,³³ most of whom were from Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).³⁴

Other violations or abuses

Other:

With the exception of cattle rustling and robbing, there is very little information regarding abuses or violations perpetrated during the rebellion.

OUTLOOK

In late 2004, an outbreak of fighting revealed that Niger continues to face threats to its security. In October, government forces clashed with fighters they identified as bandits, resulting in five deaths. Mohamed Ag Boula claimed responsibility for the attack, adding that he was now heading a 200-strong rebel force dedicated to defending the rights of northern nomadic groups including the Tuareg, Toubou, and Semoir.³⁵ The attacks may also be linked to his brother, Rhissa Ag Boula, a former FLAA leader who later became minister of tourism. Rhissa Ag Boula had been detained on a charge of complicity to murder since December 2003.³⁶ He was released in March 2005, one month after his brother Mohamed set free four government soldiers he had captured during the October 2004 attacks.³⁷ In November 2004, in south-western Niger, another conflict erupted between landowners and cattle herders over land rights. This resulted in several casualties, the destruction of 80 granaries, and the death of dozens of cattle.³⁸

In response to GSPC incursions, the United States-led Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) trained approximately

130 Nigerien soldiers to combat the trafficking of arms, merchandise, and persons across the desert.³⁹ While increasing security through military assistance is positive, it does little to provide sustainable livelihoods to the 60 per cent of the Nigerien population living below the poverty line. Civil war in Côte d'Ivoire aggravated the situation as imports and exports can no longer go through Abidjan and have to be rerouted with additional expense.⁴⁰ So far, international aid (an annual USD 125 million) remains negligible and privation endemic.⁴¹ Indeed, Niger's fragile democratic process could well founder if the international community fails to provide the means to sustain it.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAD	Comité d'Autodéfense
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CVT	Comité de vigilance de Tassara
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARS	Forces armées révolutionnaires du Sahara
FDR	Front Démocratique du Renouveau
FLAA	Front de libération de l'Aïr et de l'Azawak
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
IDP	Internally displaced person
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher
UFRA	Union des forces de la résistance armée
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ENDNOTES

- 1 AP (2004).
- 2 Refugees International (2004).
- 3 IRIN (2004a); CSC (2004).
- 4 PACD (2003b).
- 5 IRIN (2004b).
- 6 IRIN (2004b).
- 7 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359).
- 8 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 9 Demetriou, Seido, and Lafrenière (2002).
- 10 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359).
- 11 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 12 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359)
- 13 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 14 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 15 Republic of Niger (2004).
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- 18 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 19 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 20 PACD (2003b).
- 21 PACD (2003a).
- 22 IRIN (2003); Confidential interview with senior Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 23 IRIN (2003); Confidential interview with senior Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 24 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 25 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 26 Demetriou, Seido, and Lafrenière (2002).
- 27 Confidential interview with Nigerien officials, Niamey, March 2004.
- 28 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 29 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 30 CNCCAI (2005b).
- 31 Based on a video showing two Tuareg child soldiers seen by Baz Lecocq. Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Morderner Orient, Berlin, April 2005. The use of child soldiers is not recognized by the government, however (CNCCAI, 2005a, para. 10.2).
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- 33 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
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- 37 IRIN (2005).
- 38 IRIN (2004d).
- 39 IRIN (2004c).
- 40 Refugees International (2004).
- 41 ICG (2005, pp. 21–22).

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A Nigerian red cross worker looks down a vandalised street towards ethnic groups fighting in Lagos 26 November 1999.



NIGERIA

OVERVIEW

Nigeria, West Africa's most populous country, is beset by widespread and recurrent ethnic and religious tensions and hostilities. Of the more than 370 ethnic groups,¹ five major ones—the Hausa and Fulani (in the north), the Yoruba (in the south-west), the Igbo (in the south-east), and the Ijaw (found across the coast of the Niger Delta region)—represent the majority of the country's 130 million people.

Corruption and economic mismanagement, which reached their height during the military dictatorship that ended in 1999, has enfeebled the nascent civilian government. This has simultaneously strengthened the resolve of many states and citizens' groups to take advantage of the more permissive democratic atmosphere to assert themselves through force of arms. It is in this context that an increasing number of armed groups have emerged, either as a direct challenge to state authority or to provide support to political figures or state security apparatuses. The growing prominence of these groups reflects not only ethnic and religious rivalries

but also economic deprivation, political manoeuvring, and long-standing tensions in the oil-rich Niger Delta.² More than half of Nigeria's 36 states have suffered violence owing to the activities of these various militias, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

The ready availability of small arms and light weapons contributes significantly to outbursts of violence; central government efforts to restore order are woefully ineffectual. Moreover, the armed groups listed in this section are merely the tip of the iceberg. Of the more than 100 militias believed to be active in Rivers state alone, only the two largest—the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF)—are recorded here. Information is hard to come by and even more difficult to verify. Group membership is fluid; contradictory reporting is rife; denials of armed activity are common; and misinformation—whether deliberate or the result of deep-seated mistrust or carelessness—is the rule rather than the exception. Nevertheless, a disturbing picture is clearly discernable: the number of armed groups has ballooned since 1999 and, with it,

impunity and a tendency towards brazen acts of violence.

ARMED GROUPS

O'odua People's Congress (OPC)

Origins/composition:

In August 1994 the OPC emerged in the wake of the annulled June 1993 national elections that Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba chief, is widely believed to have won. The organization, which is active in south-western Nigeria, was established to protect the interests of the Yoruba ethnic group. There are at least 20 OPC 'zonal commanders', each claiming to lead 200 armed men.³

Leadership:

Frederick Fasheun, a medical doctor by profession, was one of the founding members of the OPC and initially was universally recognized as its leader. In 1999, however, the OPC effectively split into two factions, with Fasheun leading the moderates and Gani Adams heading the more radical militant wing. In 2003, there were two parallel and competing structures.⁴ It is understood that in early 2005 this situation persisted.

Areas of control/activity:

The OPC is active in the six south-western states of Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti, as well as Kwara state in north-central Nigeria. It has not been active in Kogi state.⁵

The militia is engaged in violence against other ethnic groups, vigilantism, crime fighting, and robbery. It has also clashed with police and launched attacks on police stations.

Sources of financing/support:

Contributions from bus drivers and residents who solicit the OPC to protect them from thieves cover a significant portion of the OPC's operational expenses. The OPC claims a membership of more than five million Nigerians at home and abroad.⁶ It collects membership fees and also significant sums of money from many leading Yoruba politicians who believe it politically expedient to be identified with a group that appears to enjoy such wide popular support.⁷ The OPC also enjoys the patronage of some state government authorities, including the governor of Lagos state,⁸ who is believed to have employed militia members to secure his party's 2003 political victory.⁹

Status:

Active. Although Human Rights Watch reports that by early 2003 killings by

OPC had declined, the armed group remains 'active and visible'.¹⁰ The government placed a ban on the OPC in 1999, forcing the group to go underground in some areas; but in others it continues to operate in collaboration with local authorities.¹¹ Furthermore, Fasheun and Adams are regular participants in Yoruba political leadership platforms.¹²

Arewa People's Congress (APC)

Origins/composition:

The election of Olusegun Obasanjo (a 'southerner'), along with the activities of the OPC, provided the impetus behind the creation of the APC in December 1999—ostensibly to safeguard northern interests.¹³ More significantly, unlike other ethnic militia groups such as the OPC and the Bakassi Boys, the APC is also a manifestation of discontent on the part of the former military elite at losing its privileges. The group has, moreover, asserted its intention to counter southern-initiated violence against northerners.¹⁴

Leadership:

Sagir Mohammed, a former army officer, heads the APC.

Areas of control/activity:

The APC is active in the Hausa-Fulani areas of northern Nigeria. It does not

so much 'control' areas as make ad hoc use of unemployed youth known as 'Almajiri boys', who are found throughout the northern states. Almajiri boys, usually recruited at local mosques, are deployed to 'inflict pain and unleash terror'. The APC has been known to sometimes furnish Almajiri boys with weapons.¹⁵

Sources of financing/support:

Key backers are believed to include active and retired army officers.¹⁶ The APC does not appear to struggle financially. Amadu Sesay et al. speak of the Congress's 'financial muscle' and note that, while the APC does not have a 'large membership' or deploy 'armed cadres' along the lines of the Bakassi Boys, the OPC, and the Egbesu Boys, it does possess the means to purchase arms and ammunition on a significant scale.¹⁷

Status:

Active.

Onitsha Traders Association (OTA)

Origins/composition:

The Onitsha Traders Association was created in the late 1990s in response to criminality. (It had replaced the Onitsha Markets Amalgamated Traders Association, which the mili-

tary government in Anambra state had previously dissolved.)¹⁸

Areas of control/activity:

The OTA was active in Onitsha in Anambra state.

Sources of financing/support:

The Anambra state governor brought the detachment of the Bakassi Boys to replace OTA.¹⁹

Status:

Disbanded. In 2000 the Bakassi Boys replaced OTA in response to popular disenchantment with the OTA's perceived inability to stem the rise of banditry.²⁰

Bakassi Boys

Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS)

Abia State Vigilante Service (AVS)

Imo State Vigilante Service (IVS)

ASMATA Boys

Origins/composition:

The group that, in 1999, eventually became known as the Bakassi Boys emerged from a number of disparate vigilante groups active in Abia state between 1997 and 1998, among them the Onitsha Traders Association. Initially, many lauded the 'Boys' for successfully stemming a growing tide of armed robberies that was terrorizing merchants and banks

throughout the city. Others subsequently hired the young vigilantes and 'by mid-2000, the Bakassi Boys had become an accepted part of daily life in large cities throughout the south-east'.²¹ Although later also known as Anambra State Vigilante Service, the Abia State Vigilante Service (both known as AVS), and the Imo State Vigilante Service (IVS), the Bakassi Boys has its roots in Aba, Abia state. The group was formed in response to long-standing violence and intimidation by a group of criminals called 'Maf' (for 'mafia').²² In November 1998, some local shoe traders cobbled together a group of youth to counter the harassment and extortion to which they had long been subjected. The ensuing altercation resulted in a victory for the traders. In appreciation of the youths' bravery and effectiveness, the services of the group of armed young men were extended. The group became known as the 'Bakassi Boys' because 'Bakassi' was the name of the area in the market where the shoe traders sold their wares.²³

Leadership:

Gilbert Okoye, the leader of the Bakassi Boys, was arrested in March 2001.²⁴ It is not clear who, if anyone, succeeded him. A report by Human

Rights Watch (HRW) and the Nigerian Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) noted that between September and October 2001 Camillus Ebekue was the chairman of the Anambra State Vigilante Service, and Onwuchekwa Ulu the chairman of the Abia State Vigilante Service and the IVS under the command of Imo State Police Commissioner Ahmed Abubakar.²⁵ Chinwoke Mbadinuju, the Anambra state governor, is understood to have exerted considerable control over the Anambra Vigilante Service (AVS) and its successor, the Anambra State Markets Amalgamated Traders Association (ASMATA), known as the 'ASMATA Boys'.²⁶

Areas of control/activity:

The Bakassi Boys and their successor groups have been active in the states of Abia, Anambra, and Imo in south-eastern Nigeria.

Sources of financing/support:

The Bakassi Boys enjoyed the support of governments in the three states in which they operated, and were provided with offices, uniforms, and vehicles, as well as salaries.²⁷ The government of Anambra state has gone the furthest in terms of open support for the Bakassi Boys, by introducing them to the state assembly and

ensuring the passage of a law in August 2000 that officially established them as the Anambra State Vigilante Services. The law outlines the groups' functions and powers, effectively transforming them into a fully fledged law enforcement agency. Traders in the major markets in Abia, Anambra, and Imo states contributed significantly to the upkeep of the Bakassi Boys through a monthly levy. Businesses, local governments, and other institutions were also asked to contribute taxes, but not all did so willingly. Rates varied. In Anambra state, for example, the monthly levy in October 2001 was reportedly 2,000 naira (approximately USD 15 at the time) for offices, 10,000 naira (USD 76) for schools and hospitals, and 50,000 naira (USD 385) for banks; *okada* (motorcycle taxi) drivers had to pay 20 naira daily. In Abia state stores were reportedly asked to pay 250 naira (approximately USD 2). Onwuchekwa Ulu, chairman of Abia State Vigilante Services, acknowledged that levies collected from the public, as well as contributions from the state government, helped finance group activities. The amount of remuneration paid directly to individual 'boys' is still unknown.²⁸

Status:

Even after the government had formally outlawed first the Bakassi Boys and then the Anambra State Vigilante Service, both continued to operate with the support of the Anambra state governor. In 2003, however, Mbadinuju lost his bid for re-election, and the Bakassi Boys/AVS went underground. The reason for this volte-face on the part of the authorities and the public was relatively clear: the Bakassi Boys had gone too far in exercising their 'mandate' and stood accused of extreme acts of violence, including arbitrary executions, detentions, ill-treatment and torture.²⁹ While it is no longer active, it is believed that its structure still exists and that the group could still be called upon in the event of a crisis. In Imo and Abia states governors sympathetic to the Bakassi Boys were re-elected, but they heeded public opinion, which had by that time turned against the Boys.³⁰

Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC)**Origins/composition:**

The origins of the FNDIC date back to 1997, when a series of bloody ethnic clashes between the three main

Delta state ethnic groups—the Ijaw, Itshekiri, and Urhobo—erupted in Warri, a major commercial city. Oboko Bello and Chief Abel Ugedi, both Ijaw leaders, appealed to their people to defend Ijaw interests with their blood, if necessary. The public response was immediate and widespread, and the FNDIC was established soon thereafter.³¹ Today, the fighting continues over local political influence and representation, and is fuelled by resentment concerning the perceived inequitable distribution of oil revenues. The FNDIC seized oil-pumping stations and threatened to blow them up in March 2003.³² In February 2003, the FNDIC reportedly comprised some 3,000 youths.³³

Leadership:

Oboko Bello is the president of FNDIC. Other officials include George Timinimi, spokesman; Kingsley Otuario, secretary; and Dan Ekpebide, adviser.³⁴

Areas of control/activity:

Throughout the southern coastal areas of the Niger Delta region, particularly in the surrounding areas of Oporoza, Eghoro, Oghoye, Ogidigben Ajudaibo Ugboegwugwu, Akpakpa, Ugogoro Ajakosogbo, Ugbogbodu, Deghole, Utonlila, Wakeno, Tobu, and Kolokolo.³⁵

Sources of financing/support:

The FNDIC draws its support from many Ijaw in Delta state.

Status:

Active.

Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA)**Origins/composition:**

Although there is much confusion and disagreement concerning the genesis of the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), there is general agreement that they are made up of militant youth that banded together around the time of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) established in December 1998. Some experts note, however, that the Egbesu Boys were active in the Ijaw-Itsekiri conflict as early as 1997.³⁶ The IYC itself was created following a meeting in Bayelsa state of more than 5,000 youths from 25 associations, and was set up as an umbrella organization to promote Ijaw interests and challenge those of the various oil companies active in the Niger Delta.³⁷ Some analysts believe that the EBA is essentially the military wing of the IYC, representing a collection of like-minded youth from various IYC sub-groups rather than a standing force per se.³⁸ Others, such as Cyril Obi, contend that, although a formal

relationship between the IYC and the EBA cannot be established, the IYC leadership did use Egbesu—an Ijaw deity of justice and war—to motivate, mobilize, and embolden its youth to fight for the cause: greater control of the region's oil wealth. According to Obi, it is difficult to categorically determine whether the Egbesu Boys ever existed as a corporate entity or as a distinct 'group'.³⁹ Besides the reported IYC link, the EBA is also reported to follow the will of the Ijaw's chief priest, who the faithful believe communes with, and speaks on behalf of, the deity Egbesu.⁴⁰

Leadership:

Sesay et al. claim that the Egbesu Boys 'consult' the chief priest of the Egbesu shrine at Amabulou before and during major operations.⁴¹ This may be true, but does not suggest that the chief priest, Augustine Ebikeme, is a leader of the group or active in their operations. According to Justus Demeyai, the EBA's only leader was Alex Preye, who died in 2001.⁴²

Areas of control/activity:

The EBA was active throughout the south coast of the Niger Delta region, especially in Bayelsa and Delta states.

Status:

In 2004, some youth gangs still called themselves ‘the EBA’,⁴³ but many believed the EBA as an organized armed group was not a cohesive force and no longer ‘active’. Four factors explain why this might be so. First, no one appears to have assumed the role of Alex Preye’s after his death. Second, the 2003 national elections and their aftermath have provided additional political patronage that has drawn some youth away from EBA activities. Third, the arrival of powerful vigilante groups such as the NDV and the NDPVF (described in greater detail below) have also drawn EBA members or participants into their ranks. And fourth, the growth of organized crime, especially oil bunkering, has also reduced the influence of the EBA as members are increasingly choosing to take advantage of more lucrative opportunities with other gangs.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Egbesu deity continues to exert a powerful hold on unemployed Ijaw youth. The IYC, the chief priest of the Egbesu shrine at Amabulou, some other charismatic figure, or another Ijaw organization could conceivably rally disaffected youth for a common purpose—including taking up arms—in the name of Egbesu.

Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF)**Origins/composition:**

There is little agreement about the origins of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), which has appeared under several names.⁴⁵ The name NDVF is derived from that of the armed resistance group that Major Isaac Boro created in 1967.⁴⁶ Many reports suggest that the group was established around 1998. However, one informed observer posits that the group’s origins date back to the 1980s.⁴⁷ Sesay et al. describe the NDVF as ‘one of the main armed wings’ of the IYC and closely associated with the EBA.⁴⁸ The NDVF has been active in the general struggles involving the Ijaw youth movement. Its demands have included a significant increase in oil revenues, as well as commitments from companies to employ many thousands of local youths.⁴⁹

Leadership:

Bello Orubebe, a lawyer from Warri in Delta state and an Ijaw, is widely reported to have revived and led this group. Demeyai, however, notes that Ikiome Zoukumor was the ‘president’ of the NDVF back in the 1980. He adds that Zoukumor no longer holds

this title and that Orubebe serves as the group's 'national coordinator'.⁵⁰

Areas of control/activity:

The NDVF was active in the Niger Delta, particularly in the state of Bayelsa and its capital, Yenagoa.

Status:

Many analysts believe this group is effectively dormant, with some noting that it essentially folded in 2003. The NDPVF of Mujahid Abubakar Asari Dokubo and the NDV of Ateke Tom appear to have sprung up around the same time, but apparently there was no link between Orubebe's NDVF and either of these two organizations, although some members associated with the NDVF may have joined the NDV and NDPVF. Demeyai, however, reports that the NDVF remains active under Orubebe's leadership.⁵¹

Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV)

Origins/composition:

The NDV is essentially a new name for a large armed group that has been active in Rivers state for many years. It has been known by various names, including the Germans, German 2000, Icelanders,⁵² and Okrika Vigilante dating back to 1998.⁵³ The new name surfaced in 2003.

Leadership:

Ateke Tom is the leader of the NDV. He is from Okrika in Rivers state.⁵³

Areas of control/activity:

The NDV is active throughout Rivers state.

Sources of financing/support:

Illegal oil bunkering provides generous funding for the NDV.⁵⁴ Ateke also received logistical support and protection from prominent local politicians of the People's Democratic Party in exchange for his assistance in countering the efforts of the opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) during the 2003 state and federal elections.⁵⁵ More recently, some smaller groups of armed youth—or 'cults', as such groups are called—have joined the NDV.⁵⁷

Status:

Active.

Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF)

Origins/composition:

Mujahid Abubakar Asari Dokubo, a member of the Movement for the Survival of the Ethnic Ijaw Nation (MOSEIN), became vice-president of the IYC and, with Rivers state Governor Peter Odili's support, president of the IYC. Upon stepping

down as IYC president, he formed the NDPVF. He fashioned the armed group on the basis of Issac Boro's group from the 1960s. It had no link with Bello Orubebe's organization.⁵⁸ Asari left the IYC in July 2003.⁵⁹

Leadership:

Asari is the leader of the NDPVF. He was born on 1 June 1964 in Buguma, Rivers state.⁶⁰

Areas of control/activity:

Asari's control of territory is centred on the riverine parts of Rivers state around Buguma.⁶¹

Sources of financing/support:

Asari draws support from the Kalabari ethnic group.⁶² Illegal oil bunkering provides generous funding for the NDPVF.⁶³ The NDPVF also receives support from the cult Dey Gbam.⁶⁴ Asari claims to receive generous support from Ijaws and residents of Port Harcourt, noting, for example, that in one week alone he received 20 million naira (about USD 155,000) from public donations.⁶⁵

Status:

Active.

Hisbah Groups

Origins/composition:

Hisbah groups are Islamic vigilante groups that support adherence to

Sharia (Islamic law), which several states in northern Nigeria have adopted in recent years (the civil code, covering wills, marriage, and so forth, has been in force across the federation since 1979).⁶⁶ According to Human Rights Watch, these groups 'do not usually' carry firearms, but are more likely to carry sticks and whips, as well as knives and curved weapons with a blade known as a '*barandami*'.⁶⁷

Leadership:

According to one source, the various Hisbah groups do not operate under any central command and are not well organized.⁶⁸ Darren Kew, however, notes that many governors and leading political figures in Sharia criminal code states hold significant sway over Hisbah groups. In some cases, he adds, these groups were instrumental in influencing the outcome of the 2003 elections.⁶⁹

Areas of control/activity:

Hisbah groups are active in at least Kaduna,⁷⁰ Kano, Katsina, and Zamfara states.⁷¹

Sources of financing/support:

According to Africafirst.org, '[m]ost of the Hisbah groups are sponsored by state governments that practice Sharia, and draw their membership from the army of the unemployed in those states.'⁷²

Status:

Active.

*Zamfara State Vigilante Service
(ZSVS)*

Origins/composition:

The Zamfara State Vigilante Service wears red uniforms and has been described as a 'ragtag volunteer army' that patrols Zamfara state arresting anyone suspected of violating Islamic law.⁷³ In a style reminiscent of Hisbah groups in other states but more organized,⁷⁴ the ZSVS operates in six-person teams and was likely established only after the state adopted Sharia law in November 1999.⁷⁵

Leadership:

The governor of Zamfara state has been the driving force directing the ZSVS and organizing its funding, even though its continued disorganization allows for significant decentralized decision-making on an ad hoc basis.⁷⁶

Areas of control/activity:

ZSVS is active in Zamfara state.

Sources of financing/support:

The state government authorized several Zamfara Sharia Implementation Monitoring Committees with powers to arrest suspected criminals,⁷⁷

which apparently covers the activities of ZSVS.

Status:

Active.

*Al-Sunna Wal Jamma
(Followers of the Prophet, also
known as 'Taleban')*

Origins/composition:

Al-Sunna Wal Jamma was formed sometime around 2002. Its objective is the establishment of Nigeria as an Islamic state; its adherents are predominantly Maiduguri university students from the north-east region. Some 200 members apparently took up arms for the first time in December 2003,⁷⁸ possibly in response to the attempt by the governor of Yobe to disband the group.⁷⁹ So fervent is its adherence to a fundamentalist notion of Islam that locals have dubbed it 'the Taleban' in recognition of the group's admiration for the former Afghanistan government, toppled by coalition forces in 2001.⁸⁰ Indeed, Al-Sunna Wal Jamma once replaced the Nigerian flag with the Afghan flag on a state building it briefly occupied during an altercation with police.⁸¹

Leadership:

So far it is unclear who actually heads the militia. The Nigerian police claim

that a man called Mohammed Yusuf was the group's leader and that he has since fled to Saudi Arabia.⁸² Another report notes that the leader was locally known as Mullah Omar in deference to the deposed Taliban Afghan leader.⁸³

Areas of control/activity:

Al-Sunna Wal Jamma attacked two towns in the north-eastern state of Yobe in December 2003. Followers subsequently skirmished with Nigerian security forces on the outskirts of Maiduguri, the capital of neighbouring Borno state.⁸⁴ A Nigerian police spokesman said that a September 2004 attack had been staged from Niger.⁸⁵

Sources of financing/support:

The group is believed to have minimal support among the local population.⁸⁶ Nigerian authorities detained the head of the Kano-based Almundata Al-Islam Foundation for allegedly financing the group. Wealthy Saudis reportedly fund the Foundation.⁸⁷ Nigerian security sources report that the group possesses sophisticated weapon systems and communication equipment, which suggests access to sources with 'very deep pockets'.⁸⁸

Status:

Active. By one account the government 'neutralized' the group, killing 18 of its members and arresting many

others during a series of skirmishes sparked after the group failed to occupy Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state.⁸⁹ In September 2004, militia members attacked a Borno state police station,⁹⁰ and in March 2005 threatened to attack Christian settlements.⁹¹

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

Despite the repeated denials by leaders of the Bakassi Boys that their members possess or use firearms, numerous and consistent eyewitness accounts convincingly suggest otherwise. Indeed, the police have confiscated firearms during arrests of Bakassi Boys.⁹² The Egbesu Boys carry a variety of firearms.⁹³ Eyewitnesses report that members of the OPC carry 'long guns', 'sophisticated weapons', and 'pistols', despite leaders' protestations to the contrary.⁹⁴ The FNDIC have some military rifles.⁹⁵

Many armed groups rely primarily on weapons other than firearms, although there is evidence that those that traditionally have owned few

guns now possess them in greater quantities. The Almajiri boys, for example, are mainly armed with clubs, machetes, bows and arrows, but also have guns.⁹⁶ The ZSVS reportedly carries pistols along with home-made machetes and whips.⁹⁷ According to David Pratten, who has been following the development of some small armed groups in Akwa Ibom state for some ten years, there has been a 'marked increase' in the use of locally made pistols in recent years.⁹⁸

Assault rifles and other 'sophisticated weapons' are widely held. Bronwen Manby writes that an AK-47 assault rifle is 'easily available to the smallest local gang leader.'⁹⁹ Itsekiri and Urhobo vigilante groups possess small arms including assault rifles.¹⁰⁰ Al-Sunna Wal Jamma have stockpiled AK-47 assault rifles.¹⁰¹ Asari claims that his NDPVF has more than 3,000 guns in its arsenal, including many assault rifles.¹⁰²

Light weapons:

The secretary-general of a Nigerian Islamic group has alleged that armed groups from the Christian Tarok ethnic group have used 'machine guns' in their attacks on Muslim Fulanis in Plateau state.¹⁰³ Nigerian security sources report that the group Al-

Sunna Wal Jamma possesses sophisticated shoulder-launched weapon systems,¹⁰⁴ although this could not be independently verified. Armed combatants participating in the conflict between the NDV and the NDPVF told HRW that along with a variety of small arms they also used machine guns and rocket launchers.¹⁰⁵

Sources

Domestic:

Nigerian police and military firearms 'constitute [a] notable source' of small arms circulating in the country through seizures or illicit sales, as do weapons brought back by peacekeepers serving abroad.¹⁰⁶ In January 2004, Al-Sunna wal Jamma seized guns and ammunition from two police stations in the towns of Geidam and Kanamma in Yobe state.¹⁰⁷ They also reportedly carried away 'large amounts of weapons and ammunition' from attacks on police stations in Borno state.¹⁰⁸ Retired military officers from the Niger Delta region have also reportedly provided arms to Ijaw youth.¹⁰⁹ The OPC has seized weapons belonging to the police or suspected criminals apprehended by the group¹¹⁰ and the FNDIC has reportedly seized a number of military rifles from secu-

rity personnel.¹¹¹ Itsekiri and Urhobo vigilante groups obtain weapons by seizing Nigerian police and armed forces stocks.¹¹²

Communities at the level of village councils will sometimes pool resources to procure weapons in support of local vigilante groups.¹¹³

Weapons also circulate among the armed groups themselves as well as local markets. The Istekiri and Urhobo vigilante groups, for example, also obtain weapons from their Ijaw adversaries and from local sources that have smuggled arms into the Niger Delta.¹¹⁴ Asari claims that his group seized over 200 rifles from the NDV.¹¹⁵ Weapons are also easily available at local markets; for example, one 2003 study reported that in Warri in Delta state a shotgun cost USD 570, a Kalashnikov USD 850, and a bazooka USD 2,150.¹¹⁶

Blacksmiths represent 'a significant source' of small arms in the country, producing mostly single- and double-barrelled shotguns as well as various models of pistols. Vigilante groups and members of ethnic militias are increasingly turning to these artisans for weapons.¹¹⁷ Human Rights Watch reports that interlocutors in Warri indicated that craft-produced small arms are fabricated in Nigeria, 'especially in the industrial zones in

the south-east, including Aba and Awka'.¹¹⁸ (Aba is in Abia state and was a capital of the secessionist state of Biafra during the 1967–70 civil war; Awka is the current capital of Anambra state.) Nigeria also produces a variety of small arms and ammunition at its Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), but there are no reports that any Nigerian armed groups receive these weapons directly.

Foreign:

No reports of foreign governments providing weapons directly to Nigerian armed groups currently exist. Cross-border smuggling, however, is rampant. Weapons reportedly enter Nigeria overland from Benin (with arms originating in Ghana and Togo¹¹⁹ as well as in Burkina Faso),¹²⁰ and from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.¹²¹ Weapons are also known to arrive from sea, especially in the Niger Delta region via oil bunkering activities.

Recovered

DDR:

In response to the quickly escalating crisis in 2004 in Rivers state, which pitted Ateke's NDV against Asari's NDPVF, President Obasanjo invited

both men to meet with him in Abuja in an effort to reduce tensions and control the conflict. A deal was worked out whereby both protagonists agreed to a ceasefire as well as to disband their militias and disarm.¹²² While many analysts have cynically, and perhaps accurately, described the programme as little more than an ineffective (and, at USD 1,800 a weapon,¹²³ an expensive) gun buy-back scheme, it is included here because it was politically negotiated at the highest levels and included commitments that are common to many DDR programmes. The lack of sincerity on the part of the protagonists and the lack of planning on the part of the convener and implementer do not disqualify it.

The initiative reportedly netted 854 rifles and 1,353 rounds of ammunition and a small amount of additional explosive material. Government officials claim that the NDV returned more than 600 rifles. Asari challenged this assertion, countering that Ateke submitted only eight firearms. For his part, he claimed that he furnished 196 rifles, which the government confirmed.¹²⁴ Asari effectively pulled out of the process and the initiative has been derailed.

Other:

The Nigerian government has recovered tens of thousands of weapons and hundreds of thousands of ammunition over the years from armed groups and criminal elements operating in the country. In 2002, the Nigerian Customs Service reported it had intercepted arms and ammunition worth USD 34 million at border posts during a six-month period.¹²⁵ Moreover, in 2003 during an unusually large seizure it intercepted 170,000 rounds of ammunition in a single haul.¹²⁶ During the first four months of 2004, the Nigerian government reported collecting 112,000 illegal firearms.¹²⁷ In June 2004 in Warri, the government undertook Operation Restore Hope, which through cordon-and-search operations netted 42 rifles, 1,500 rounds of ammunition, and several locally made mortar rounds.¹²⁸ The emergency Plateau state administration collected some 300 weapons over a 30-day amnesty period during the 2004 state of emergency.¹²⁹ These few examples indicate the types of activities being undertaken. They are not intended to convey the full scope of the government's initiatives.

Civil society has also undertaken programs to counter the proliferation of small arms. For example, a

coalition of NGOs in Delta state initiated a 'Mop up the Arms' campaign in June 2003. However, the measure reportedly did not recover more than a symbolic number of weapons.¹³⁰

Relatively few examples of the weapons and ammunition recovered are destroyed. It has been reported that in July 2001 Nigeria set fire in Kaduna to some 2,400 guns seized from armed robbers, illegal arms dealers, and participants in communal conflicts. The government said that additional arms were to be destroyed in Lagos and Makurdi as part of the initiative.¹³¹ Some of the weapons that the NDV and NDPVF turned in were set ablaze during a public ceremony in November 2004. Again, this is not a complete list.

In recognition of the growing problem of the proliferation of illicit arms and the growing fears surrounding armed criminality and violence, President Obasanjo established in March 2004 the National Committee on the Destruction of Illegal Arms and Ammunition. In its first year of operation, the Committee conducted four destruction exercises. All told, some 3,000 firearms and 2,500 rounds of ammunition were destroyed.¹³²

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (CSC), armed Ijaw youth thought to be 16 years of age and older are believed to be active in the Niger Delta region conflicts.¹³³ Many of the Almajiri boys are 15–16 years of age, with some as young as 10–12 years old.¹³⁴ The problem of child insurgents is likely fairly widespread throughout Nigeria. Nnamdi Obasi underscores the potential threat by pointing out that a Nigerian human rights organization report found that in 1999 more than two million children under the age of 15 roamed the streets in 19 northern Nigerian states capitals as beggars, and were responsible for more than two out of every three acts of urban violence.¹³⁵ Unsupervised and impoverished children are more vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups; and their large numbers could constitute a major threat to human security in the very near future.

Functions:

Although a HRW study did not define the ages of the 'youth' in Delta

state in its investigation of the crisis in Warri, it did provide an indication of what types of activity child combatants undertake and how much it costs to recruit them. HRW reported that it was alleged that politicians—including the Delta state governor—armed and hired youth to intimidate their opponents during the election campaign as well as to protect the operations of illegal oil bunkerers. The youth were not particularly generously compensated for their services. An individual could be contracted for USD 70 or less according to the report.¹³⁶

Displacement

IDPs:

Displacement owing to vigilante group activity and altercations with Nigerian security forces is common and widespread. The Global IDP Project states: ‘Since the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 ended 15 years of military rule in Nigeria, at least 10,000 people have been killed and some 800,000 displaced by outbreaks of communal violence across the country. According to government estimates, about 250,000 Nigerians remain displaced today—including up to 60,000 who fled their homes

during the latest unrest in Plateau State in May 2004’.¹³⁷

Between late December 2003 and early January 2004, at least 10,000 inhabitants of the towns of Babangida, Dankalawar, Geidam, and Kanamma in Yobe state fled their homes owing to fighting between Al-Sunna wal Jamma and government forces.¹³⁸ More recently, violence in Plateau state has forced ‘tens of thousands’ of residents to flee their homes.¹³⁹ By early 2005, most Plateau state internally displaced persons (IDPs) had returned home, with only a few thousand remaining in Bauchi state. Although the extent of internal displacement is not known, it appears to be very localized. In 2003, violence between security forces and the FNDIC reportedly resulted in the displacement of an estimated 4,000 people.¹⁴⁰

Refugees hosted:

In 2003, UNHCR reported that Nigeria was host to 9,180 refugees, mainly from Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Chad. In the second half of that year, over 3,000 Liberians fled to Nigeria.¹⁴¹

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

The OPC stand accused of murder, summary execution, and torture. They

have killed or injured hundreds of people.¹⁴² The Bakassi Boys have likewise been accused of murder and torture.¹⁴³ Amnesty International (AI) has charged the AVS with murder and summary execution.¹⁴⁴ The United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), citing a Nigerian academic, reported that during the first three years following the return to democratic rule, ethnic and religious unrest had claimed the lives of more than 10,000 people.¹⁴⁵ Amnesty International also reports that the OTA/Bakassi Boys also summarily executed more than 1,500 people between September 1999 and July 2000.¹⁴⁶

Other:

AI noted that various Nigerian armed groups not only were responsible for murder and torture, but also stood accused of 'cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment [and] unlawful detention.'¹⁴⁷ The OPC is reported to have poured acid on its victims in several cases, and to set ablaze corpses of people who they have killed.¹⁴⁸ According to HRW, while Hisbah groups are supposed to turn suspects over to the police, they have often disregarded their own guidelines and taken it upon themselves to mete out justice. Hisbah members frequently flogged

or beat suspected transgressors on the spot. HRW adds, however, that it was not aware of Hisbah members killing anyone, and notes that since 2003, abuses by the Hisbah appear to have decreased.¹⁴⁹

OUTLOOK

Long-standing religious and ethnic tensions, economic hardship, and political opportunism all suggest that armed groups remain a threat to human security.

This study has enumerated many of the larger armed groups active in Nigeria, but by no means all of them. Relatively little is known, for example, about the numerous ethnic Itsekiri or Urhobo armed groups, which compete for influence throughout the Niger Delta region. These, however, tend to be small and limited to defending their local communities.¹⁵⁰ There are important exceptions.¹⁵¹ Another concern is the existence of groups, such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB),¹⁵² which are not currently conducting armed attacks but which have easy access to small arms and light weapons and might well use them in the future.¹⁵³

Government crackdowns on vigilantism has yielded only limited results, and efforts to reclaim small arms and light weapons, while welcome, are insignificant in relation to the scale of the problem. The decision by President Obasanjo in May 2004 to declare a state of emergency and suspend the governor in Plateau state underscored just how dire the situation had become. But the decision to reinstate the governor should not be taken to indicate that the worst is past. Indeed, if judged purely on grounds of job performance or ability to uphold law and order, many more governors would arguably be candidates for suspension—admittedly a draconian measure with serious implications for a country that has worked hard to restore civilian democracy after so many years of military dictatorship. Obasanjo has repeatedly pledged to honour the constitution and not to seek re-election when his second term expires in 2007. Term limits will also apply to many state governors. During the 2003 election, politically inspired killings escalated sharply. In 2007 greater competition (because of a reduced number of incumbents) coupled with the proliferation of armed groups and their weapons

could well spark a renewed outbreak of communal and political violence.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International	IVS	Imo State Vigilante Service
ANPP	All Nigeria People's Party	IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
APC	Arewa People's Congress	MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
ASMATA	Anambra State Markets Amalgamated Traders Association	MOSEIN	Movement for the Survival of the Ethnic Ijaw Nation
AVS	Abia State Vigilante Service	NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
AVS	Anambra State Vigilante Service	NDV	Niger Delta Vigilante
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces	NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
CLEEN	Centre for Law Enforcement Education	OPC	O'odua People's Congress
CSC	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers	OTA	Onitsha Traders Association
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
DICON	Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria	ZSVS	Zamfara State Vigilante Service
EBA	Egbesu Boys of Africa		
FNDIC	Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities		
HRW	Human Rights Watch		
IDP	Internally displaced person		
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks		

ENDNOTES

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- 43 Pratten adds that some of these gangs include members outside of the Ijaw ethnic group. Written correspondence with David Pratten, Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex, Brighton, England, 12 April 2005.
- 44 Interview with Nnamdi K. Obasi, Research Fellow, Centre for Peace Research and Conflict Resolution, Nigerian National War College, by telephone, 7 April 2005.
- 45 For example, a 1998 newspaper account names Orubebe as 'leader of the Delta Volunteer Force'. See Santoro (1998).
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- 151 There is an armed Urhobo group known as the G8 that conducts offensive operation and has terrorized the local population of Ekpan in neighbouring Delta state since 2001. The name derives from the original eight members who saw themselves as particularly powerful like the Group of 8 industrialized nations. The group is now considerably larger and reportedly is better armed and equipped than the local police. Written correspondence with Innocent Adjenughure, Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Dispute Resolution, Ekpan, Delta state, 21 April 2005.
- 152 The group, headed by Ralph Uwazurike, was formed in September 1999. Its intention was to revive the secessionist state of Biafra (Obasi, 2002b, pp. 65-84 and 126-29), which had led to the Nigerian civil war in 1967-70. It is unclear how many members the group has, although in 2001 MASSOB leaders claimed that 2,500 of its members were imprisoned (Ubani, 2001). MASSOB is active in south-eastern Nigeria in the states of Abia, Anambra, Eboniyi, Enugu, and Imo.
- 153 According to a HRW/CLEEN report, in October 2001 there were violent clashes between members of the Bakassi Boys and MASSOB in which both groups used firearms and machetes (HRW and Centre for Law Enforcement Education, 2002, p. 36). Leading personalities in MASSOB have not ruled out the possibility that they will be compelled to turn to armed struggle, while underscoring that MASSOB is not a militant group. (Written correspondence with Dickson N. Orji, Country Director, Nigeria Action Network on Small Arms, 3 April 2005.)

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SENEGAL

OVERVIEW

The separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance, MFDC) and the Senegalese government have been struggling since 1982 over the status of Casamance, Senegal's southern region. Originally limited to large MFDC demonstrations, the conflict intensified in the late 1980s as the group began to launch attacks against the Senegalese administration.

A series of ceasefire agreements throughout the 1990s resulted in the political and military division of the MFDC.¹ A peace agreement signed in March 2001 by the newly elected President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and MFDC leader Abbé Augustine Diamacoune Senghor restored relative peace. The 2001 deal was accompanied by the progressive weakening of the MFDC's military wing due to increased military cooperation between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal's armed forces on the Bissau-Guinean border (a safe haven for MFDC rebels during the 1990s).² Even though further incidents of fighting were

reported in 2001 and 2002, subsequent relative calm and continuing negotiations with the political leadership of the MFDC raised prospects for peace.³ In 2004 the Senegalese legislature voted unanimously to grant an amnesty to fighters of the MFDC for all crimes related directly to their war efforts.⁴

The latest peace deal, signed by Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom and Abbé Diamacoune in Ziguinchor on 30 December 2004, was primarily a ceasefire agreement that included a pledge by the MFDC to give up armed struggle and a commitment by the government to reintegrate former combatants and rebuild the war-torn region.⁵ A grant of USD 129 million from international donors will supplement government funds to help de-mine and rebuild roads and villages, develop the tourism, timber, and fishing industries, and repatriate refugees.⁶

ARMED GROUPS

Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)

Origins/composition:

The MFDC is motivated by feelings of under-representation and economic underdevelopment among the Casamance population, Senegal's southern region between Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. The Diola is the main ethnic group in Basse-Casamance⁷ and the MFDC,⁸ although other ethnicities also are also represented in the group. The MFDC was estimated to comprise as many as 2,000–4,000 fighters.⁹ Since 1992, the MFDC's military wing has been divided into the Front Sud and the Front Nord, which have further split into a number of additional factions.¹⁰ It remains unclear how many are armed combatants as opposed to refugees, and recent reports suggest only a third of MFDC combatants are mobilized owing to logistical and financial constraints.¹¹

Leadership:

Abbé Diamacoune is the historical and political leader of the MFDC, although he now appears largely disconnected from the movement's military factions.¹² Sidy Badji, the founder of the hardline military

wing of the MFDC, died in May 2003 from natural causes. Kamougué Diatta has succeeded him as leader of the Front Nord,¹³ although his leadership is now in question.¹⁴ Léopold Sagna was the first leader of the Front Sud, which was formed in reaction to Badji's signing of the 1992 Cacheu accord with the Senegalese government. Sagna was close to Diamacoune, and considered a moderate. As a result, more hardline Front Sud leaders have emerged since, including Salif Sadio and Faye Sambou. They have also been joined by Front Nord dissidents, including Ousmane Goudiaby.¹⁵

Areas of control/activity:

MFDC fighters were based along borders with the neighbouring countries: approximately 2,000 MFDC members were located close to or in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, while 1,000 were located on both sides of the border with the Gambia.¹⁶ The political leadership of the MFDC is based in Ziguinchor. The Front Nord has its main base in Diakaye. Outside of Guinea-Bissau, Front Sud fighters have controlled the north-east of Bignogna department around Djibidione and adjacent areas of Sedhiou department since 1997.¹⁷

Sources of financing/support:

Sources of finance include donations from the Diola community in Senegal, armed robberies,¹⁸ and, to a lesser extent, marijuana trafficking.¹⁹ Cash donations were made in the early days of the rebellion. More recently, assistance from the Diola community has been in kind, i.e. support to fighters (food and shelter) from their families in Casamance, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. Fighters also harvest and sell other local commodities: notably cashews (Front Sud), and timber, fuelwood, and charcoal (trafficked to Gambia by the Front Nord).²⁰ Government and military officials in Guinea-Bissau provided weapons to the MFDC until the 1998 civil war in that country.²¹ Since then, Guinea Bissau appears to have sided with the Senegalese government, as demonstrated by the 2000 and 2001 Bissau-Guinean offensives on Sadio's faction, which were led by current Chief of Staff Maj.-Gen. Tagmé Na Way.²²

Status:

The political wing of the MFDC is engaged in negotiations with the Senegalese government. Militarily, the MFDC appears weak given internal divisions and declining resources and foreign support: its actions seem

increasingly limited to groups of armed bandits.²³ The Front Nord is generally pacified and nominally involved in the development of its zone (although in practice this involves unsustainable timber extraction), while the Front Sud is heavily divided.²⁴

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS*Stockpiles***Small arms:**

In the early stages of the Casamance rebellion, the MFDC used rudimentary weapons such as arrows and spears. It obtained more modern arms from caches left behind in Casamance by Bissau-Guinean fighters involved in the liberation struggle, which ended in 1974.²⁵ As the conflict intensified in the late 1980s, rebels started using more sophisticated weapons, starting with hunting rifles but also including AK-47 assault rifles²⁶ and 9 mm weapons.²⁷

Light weapons:

The MFDC began using RPGs and mortars in the early 1990s.²⁸ Sadio's faction obtained 82 mm mortars, B-10 82 mm recoilless guns, and

DShK-38 12.7 mm heavy machine guns when he fought alongside Mané in Guinea-Bissau's 1998–99 civil war. Sadio, however, did not use these weapons, which the Bissau-Guinean military, led by Maj.-Gen. Tagmé Na Way, recovered during its 2000–01 offensive against Sadio.²⁹

Sources

Domestic:

MFDC fighters sometimes seized weapons as a result of successful attacks against Senegalese forces.³⁰ Reports suggest the presence of illicit craft production workshops in Senegal. Senegalese craft weapons, however, are unlikely to be sophisticated or to represent a significant supply of weapons for the MFDC.³¹

Foreign:

Military officials from Guinea-Bissau provided weapons to the MFDC prior to 1998. Allegations against Bissau-Guinean military officials over arms smuggling to the MFDC actually sparked the 1998–99 civil war in that country with the MFDC likely to have obtained weapons in Guinea-Bissau during that conflict.³² Some trafficking of arms by Bissau-Guinean soldiers to MFDC fighters may continue but would now be very

limited.³⁴ Mauritania and Gambia have also reportedly served as transshipment points for arms smuggled from Libya and Iraq to the MFDC.³⁵ There are also reports of arms being trafficked from Burkina Faso through Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia.³⁶ During the 1990s, insurgents from Sierra Leone and Liberia, including Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), reportedly smuggled weapons to the MFDC in return for marijuana. In early 2004, active MFDC factions reportedly sent members to Liberia by boat to purchase AK-47s for USD 300, as well as bazookas and RPG-7s. Weapons also appear to be coming in from Guinea.³⁷

Recovered

DDR:

The 30 December 2004 peace deal calls for the demobilization of MFDC fighters and stockpiling of arms under the control of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the African human rights group, Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme (RADDHO).³⁸ The government pledged to grant an amnesty to demobilized fighters and to reintegrate them on a voluntary basis within paramilitary forces.³⁹

Internal divisions within the MFDC's military wing,⁴⁰ however, will make the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants a particularly challenging task.⁴¹ Since 2003, the government has offered MFDC members a demobilization package, which had officially reintegrated at least 40–50 fighters into local businesses as of early 2004. Additional unrecorded voluntary demobilization over a longer period could be considerable.⁴²

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

There are reports of children as young as 13–15 working with the MFDC.⁴³

Functions:

CAFF reportedly did not serve as front-line combatants, but carried out support operations such as transporting ammunition.⁴⁴

Displacement

IDPs:

At the height of the fighting in 1998, a census by Caritas gave a total of 62,638 IDPs and refugees.⁴⁵ At the

end of 2002, 5,000 people remained internally displaced in Senegal.⁴⁶

Refugees abroad:

In late 2004, according to UNHCR figures, 7,000 refugees were sheltered in Guinea-Bissau and another 500 in the Gambia.⁴⁷

Refugees hosted:

Senegal hosted approximately 45,000 refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2002, including an estimated 40,000 from Mauritania. In 2003, UNHCR reported a refugee population of 22,992 in Senegal, mostly from five countries: Mauritania, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sierra Leone. In that year 2,266 Africans sought asylum in Senegal.⁴⁸ The number of refugees hosted by Senegal decreased to 20,726 in 2005.⁴⁹

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

Both Senegalese forces and MFDC rebels abused civilians during the Casamance conflict.⁵⁰ Abuses and violations perpetrated by the MFDC included killings and torture.⁵¹

Other:

Abuses and violations perpetrated by the MFDC included beatings and looting.⁵²

OUTLOOK

With the political wing of the MFDC and the Senegalese government signing a peace agreement at the end of 2004,⁵³ Senegalese and Bissau-Guinean military authorities cooperating at the border,⁵⁴ and the Casamance population eager to move away from conflict, prospects for peace in Casamance appear reasonable.

The division of the MFDC's military wing into various factions, however, is worrying and may present a challenge to the peace process and to neighbouring countries. This was made particularly clear when in early 2004 clashes at the Senegalese border between the Bissau-Guinean army and alleged armed elements of the MFDC killed 4 soldiers and injured 14.⁵⁵ Furthermore, key provisions of the December 2004 peace deal—including modalities for DDR—were still to be negotiated in 2005, and several factions of the movement have distanced themselves from the accord.⁵⁶

Despite these hurdles, the Casamance peace process appears irreversible given the strong relationship between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, which the 11 November 2004 nomination of Maj.-Gen. Tagmé Na Way,

a long-time MFDC opponent, as the new Bissau-Guinean army chief of staff has further reinforced.⁵⁷

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
IDP	Internally displaced person
MFDC	Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance,
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
RADDHO	Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ENDNOTES

- 1 See, for example, Evans (2004).
- 2 IRIN (2004c).
- 3 IRIN (2003).
- 4 AFP (2004c).
- 5 IRIN (2004c).
- 6 IRIN (2004c).
- 7 WANEP and FEWER (2003).
- 8 Written correspondence with Martin

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- Evans, Research Associate, University of Leicester, 21 February 2005.
- 9 Evans (2004); IISS (2002).
- 10 Evans (2004).
- 11 Evans (2004, p. 6).
- 12 Evans (2004, p. 16).
- 13 Evans (2004, p. 5).
- 14 Written correspondence with Martin Evans, Research Associate, University of Leicester, 21 February 2005.
- 15 Evans (2004, pp. 5–6).
- 16 Confidential interview with West African diplomat with military experience in Casamance, March 2004.
- 17 Evans (2004, pp. 5–6).
- 18 Evans (2004, p. 11).
- 19 Confidential interview with West African diplomat with military experience in Casamance, March 2004; Evans (2004, p. 10).
- 20 Written correspondence with Martin Evans, Research Associate, University of Leicester, 21 February 2005.
- 21 Evans (2004, p. 8); Global IDP Project (2004).
- 22 Evans (2004, pp. 5–6).
- 23 Confidential interview with Western military official, Dakar, March 2004.
- 24 Evans (2004, p. 4).
- 25 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 26 Confidential interview with West African diplomat with military experience in Casamance, Bissau, March 2004. See also Evans (2004, p. 8); HRW (2002a).
- 27 MALAO (2003, p. 42).
- 28 Confidential interview with West African diplomat with military experience in Casamance, Bissau, March 2004. See also Evans (2004, p. 8); HRW (2002a).
- 29 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 30 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 31 MALAO (2003).
- 32 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 33 Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 34 Written correspondence with Martin Evans, Research Associate, University of Leicester, 21 February 2005.
- 35 WANEP and FEWER (2003); Evans (2004, p. 8).
- 36 MALAO (2003, p. 42).
- 37 Evans (2004, p. 9).
- 38 IRIN (2004c).
- 39 IRIN (2004c).
- 40 IRIN (2004b).
- 41 Evans (2004).
- 42 Evans (2004, p. 15).
- 43 Evans (2004, p. 7).
- 44 Evans (2004, pp. 5–6).
- 45 Evans (2004, p. 4).
- 46 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 47 IRIN (2004c).
- 48 UNHCR (2003, p. 227).
- 49 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 50 Amnesty International (1997).
- 51 Amnesty International (1996).
- 52 Amnesty International (1996).
- 53 BBC News (2004a).
- 54 Confidential interview with West African
-

- diplomat with military experience in Casamance, Bissau, March 2004.
- 55 IRIN (2004a).
- 56 IRIN (2004c); BBC News (2004b).
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SIERRA LEONE

OVERVIEW

The civil war in Sierra Leone began in March 1991 when a small number of fighters called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked Sierra Leone from Liberia. An Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), comprising mutinous members of the Sierra Leone Army (referred to as 'ex-SLA'), overthrew the government in May 1997. The RUF accepted the AFRC's invitation to join the new junta, but the international community overwhelmingly supported the government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, exiled in Conakry. In March 1998, Nigerian troops participating in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) reinstated Kabbah, but the civil war raged on until January 2002.

Low points in the conflict included the AFRC–RUF siege of Freetown in January 1999 that resulted in more than 5,000 deaths, and an RUF hostage-taking incident involving the capture of some 500 UN peacekeepers in May 2000. The civil war was noteworthy for the sheer scale of

human rights violations and extensive use of child soldiers. The country has remained relatively stable since President Kabbah was re-elected in a landslide victory in May 2002. This is partly because the UN Security Council has successively extended the drawdown of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). In April 2005, several thousand UN peacekeepers continued to serve in the mission there.

ARMED GROUPS

Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

Origins/composition:

At its height, the RUF may have numbered around 20,000. Although more than 24,000 RUF combatants participated in the various phases of the government's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme,¹ this is an inaccurate indicator of the group's actual strength. Many RUF members report that they were recruited by force and promised material rewards (sex slaves, drugs, money) in exchange for their participation.²

Leadership:

Foday Sankoh led the RUF until his capture in May 1999. Issa Sesay emerged as interim leader in November 2000. Sankoh died in custody in July 2003. Sesay, who was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), is currently awaiting trial.

Areas of control/activity:

Widespread and long-standing discontent with the country's government and political elites in Freetown initially provided the RUF with a base of popular support that ran across ethnic and district lines throughout parts of the hinterland. As the RUF relied increasingly on terror and forced conscription, its control of several districts within the northern and eastern provinces increased, but at the expense of its popular support.

Sources of financing/support:

The RUF received considerable funding from the illegal sale of alluvial diamonds.³ Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Libya are widely reported to have provided the RUF with weapons.⁴

Status:

The peace accords called for the RUF to be transformed into a political party. This effectively occurred under Sesay. The RUF is no longer a

cohesive fighting force. While many RUF members disarmed and demobilized, others left Sierra Leone to fight in neighbouring wars. Internal divisions, the indictment of four of its leaders, and waning support all point to the eventual demise of the RUF.⁵

Civil Defence Force (CDF)**Origins/composition:**

The CDF constituted a loose-knit collection of tribally based hunting societies that defended their communities, initially against the SLA and later the RUF. Its members included the Kamajors (Kailahun area), Tamaboros (Koinadugu district), the Donsos (Kono district), the Kapras (Tonkolili district), and the Gbethis (Port Loko and Tonkolili districts). More than 37,000 CDF members participated in the DDR programme,⁶ but the number of CDF fighters was considerably larger. According to a survey of ex-combatants, CDF members largely joined the militia in order to defend their communities, and recruitment occurred on the basis of family or community networks. Consequently, CDF discipline appears to have been relatively stronger than that of other groups.⁷

Leadership:

Sam Hinga Norman, who served as Kabbah's deputy minister of defence for a time, was the CDF's National Coordinator. The degree to which he exerted control over militias other than his Kamajor kinsmen is believed to have varied among other CDF groups, but is reported to have been not particularly strong.

Areas of control/activity:

(See 'Origins/composition' above.)

Sources of financing/support:

The Kamajors received some training from Sandline International, a British private security company.⁸

Status:

Hinga Norman, indicted by the SCSL in March 2003, currently awaits trial. The Kamajors still have a well-organized command structure and claim to be ready to mobilize at any time,⁹ but the status of many other CDF militias is unclear.¹⁰

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)

Origins/composition:

Disgruntled members of the armed forces established the group at the time of the coup d'état.

Leadership:

Johnny Paul Koroma was chairman of the AFRC and ruled the junta from May 1997 to February 1998. He remained influential with 'ex-AFRC' and members of the former Sierra Leone armed forces through the May 2002 elections.

Areas of control/activity:

The AFRC was forced to flee Freetown in February 1998, but some elements continued to operate in small groups. Koroma continued to enjoy the allegiance of some ex-SLA and gained additional supporters among the general Freetown population for his defence of the capital in May 2000.

Sources of financing/support:

The AFRC was politically isolated, although it might have received support from Liberia and perhaps some of Liberia's supporters.¹¹ Financially and militarily, the AFRC benefited from exercising effective control of the country and its assets during its eight-month rule.

Status:

Koroma has not been seen in public since his reported 'death' in June 2003. Some believe his disappearance is simply a ploy to avoid arrest by the SCSL, which had handed down its indictment three months earlier.

Indeed, according to the SCSL Koroma's 'fate and whereabouts remain unknown'.¹² The AFRC, however, is no longer believed to be a cohesive force.

West Side Boys (WSB)

Origins/composition:

The nucleus of the WSB included former SLA members. Its strength was believed to number in the hundreds.

Leadership:

Foday Kallay headed the WSB.

Areas of control/activity:

Largely limited to the Rokel Creek area near Occra Hills in Port Loko district.

Sources of financing/support:

The WSB attacked and robbed people travelling along the roads in their area of control.

Status:

Defunct. The WSB was neutralized in September 2000 after 'Operation Barass', a mission the British undertook to rescue their soldiers taken hostage by the WSB in August. Those not killed in the raid surrendered and later enlisted in the DDR programme.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

The RUF possessed a wide array of weapons including rifles such as AK-47 assault rifles of Chinese, Soviet, and eastern European origin, Belgian FN-FALs, German G3s, and British Lee-Enfield no. 4s, and sub-machine guns such as the German Sten and Israeli Uzi.¹³ The CDF possessed large numbers of hunting rifles, but also a few assault rifles. For example, Gbethis who disarmed in Port Loko district turned in AK-47s, self-loading rifles (SLRs), and G3s.¹⁴

Light weapons:

The RUF possessed Chinese 12.7 mm machine guns, various 60 mm, 82 mm, and 120 mm mortars, and small numbers of anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles.¹⁵

Sources

Domestic:

Sierra Leonean armed groups seized weapons from the Sierra Leone armed forces as well as from UN and ECOWAS peacekeeping troops. For example, the RUF took hundreds of

weapons from Guinean, Kenyan, and Zambian troops during the May 2000 UNAMSIL hostage crisis. The AFRC took weapons from the Malians in ECOMOG.¹⁶ Many of the CDF's hunting rifles were craft-manufactured. The Kamajors received some weapons from Nigerian ECOMOG troops and from the SLA.¹⁷

Foreign:

At least eight countries—Burkina Faso, Bulgaria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, the Slovak Republic, and Ukraine—reportedly provided materiel to the RUF.¹⁸ The RUF also seized arms from the ECOMOG, the SLA, and UNAMSIL.¹⁹

Recovered

DDR:

Between September 1998 and January 2002, some 25,000 small arms, 1,000 light weapons, and almost one million rounds of ammunition were collected during the DDR process.²⁰ However, the programme aimed primarily at collecting assault weapons, and failed to recover many of the CDF's craft hunting rifles.²¹

Other:

A Community Arms Collection and Destruction Programme (CACD), which focused on weapons exempted

from DDR such as pistols and hunting rifles, retrieved some 9,660 weapons and 17,000 rounds of ammunition between December 2001 and March 2002.²² The success of this initiative led to a second undertaking, known as CACD II, which began in February 2003 and was subsequently renamed the Arms for Development (AfD) project. The project aims to completely clear 67 chiefdoms—approximately half the country—of arms by the end of 2005. As of 31 December 2004, arms collection had either been completed or was ongoing in 17 chiefdoms, and a total of 1,892 weapons had been collected.²³ So far, mostly hunting rifles and unexploded ordnance (UXO) have been recovered. Of the relatively few assault rifles collected—perhaps 40 or so in all—most are G3s and AK-47s.²⁴

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CADF

Extent of recruitment:

The government and UNAMSIL demobilized approximately 6,850 children during and after the civil war, but this figure does not repre-

sent the full scale of the numbers of children recruited. For example, some commanders did not register children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) in the DDR programme, preferring instead to enter into kick-back schemes with non-combatants whereby the commanders would receive some of the recipients' benefits. Some children, especially those associated with the RUF, were afraid of being stigmatized and elected instead to remain anonymous.

Some 3,000 CAFF are in school. According to UN officials, the 'Sierra Leone model for the demobilization and reintegration of child combatants is widely considered a success that could be applied to other peace-keeping operations'.²⁵ However, a range of organizations, such as the Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children, criticized the structure of the programmes because it largely neglected the needs of girls and former RUF child soldiers, leaving large numbers of the target population ignored and underserved.²⁶ The overwhelming majority of children associated with the RUF were forcefully recruited, as a result of which many ended up belonging to several—sometimes opposing—groups throughout their youth.²⁷

Functions:

CAFF's most common functions within the RUF included (in order of importance) spying, looting, camp maintenance, manning checkpoints, and looking for food.²⁸ Sierra Leonean CAFF were also directly involved in the hostilities,²⁹ particularly in ambushes against vehicles, killings of civilians, looting, as well as rapes and kidnapping. Children associated with the RUF often had access to firearms—even though these were usually owned by adult members of the group—and were given drugs before being sent to the front line.³⁰ Human Rights Watch has documented how adult rebels of the RUF and the AFRC used girls and in some cases boys as sex slaves.³¹

Displacement

IDPs:

Completion of the Sierra Leone DDR programme in early 2002 facilitated large-scale repatriation of refugees and resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs). At least 600,000 Sierra Leoneans were displaced within their own country at the end of 2001.³² More than 65,000 IDPs and returnees were resettled between May 2001 and February

2002.³³ The final ‘official’ group of 12,800 IDPs were resettled in November 2002.³⁴

Refugees abroad:

By July 2004, 280,000 refugees had returned to Sierra Leone, and 15,000 remained in asylum countries in the subregion.³⁵

Refugees hosted:

By late 2004, Sierra Leone also hosted 50,000 refugees,³⁶ mostly Liberians.³⁷

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

All parties to the conflict engaged in human rights violations during the civil war. The RUF and the AFRC committed systematic and widespread violations of human rights including amputations, rape, torture, mutilations, and summary executions. The CDF and the SLA reportedly committed serious human rights violations as well.³⁸

Other:

In March 2003, the SCSL indicted former RUF leader Sesay. His trial began in July 2004. He faces charges of crimes against humanity, serious violations of international humanitarian law, and war crimes.³⁹

OUTLOOK

Although the DDR was imperfect, it appears that small arms and light weapons are no longer easily available in the capital and throughout the country. Unemployment remains high, yet armed robberies and assaults are rare. Johnny Paul Koroma’s supporters tried (unsuccessfully) to steal weapons from the army engineer unit’s depot in Wellington in January 2003. This attempt suggests weapons are not circulating freely. Reasons for concern remain, however.

Popular support for the SCSL may dissipate depending on how the three group trials of nine indictees, which began in mid-2004, evolve. Youth groups have appeared in the eastern diamond-mining districts, and the government continues to struggle to assert control over illegal mining in this area. The Security Council’s decisions to continue to extend the mandate for UNAMSIL have provided essential support to the post-conflict peace-building process. The Sierra Leone armed forces and police are still far from being able to provide for the country’s defence or to uphold law and order on their own.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfD	Arms for Development
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
CACD	Community Arms Collection and Destruction Programme
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CDF	Civil Defence Force
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IDP	Internally displaced person
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLR	Self-loading rifle
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
WSB	West Side Boys

ENDNOTES

- 1 Thokozani and Meek (2003, p. 33).
- 2 Humphreys and Weinstein (2004, pp. 28–29).
- 3 Smillie, Gberie, and Hazleton (2000, pp. 52–54).
- 4 Obasi (2002, pp.58–59); Global Witness (2001; 2003).
- 5 ICG (2003, p. 15).
- 6 Thokozani and Meek (2003, p. 33).
- 7 Humphreys and Weinstein (2004, pp. 28–29).
- 8 Berman (2000, p. 12).
- 9 ICG (2003, p. 13).
- 10 Confidential written correspondence with a knowledgeable source, 5 May 2004.
- 11 Liberia, as a member of ECOWAS, officially condemned the coup d'état and continued to recognize the Kabbah government. However, given then Liberian President Charles Taylor's long-standing support for the RUF, which entered into an alliance with the AFRC, it would seem that Taylor's support for the sanctions that ECOWAS and the UN imposed were in word rather than deed.
- 12 Special Court for Sierra Leone (2003).
- 13 Berman (2000, p. 15).
- 14 *Concord Times* (2001).
- 15 Berman (2000, p. 15).
- 16 Berman (2000, pp. 7–8).
- 17 Berman (2000, p. 12).
- 18 See Berman (2000, pp. 3–10); UNSC (2000, paras. 194–95, 203–11).

- 19 Berman (2000, pp. 7–8).
- 20 Thusi and Meek (2003, p. 29).
- 21 Other limitations included the inadequate reintegration of women and children. For an analysis of Sierra Leone's DDR programme, see Ginifer (2004, pp. 32–34)
- 22 Thusi and Meek (2003, p. 33).
- 23 UNDP (2005, Annex 2, p. 14). See also Bah (2004, pp. 8–10) for a description of the programme.
- 24 Interview with Andrew Gbanie, Assistant Superintendent, Sierra Leone Police, Abuja, 25 October 2004.
- 25 UNSC (2004, para. 21).
- 26 CSC (2004a, p. 37).
- 27 See Chapter 6 and HRW (2003).
- 28 See Chapter 6.
- 29 See also CSC (2004b, p. 37).
- 30 See Chapter 6.
- 31 HRW (2003, pp. 28, 42).
- 32 USCR (2004).
- 33 Malan (2003, p. 15).
- 34 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 35 UNHCR (2004).
- 36 UNOCHA (2004a, p. 9).
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- 38 Special Court for Sierra Leone (2004); HRW (2003, pp. 25–48).
- 39 Special Court for Sierra Leone (2004).

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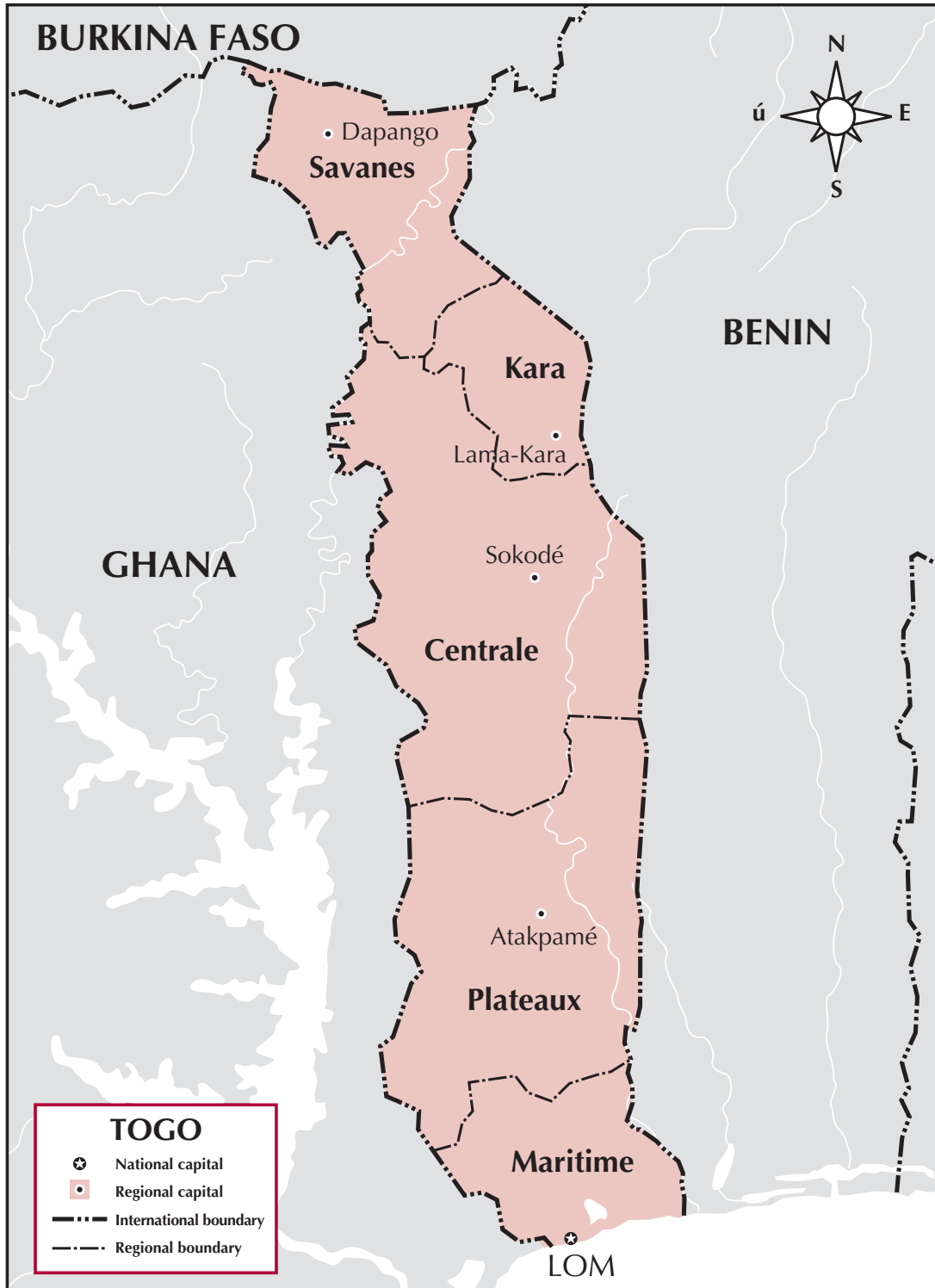
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TOGO

OVERVIEW

Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who had been in power since his successful coup d'état in 1967, died on 5 February 2005, plunging the country into a succession crisis. The president's son, Faure Gnassingbé, immediately seized power with the help of the army and amended the constitution to allow him to rule until 2008.¹ Sustained international pressure, however, including by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), led Gnassingbé to hand power over to Abass Bonfoh, the vice-president of the national assembly. Fresh elections are scheduled for 24 April 2005.²

There are no reports of armed groups active or dormant in Togo. Yet, small arms are increasingly a problem. Between 1999 and 2004, the Togolese authorities seized 649,563 rounds of ammunition and 22,293 firearms—primarily imported and craft hunting rifles, but also 643 military assault rifles.³ The country is a vital transshipment route for illegal arms smuggling among Benin, Ghana,

Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire.⁴ Nigerian traffickers purchase craft weapons in Ghana and Benin and then smuggle them into Nigeria, while military weapons are usually confiscated from armed robbers operating in Togo itself.⁵ The country also has a growing craft small arms industry, particularly the Western region bordering Ghana (Badou, Bassar, Dagomba, Komkomba and Kpalime) but also in Notse in the South and Pagala in the North.⁶

OUTLOOK

Given the unpredictable political transition, the increasing availability of small arms in Togo is a worrying trend. Since 1993, when political parties other than the president's were permitted to contest legislative and presidential elections, armed violence reportedly has centered on the actions of state security forces. Opposition group activities were largely limited to peaceful protests and boycotts of elections widely believed to be fraudulent. Previous experience in Africa and elsewhere suggests, however, that where genuine political space is nonexistent, political struggle may turn violent.

The violent repression of opposition protests in Kpalime, Keve, Lome and Tabligbo in the run-up to the April 2005 elections⁷ underscores the challenges ahead. A deterioration of the political situation would likely generate spillover effects into neighbouring countries in the form of population displacement⁸ and accelerated weapons trafficking—but this time into Togo itself.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

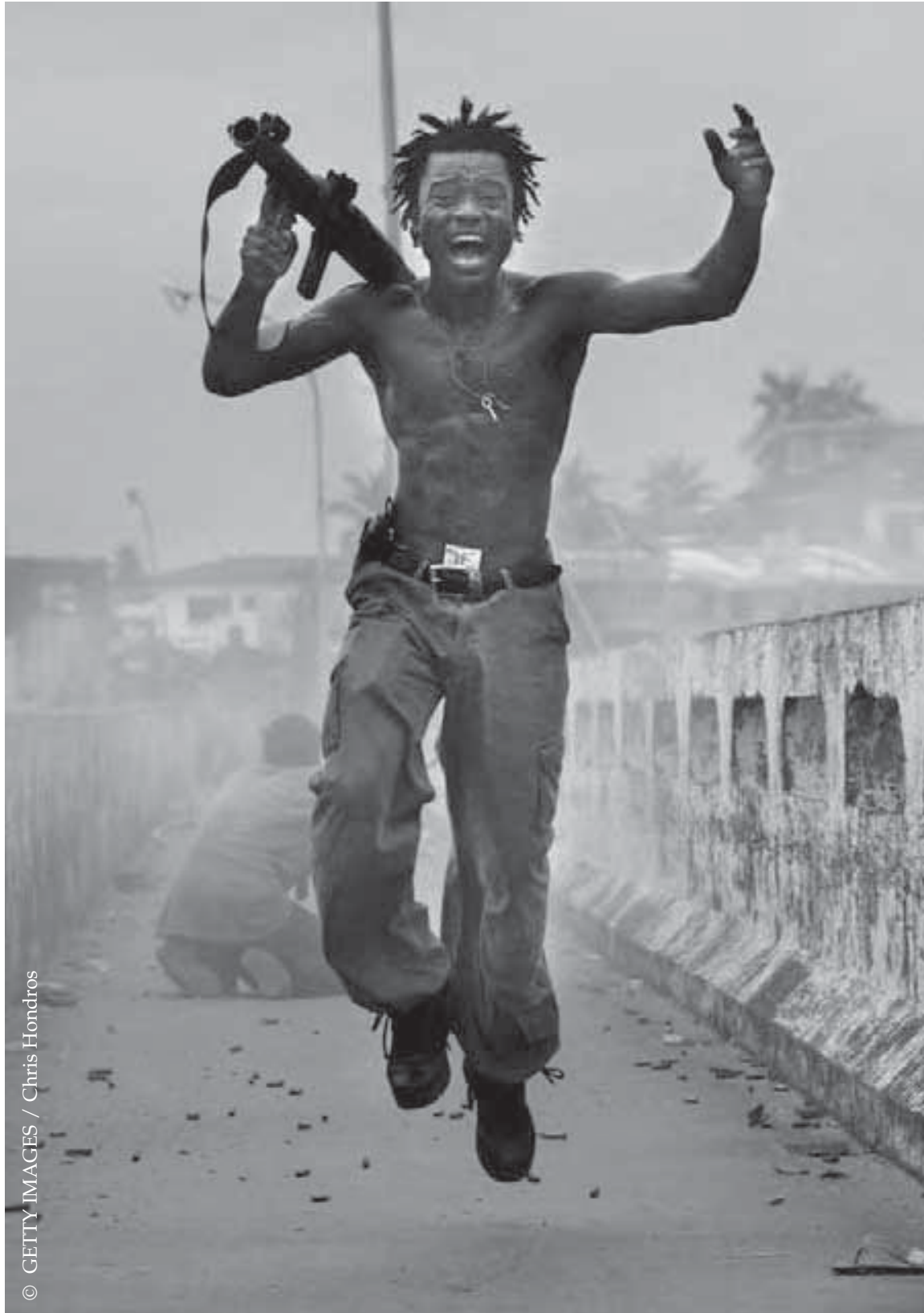
AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

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- 1 IRIN (2005a).
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- 3 Written correspondence with Colonel Assiah Toyi, President of the Togolese National Commission on Small Arms, 12 April 2005.
- 4 Ebo with Mazal (2003, p. 39). Written correspondence with Colonel Assiah Toyi, President of the Togolese National Commission on Small Arms, 12 April 2005.
- 5 Written correspondence with Colonel Assiah Toyi, President of the Togolese National Commission on Small Arms, 12 April 2005.
- 6 Ebo with Mazal (2003, p. 39).
- 7 IRIN (2005b).
- 8 Togo hosted 12,000 refugees at the end of 2003. The vast majority were Ghanaians that fled ethnic conflict in northern Ghana in 1994 (USCRI, 2005).

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© GETTY IMAGES / Chris Hondros

A Liberian militia commander loyal to the government exults after firing a rocket-propelled grenade at rebel forces at a key strategic bridge on 20 July 2003 in Monrovia, Liberia.

CONCLUSION

By Eric G. Berman and Nicolas Florquin

The 35 armed groups operating in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region examined here are only the tip of the iceberg. If individual groups acting under an umbrella organization—such as the Young Patriots in Côte d’Ivoire—were included, the list would be significantly longer. In Nigeria, many of the hundred or so ‘cults’ active in Rivers state (see Chapter 1) would qualify as small-sized armed groups involved in low-level criminality—activities with which this study does not concern itself. Despite this, many would nevertheless meet the criteria for inclusion, but because of time constraints and difficulties documenting their activities they have not been taken into account. Moreover, several are not identifiable by name or do not regularly meet or conduct operations. This, however, does not make them any less deadly. Prominent examples include religious-based groups in the Nigerian state of Plateau, the Arab and Kounta tribes in Mali, and various ethnic groups such as the Fulani and Gourmantches in Burkina Faso as well as Hausa farmers and nomadic cattle herders in Niger.

A growing and persistent threat to security

Armed groups are active in a majority of ECOWAS countries and represent a clear threat to regional and human security. Since 1998, these groups have been operational in fully two-thirds of the 15 ECOWAS member states: Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali,¹ Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. They consist of pro-state, anti-state, and a wide range of vigilante groups established to safeguard various financial (both individual and commercial), religious, communal, and ethnic interests. Most were established after 1998.

While approximately half the militias examined were demobilized or considered defunct as of December 2004, many could be remobilized at short notice. For example, the Kamajor militia—a traditional hunting society associated with the now defunct Sierra Leone Civil Defence Force (CDF)—could once again take up arms should the Sierra Leone Special Court find its former leader guilty of war crimes. Furthermore, the command structures of former Liberian insurgent groups appear wholly intact despite the advanced stage of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process now under way in that country (see Chapter 4).

In 2004, regional instability contributed to the migration of more than 2.7 million people, an estimated half of whom were internally displaced persons (IDPs).² Armed groups, whether politically neutral, pro-state, or anti-state, represent a continuous threat to human security in general and to vulnerable migrant populations in particular. Militias attack and infiltrate refugee and IDP camps and forcibly recruit occupants for combat and other duties (see Chapter 5). Several tens of thousands of children have been press-ganged into rebel groups fighting in the Mano River Union (MRU) alone (see Chapter 6). Adult group members often sexually abuse and exploit children and women associated with fighting sources,³ attack civilians, and engage in widespread human rights violations.

Armed and aimless

Regardless of their original motives, armed groups can quickly become aimless—but remain no less deadly. They have a dangerous tendency to shift allegiances or to morph from groups originally established to support law and order to those that actively undermine it. Original ‘ideology’ tends to evaporate rapidly in the face of temptations to engage in financial or political aggrandizement—usually at the point of a gun. Ostensibly formed in support of the state, many armed groups—such as the Young Volunteers and Young Patriots in Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire—may evolve into genuine threats to national and regional security.

A key concern is their unpredictability, which—when coupled with training and access to guns—can transform former members into lethal guns for hire. Governments, rebel groups, or political parvenus can hire former combatants to fight on their behalf or as mercenaries in neighbouring countries. In some cases, armed mercenaries even turn against their erstwhile benefactors to pursue their own political or monetary objectives. There are many examples of local politicians using originally apolitical groups for personal and nefarious purposes.

Perhaps the most critical argument in favour of continued vigilance is that it is disaffected youth that comprise most of today’s regional armed groups. In 2000, fully 45 per cent of West Africa’s population were less than 15 years old (UN, 2004). Lack of economic development and widespread unemployment make membership of an organized armed group a particularly attractive option for the region’s idle youth. Given this context, it is hardly surprising that as many as 150,000 young Ivorians have joined the Young Patriots and are eager to participate in—often violent—protests for just a few dollars. The majority (60 per cent) of children and youth interviewed in the three MRU countries maintained they

had voluntarily joined armed groups primarily because it represented their best—if not only—opportunity to ‘earn’ a living (see Chapter 6).

The link to small arms

Gangs of untrained, inexperienced youth would be less threatening were it not for easy access to a wide variety of small arms and light weapons. While the black market price of weapons was not the focus of this study, various sources suggest that assault rifles in the West African region can cost several hundred dollars. This, however, appears to be no obstacle. Indeed, most groups usually possess the requisite funds to procure whatever they desire.

Less resourceful groups are making use of craft hunting rifles and foreign knock-offs now being produced region-wide. Craft-produced firearms used to be largely limited to ungainly-looking pistols and rudimentary shotguns. Local artisans in Ghana are moving towards producing reverse-engineered assault rifles, and they are sharing their expertise with blacksmiths elsewhere in the continent (see Chapter 3). Artisanal gun-making and small-scale arms smuggling are becoming increasingly profitable businesses.

More worryingly, they are acquiring not only pistols and assault rifles but sophisticated weapon systems as well. Indeed, during the 1990s and early part of the twenty-first century, at least four armed groups—the Mouvement patriotique de Côte d’Ivoire (now Forces nouvelles), the Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée, Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD), and the Revolutionary United Front—reportedly possessed man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) capable of attacks on military and civil aviation.

Neglected stockpiles

In spite of international initiatives designed to curb foreign supply, such as the ECOWAS *Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa*, the smuggling of weapons from international sources continues to make headlines. For the vast majority of groups, however, the recirculation of existing stockpiles—in particular of official state-owned weapons—through theft, seizure, and corruption is a primary source of armament. State-owned weapons often make their way into the hands of Nigerian groups (see Chapter 1) and elsewhere, frequently with the help of corrupt politicians or members of the security forces.

It is imperative that rigorous and transparent stockpile management and security accompany supply-side initiatives. Despite representing a significant weapons source, little information is available regarding weapons possessed or captured by state security forces. The Guinean government's destruction of 22,000 weapons in late 2003, including 278 MANPADS, is an exception. State stockpiles need special scrutiny and monitoring owing to the risk of seizure or theft. Reports that the Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC) acquired surface-to-air missiles during its stay in Mali (see Chapter 2) indicate that there exists a regional trade and market even for these technologically sophisticated weapons—found in the official arsenals of Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Nigeria (IISS, 2004).

Despite repeated violations of measures aimed at curbing weapon transfers, monitoring and controlling today's arms flows—including legal transfers—will reduce the likelihood of future arms seizures and theft. Stricter controls over ammunition might be even more successful. Ammunition will deteriorate if not stored carefully and new supplies are constantly required to support combat. In Liberia, LURD had to retreat and postpone its final attack on Monrovia until it received new mortar shells (HRW, 2003b, pp. 2–3). In the early 1990s, ammunition scarcity pushed Malian rebels to adopt strict codes of conduct to avoid wasting bullets, resulting in fewer criminal attacks on civilians (see Chapter 2). Finally, Ghanaian gunsmiths design their guns based on the imported ammunition available on the open market; they do not produce their own ammunition but adapt their products to what is readily available (see Chapter 3).

Disarmament in West Africa

The degree to which arms proliferation drives conflict is revealed by the growing energy with which international organizations, governments, and NGOs are seeking to remove weapons from West Africa. DDR programmes have been implemented in Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Sierra Leone; more are planned for Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. Other initiatives, such as weapons for development (WfD) programmes, and voluntary gun collection projects have been carried out in Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Governments also confiscated weapons from criminals and traffickers.

These arms collection initiatives have produced mixed results. Between 1998 and 2004, personnel successfully collected or seized more than 200,000 small arms region-wide, at least 70,000 of which were subsequently destroyed. The quality of

those weapons destroyed is questionable, however, and implies that better models are being recirculated. While the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) eliminated all 27,000 firearms it collected, loose selection and screening processes contributed to the participation of more than 100,000 Liberians—including many non-combatants—in the DDR programme, pushing it into a funding crisis.

Although WfD programme personnel have collected rather small numbers of weapons, their contribution to development and conflict resolution is only beginning to be understood. Small, targeted initiatives such as the Canadian training of local Mixed Brigades to patrol and restore security in Guinea's refugee camps also illustrate what can be done with limited resources. Attempts by Ghanaian civil society to start a transparent dialogue between traditional gunsmiths and the authorities are both ambitious and sincere. ECOWAS plans to strengthen its small arms moratorium by turning it into a legally binding convention demonstrate continued commitment to controlling arms transfers and combating the proliferation of illicit weapons. Even stronger determination will be necessary to bring about real and lasting change.



West Africa is at a crossroads. On the one hand are small but hopeful signs of progress. On the other, the seemingly intractable social and economic problems that gave rise to conflict in the first place remain. Although there have been some improvements, the combination of high youth unemployment, demographic bulges, and the ready availability of small arms is a serious cause for concern. Moreover, the region's history shows that violence is contagious and that 'spillover' is common. Furthermore, several critical upcoming elections have the potential to trigger yet another round of violence and, with it, tremendous suffering—as witnessed in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. If current efforts to contain and disarm armed groups are not stepped up, history could judge the period of this study as a relatively quiet interlude in a destructive cycle of unremitting violence. Today's armed and aimless youth could well be the spark that ignites tomorrow's conflagration.

List of abbreviations

CDF	Civil Defence Force
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
IDP	Internally displaced person
LURD	Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy
MANPADS	Man-portable air defence systems
MRU	Mano River Union
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WfD	Weapons for development

Endnotes

- 1 Although Mali has no armed group entry in the book, it is listed here because of the recent incursions of the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC) in the north of the country (see Chapter 2).
- 2 The 2.7 million people comprised 1,330,000 IDPs, 620,000 returning migrants, 360,000 returning refugees, 340,000 refugees, and 67,500 third-country nationals (UNOCHA, 2004, p. 9).
- 3 Whereas this study gives only limited coverage of issues of sexual abuse by armed groups, other organizations such as Human Rights Watch have reported extensively on the subject. See, for instance, HRW (2003a).

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