

Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in Perspective

*By Jennifer M. Hazen
with Jonas Horner*



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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAPW	Academic Associates PeaceWorks
CLEEN	Centre for Law Enforcement Education, now the CLEEN Foundation
COMA	Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DICON	Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOWAS Convention	<i>ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials</i>
ECOWAS Moratorium	<i>ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons</i>
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FNDIC	Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities
GBP	British pound
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
JRC	Joint Revolutionary Council
JTF	Joint Task Force
KK	Klansmen Konfraternity
LGA	local government area
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
NAPE	Nigeria Alliance for Peaceful Elections

NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDSF	Niger Delta Strike Force
NDVS	Niger Delta Vigilante Services
NGN	naira (national currency of Nigeria) (USD 1 = NGN 125)
OPC	O'odua People's Congress
PDP	People's Democratic Party
Programme of Action	<i>(UN) Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects</i>
SVC	Supreme Vikings Confraternity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	US dollar

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Preface

This report is based on field research that was carried out by the Small Arms Survey and our Nigerian partners from September 2006 to April 2007. Consequently, the analysis presented here reflects the situation in Nigeria during this period. While the report does address some key events that took place after April 2007—the inauguration of the new president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua; the initiation of peace talks in the Niger Delta; and the release of Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari from prison—these events are covered in far less detail. The findings in the report and the trends identified in terms of small arms proliferation, growing insecurity, and the important role of armed groups in security and politics continued to hold true through October 2007. 📄

I. Introduction

There is overwhelming community sympathy for what they are doing . . . [The militants] are seen as people who can stand up to the oppressors . . . I consider myself a person who can speak on these issues—our problems and protests . . . But getting [to the MEND camp to negotiate the hostage release] and seeing 200 to 300 young men in uniforms, machine guns, rocket launchers and ammunition . . . I said, 'God, so we have come to this.'

—Ledum Mitee, Port Harcourt human rights campaigner (Robinson, 2006)

In the lead-up to Nigeria's April 2007 national and presidential elections, numerous signs emerged of growing popular discontent with the national political system and indications that the 2007 elections would mirror the violence of 2003. The shadow of the 2003 elections hung heavily over the country, while the 2007 electoral process faced a number of challenges.¹ Problems with voter registration raised concerns about disenfranchisement, whether intentional or not. The efforts of Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo to modify the Constitution to enable him to run for a third term drew accusations of authoritarianism. Tensions between the north and the south of the country persisted, as they have for years, and reflected the normal tendency of increasing in an election year. Growing unrest in the Niger Delta brought a rise in violent incidents and kidnappings. Although not as violent as many had predicted, the elections exacerbated political divides due to widespread accusations of fraud from voters and national and international observers alike. The elections did little to resolve the political tensions in the country.

These political tensions are compounded by the reality that Nigeria's economy has grown since President Obasanjo was first elected in 1999, and yet this wealth has been neither seen nor felt by the vast majority of Nigerians. Nearly three-quarters of Nigeria's population live on less than one dollar a day² in a country that has earned oil revenues of at least USD 280 billion over

three decades (Unegbu, 2003, p. 1), not including the past few years of high oil prices. Ethnic tensions, religious differences, limited economic opportunities, and numerous social and political grievances are all fuelling the unrest in Nigeria and contributing to flashpoints for violence. The challenges are immense, and Obasanjo's successor, the newly elected Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, faces the difficult tasks of healing a divided country, addressing legitimate economic grievances, and reforming the police and military. At the same time he must devise a political solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta and address the prevalent insecurity in the country.

This study aims to raise awareness of a number of issues relating to insecurity, armed violence, and the proliferation of illicit small arms in Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999. To this end, the core of this report is divided into five sections. The first section looks at the causes of armed violence in Nigeria, including the context of the 2007 elections, the various dividing lines in Nigerian society, and the long-term challenge of economic development and the redistribution of resources. The second section discusses the circulation of illicit small arms, the availability of legal and illegal arms, the manufacture of craft weapons, and popular demand for small arms. The third section looks at armed violence in Nigeria, with the intention of providing a more nuanced understanding of the types of violence in Nigeria, the contexts in which violence is more likely to occur, and the nature of the perpetrators involved. The fourth section concentrates on the role of armed groups in Nigeria by first discussing the types of armed groups that operate in the country, and then focusing on the evolution of such groups in the Niger Delta region in particular. The fifth section presents an overview of the challenges the government faces in addressing armed violence and insecurity, and more closely investigates specific attempts by the government to tackle these problems in the Delta. The conclusion reviews the numerous challenges that the newly elected president now faces and must address in the coming five years to prevent further deterioration in the security situation in the country.

The following are among the key findings in this report:

- Politics is extremely competitive and elections are perceived as zero-sum contests. This has led to the increasingly militarized nature of politics, the

use of violence as an electoral tool, and the inculcation of a culture of violence in society.

- Armed groups are not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. There are numerous groups of varying character and intent operating in the country. However, today's armed groups are better armed, better trained, and increasingly sophisticated in their actions compared to those of the past.
- The militarized nature of politics combined with the prevalence of armed groups has provided an easy marriage between politics and violence. Armed groups have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by being hired hands, and have now developed their own bases of economic support, thereby freeing themselves from their political patrons. This has led some groups to engage in and try to influence the political process themselves.
- Armed violence is not a random event. Acts of armed violence in Nigeria are purposeful in intent and directed at key targets, whether economic or political. Armed violence is about more than oil, religion, ethnicity, or politics. In essence, such violence is about access to resources, whether through committing crimes, playing on communal tensions, stealing oil, or winning elections. Without addressing the key issues of resource control and distribution, armed violence will persist. A political solution through dialogue will do more to address these issues than a military response.
- While Nigeria supports international instruments to limit illicit proliferation and has put in place national laws to restrict the ownership and use of licit small arms, these laws are poorly enforced and as a result largely ineffective in addressing illicit proliferation. The inability of the police to provide law and order in the country, and the resulting insecurity among the population, has led some individuals and communities to acquire small arms for protection.
- The security vote is an opaque budget line item that provides significant amounts of funding for 'security-related' issues, but which remains uncontrolled by requirements for disclosure. At best, this provides an easy source of money for corruption; at worst, it provides politicians with money that allows them to use violence as a tool of political influence and control by purchasing the services of armed thugs.

- The government's response to armed violence has been a mixed strategy of carrot and stick. The carrot—development programmes—has failed to deliver substantial economic benefits and development progress. The stick—an attempt to meet force with force—has provoked an escalation of violence rather than curbed it, generated popular support for armed groups, and led to an entrenchment of the positions of militants. The only solution to the rising armed violence in the Niger Delta is a political one.

Methodology of the study

This report is primarily a qualitative study of armed violence in Nigeria. It relies on a number of sources of information and data. Numerous interviews were conducted with key informants in government, the foreign diplomatic corps, national and international organizations, individuals involved in the arms trade, and various informed citizens. Interviewees are identified in the text where possible. In situations where identification of the informant could place him or her in danger, the name of the informant is omitted. In addition, the study draws on quantitative data from four sources: a household questionnaire in Rivers and Kano states; an analysis of press reports; a national victimization survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation, a Nigerian NGO; and a survey of armed groups conducted by Academic Associates PeaceWorks, another Nigerian NGO. The Small Arms Survey, in conjunction with local partners, administered the household questionnaire in Rivers and Kano states. This resulted in 459 and 638 completed questionnaires, respectively, which provided important insights into the patterns of armed violence in these areas. The Survey also conducted an analysis of press reports, employing the use of the Taback-Coupland model,³ which tracks violent incidents through press reporting and enables the identification of trends in armed violence. In addition to these primary sources, a wide range of secondary sources was reviewed. A number of individual scholars and national NGOs were also kind enough to share their research and comments with us. 📄

II. The causes of armed violence

Violence is 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (WHO, 2002, p. 5). The main focus in this paper is on the actual carrying out of violent acts, the driving forces behind these episodes of violence, and the tool used in committing acts of violence. Specifically, the concern is with armed violence, which, for the purposes of this paper, is defined as the carrying out of a violent act with 'any material thing designed or used or usable as an instrument for inflicting bodily harm' (Taback and Coupland, 2005, p. 20).

There is a common set of explanations in the literature for what causes violence in Nigeria. This includes politics and elections, the shift to democratic governance, the rise of armed groups, oil, ethnicity and religion, and poverty. These issues represent dividing lines in communities that have led to heightened tensions between and within groups. But to say that groups or individuals are fighting over any single issue is too simplistic. At the heart of many of these conflicts is access to resources and control over the distribution of benefits. This struggle for resources has led to a broad sense of insecurity, opportunism, and the pursuit of self-help strategies across the country.

The context of elections

Democratic elections took place in April 2007. State elections were held on 14 April, while national elections were held one week later on 21 April. While the 1999 elections marked a significant step forward for Nigeria as it transitioned from military rule back to democracy, and the 2003 elections marked the additional step forward of having two successive democratically elected governments, the 2007 elections are significant in the history of Nigeria in that

they mark the first time that there has been a democratic transition from one leader to another. All previous democratic elections resulted in military coups.

Elections in Nigeria are significant not only on the political level, but also in the area of economics. Given the highly centralized nature of government as a result of decades of military rule, political power and economic resources are concentrated in the hands of political leaders. As such, politics in Nigeria could be called the 'politics of allocation', through which electoral victory is intimately tied to 'access to the state as an avenue for wealth accumulation and conferment of status' (CDD, 2003). Those who are a part of the system benefit from the system, while those who are outside of it are left out of the distribution process.

Politics encourages competition not only at the national level, but also at the state and local levels, where the same patronage system holds sway, making elections true 'all-or-nothing' contests that have resulted in violent clashes motivated by the quest for power and its advantages. These clashes have taken place both within parties, as political candidates seek their parties' nominations, and among parties vying for seats in government.

The perception that elections are truly zero-sum contests for access to resources, combined with a culture of impunity, has encouraged the use of violence by politicians to secure electoral success. Politicians have in the past provided weapons to privately funded militias who wield these arms as tools to intimidate the politicians' opponents and the latter's supporters.⁴ Similar tactics were deployed for the 2007 elections, with an interesting twist. The weapons provided during the 2003 elections were still held by those armed groups, who grew in power during the intervening four years, enabling them to use their firepower to influence the political process themselves rather than merely taking orders from politicians.

Elections are also about representation. In addition to holding the economic reins of the country, the presidency also provides a significant symbol of ethnic and religious representation in a country with over 250 ethnic groups,⁵ and significant Muslim and Christian populations. The origins of the president are viewed as important because of the perception that the group or groups that the president represents benefit during his time in power. As such, elections are more about candidates' origins than their political platforms.

Table 2.1 Nigerian heads of state, 1963–2007

Years of rule	Name	Type of government	Ethnicity	Religion	Place of birth	Departure from government
1963–66	Nnamdi Azikiwe*	Civilian	Igbo	Christian	North-west (Niger)	Coup
1966	Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi	Military	Igbo	Christian	South-east Abia	Coup (killed)
1966–75	Yakubu Gowon	Military	Ngas	Christian	North central (Plateau)	Coup
1975–76	Murtala Muhammed	Military	Hausa	Muslim	North (Kano)	Attempted coup (killed)
1976–79	Olusegun Obasanjo	Military	Yoruba	Christian	South-west (Ogun)	Election
1979–83	Shehu Shagari	Civilian	Hausa-Fulani	Muslim	North (Sokoto)	Elected again in 1983, but elections considered fraudulent; coup
1984–85	Muhammadu Buhari	Military	Hausa-Fulani	Muslim	North (Katsina)	Coup
1985–93	Ibrahim Babangida	Military	Gwari	Muslim	North-west (Niger)	Forced to step down after nullifying democratic elections
1993	Ernest Adegunle Oladeinde Shonekan	Civilian	Yoruba	Christian	South-west (Lagos)	Coup
1993–98	Sani Abacha	Military	Kanuri	Muslim	North (Kano)	Died (heart attack)
1998–99	Abdulsalami Abubakar	Military	Gwari	Muslim	North-west (Niger)	Election
1999–2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Civilian	Yoruba	Christian	South-west (Ogun)	Election
2007–	Umaru Yar'Adua	Civilian	Hausa-Fulani	Muslim	North (Katsina)	

* Nnamdi Azikiwe served as governor general from 1960 to 1963 before becoming president in 1963.

Sources: Based on BBC and Reuters news articles, and *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (2007)

While there has long been an unwritten, but accepted practice of rotating the presidency among the six Nigerian geopolitical zones (ICG, 2007a, p. 2), a pact made in 1999 established an unwritten rule that the country's leadership position should rotate between the north and the south, largely Muslim and Christian, respectively (Ibrahim, 2007, p. 6). Obasanjo, who held the presidency for eight years, is a southerner, despite his previous strong ties to the north. The north wanted a northern president in the 2007 elections. The presidential candidates of the top three contending parties were all Muslims from northern states, indicating a keen understanding by all political parties of the dynamics at play and the need to cater to the demands of important constituents. The election of a northerner, Yar'Adua, could contribute to reducing concerns in the north of being sidelined from the political process. However, much will depend on the policies of the new president and the response of the south, which claims that its time has not yet passed.

Many expected the 2007 elections to be as violent as those in 2003. Widespread distrust, fear, and apathy due to the popularly held belief that politicians use violence, intimidation, and vote rigging to win elections pervaded the pre-election period (Bekoe, 2007). Incidents in the months preceding the elections suggested reason for concern, but they also indicated that violence was not likely to be widespread or national in character, but instead localized to the most contested areas. The European Union decided that it would send election monitors to 33 of the 36 states, claiming the situation was too dangerous in the Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers to responsibly send monitors there (BBC, 2007d). This offers a telling insight into international perceptions of the nature of the situation in Nigeria, but the Niger Delta is not the only area where there are concerns over violence. While the spectre of armed violence hung over the 2007 elections, evidence suggests that there has been an overall trend of rising violence since the democratic transition in 1999. This trend cannot be explained by elections or the violence in the Niger Delta alone.

Democracy

While democracy is not something entirely new to Nigeria, the country has been ruled by military regimes for most of its post-colonial period (see Table 2.1).

Violence was common during military rule, and the seeds of various forms of violence were planted during this time (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, pp. 21–22). The 1999 elections, which marked a return to democratic governance, proved a positive step on the political front. But the return to democracy has produced a number of challenges for the government. The immediate effect of democracy has been more conflict (World Bank Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, 2003), not less, due to the nascent quality of democratic institutions and the distribution of resources in the country.

While democracy has provided the opportunity for political competition, such competition has extended beyond the political realm, providing an opening for communal, ethnic, and religious tensions long suppressed under years of military rule. In this way, ‘democracy has deepened divisions rather than healed them’ (Tayler, 2006). While this plays out in ethnic, communal, and religious violence, these are often useful rallying points for politicians vying over public goods, as opposed to struggles over identity. Without addressing the fundamental problems of Nigeria in terms of poverty and access to resources, the opening of political space has created a public space for a struggle for control (Ebo, 2006, p. 11), pitting groups against one another in a fight for resources.

At the core, politics in Nigeria is a struggle for control of resources and the decision-making power to determine how these resources are utilized and distributed. ‘Everyone, including DFID [UK Department for International Development], underestimated the challenge Nigeria confronted in 1999 There was an assumption that the transition from military to civilian rule would create the necessary political space, and political will, for significant pro-poor reform’ (DFID, 2004, p. 11). What was not recognized at the time was that these reforms actually *reduce* access to resources. The incentives were not there for political leaders to engage in the necessary political and economic reforms largely because any offered benefits from the reform process could not match ‘the loss of highly personalised, discretionary use of resources that engagement with the reform agenda would entail’ (DFID, 2004, p. 13). This competition for resources has made the political arena highly competitive, even cut-throat, encouraging the use of violence to win. Politics has been militarized, with violence becoming an ordinary tool of elections and a part of the political culture (ICG, 2006a, p. 27).

Another consequence of the return to democracy was the perceived explosion of lawlessness and chaos. One observer has argued that ‘across much of the country, anarchy reigns’ (Tayler, 2006). This extreme view is not supported by evidence on the ground, but there is a kernel of truth in what is said: the state security forces within the country have found it increasingly difficult to handle challenges to authority. While the democratic government ‘has lifted many of the dictatorial strictures on daily life’ that were present under previous military regimes and removed the military to an external role (Tayler, 2006), this has left a security vacuum in many parts of the country. The absence of effective security forces in a situation of weak law and order has led to ‘heightened clashes among the populace’ (Tayler, 2006), a rise in crime, and an atmosphere of insecurity (Ebo, 2006, p. 10). It has also resulted in the proliferation of armed groups, community defence groups, and vigilante groups. While many of these groups claim to have been formed as a response to the insecurity, and some have been successful in restoring a semblance of security (ICG, 2006c, p. 17), such efforts at self-help or self-defence have come at a price. It is now these groups, rather than the police, that govern the streets of many towns.

While the population still supports democracy as a form of government, the performance of the democratic government has been increasingly criticized and questioned. While citizens are not arguing for a return to military rule, they are softening their stance against other forms of government (Afrobarometer, 2006). The population is questioning the democratic credentials of the former government, and growing impatient with the slow pace of reform. In part, this is the result of the failure of the government to utilize the country’s economic growth to better the quality of life of the people, the high levels of corruption that persist, and questions about the 2007 electoral process. But it is also likely the result of actions by the former president himself. Many Nigerians are increasingly unhappy with the political system, feeling disenfranchised, as though their votes do not matter.⁶ Such sentiments were reinforced by Obasanjo’s bid to change the Constitution to enable him to run for a third term. He was unsuccessful in this effort, and this should be seen as a democratic victory for the legislature, but his attempt to alter the Constitution raised concerns about his commitment to the democratic process, further heightening

discontent with the regime and losing Obasanjo his political backers. Accusations of fixing the polls had already begun months before the elections, and pervasive fraud evident in the April 2007 elections seriously undermined democracy in Nigeria.⁷ Citizens, although not overly vocal about the rigging of the elections, nonetheless did turn out to vote. Their determination to vote, even with the expectation that the vote would not count, suggests a sincere interest in the political process and a desire to be a part of that process.

The shadow of 2003

The 2003 elections cast a long shadow over the politics of Nigeria and have had a lasting impact on the country. They were an unfortunate turn for Nigeria after relatively peaceful, if not perfect, elections in 1999. The 2003 elections mirrored past attempts to transition peacefully from one democratic leader to the next in that they were marred by allegations of fraud, disenfranchisement, and violence. While these elections were more successful than similar elections in the past in that they did not result in a reversion to military rule, they nevertheless left the population resentful and set the tone for future elections. The causes of discontent in the 2003 elections included poor performance by the electoral commission, rigging of the elections, the involvement of armed groups, and the use of violence in the electoral process. Similar problems preceded the 2007 elections.

As in 2003, the 2007 electoral process was viewed as largely manipulated by the ruling party. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was viewed as largely ineffective in the 2003 elections, and was viewed in much the same way in the lead-up to the 2007 elections, drawing accusations of intentional delays, bias towards the ruling party, ineffectiveness in preparing for the elections, and being a contributing factor to political violence (Bekoe, 2007). There were allegations that the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), had used its power to manipulate both INEC and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to eliminate rivals and ensure its victory in the elections. In February 2007 the EFCC released a list of party candidates from all parties indicted for corruption. While the EFCC and INEC do not have the legal power to disqualify candidates, their actions forced candi-

dates to initiate court cases in order to qualify to contest the elections. With the short time frame before elections, such actions virtually ensured such candidates' inability to run. The most contentious candidate caught in this battle was the sitting vice president, Atiku Abubakar, who contested the elections as a presidential candidate, but from a leading opposition party, having broken from the ruling PDP and Obasanjo over the latter's efforts to obtain the right to run for a third term. Ultimately, the courts granted Abubakar the right to stand in the elections, but only days before the presidential election, leaving him little time to campaign.

The 2003 elections witnessed violence resulting from a mix of ethnic and religious tensions, communal violence, politically motivated killings, and the manipulation of inter-communal divisions by politicians for political gain. Not all of the violence resulted directly from the electoral process, and many parts of the country had experienced violence in the previous years. Yet there was a discernible increase in the level of violence in the months leading up to the polls. Between the party primary elections for local government candidates in mid-2002 and early 2003, hundreds of people were killed and thousands displaced as a result of political violence (HRW, 2003b, p. 1). Politicians used the elections as a time to manipulate ongoing or latent conflicts in an effort to galvanize support. They acted upon opportunities to sort out past political differences with other party members and opposition candidates in their own favour, and by whatever means available. High-level political assassinations, although rare, did occur. Politicians also took advantage of the unemployed youth by arming them and using them to gain supporters and intimidate their (the politicians') opponents (HRW, 2003a; 2003b). These actions exacerbated existing tensions and set the tone for the post-election period. The 2003 elections set in motion a violent trend with '[m]any former political enforcers hav[ing] since evolved into well-armed criminals or leading anti-government militants' (HRW, 2007a, p. 85).

These actions have come back to haunt regional politicians. The arming of youths or personal militia groups in 2003 as a political tool to win office has led to a larger problem of the proliferation of small arms and the entrenchment of armed groups. Politicians provided weapons to groups, but never collected these weapons after the elections. According to police, these weap-

ons were never recovered, but instead were used for criminal activities (Olori, 2004). Gangs were 'hired and armed by politicians to fight their political opponents, steal ballot boxes, and generally rig the vote', but the gangs kept the weapons, were not given jobs by politicians as promised, and have since used the guns to develop criminal enterprises (BBC, 2007b). The shift to criminal activities appears to be a response to having arms and not having any economic opportunities. Militants abandoned by their patrons following the elections still had guns and used them. In some cases, these groups continued to act under the direction of politicians. In other cases, they were seemingly left to their own devices, and have since developed into much stronger and better-armed groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these groups, once ruled by the politicians who armed them, in fact now hold the reins of power and attempted to influence the 2007 elections themselves, rather than at the behest of politicians (BBC, 2007b). In large part, this is the result of these armed groups developing their own economic support systems, and of their disagreements with ruling politicians.

The 2003 elections had a significant impact on the dynamics in the Delta region and the development of armed groups there. The arming of groups in the lead-up to the 2003 elections 'transformed the political landscape of the Delta' (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 8). Politicians armed two key men: Ateke Tom, then head of the Niger Delta Vigilante Services (NDVS), and Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, the president of the Ijaw Youth Council at the time. Asari has made public statements linking key government officials and armed groups in the lead-up to the 2003 elections. He claims that government officials were the sponsors and financiers of armed groups in order to ensure that the PDP won the election (NDPEHRD, 2004, pp. 5–6). These accusations were denied by government officials, but additional evidence suggests that the main backers of armed groups in 2003 were PDP politicians (HRW, 2004a, pp. 2, 4; NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 6; SDN, 2006b, p. 9). This arming of groups provided fuel for the fire. The assistance from politicians in combination with revenues from stealing oil provided armed groups with the means to escalate violence through the purchase of additional and more sophisticated arms (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 8). It also pitted the two main armed groups against each other. Asari and Tom, reportedly working together during the elections, split soon after and

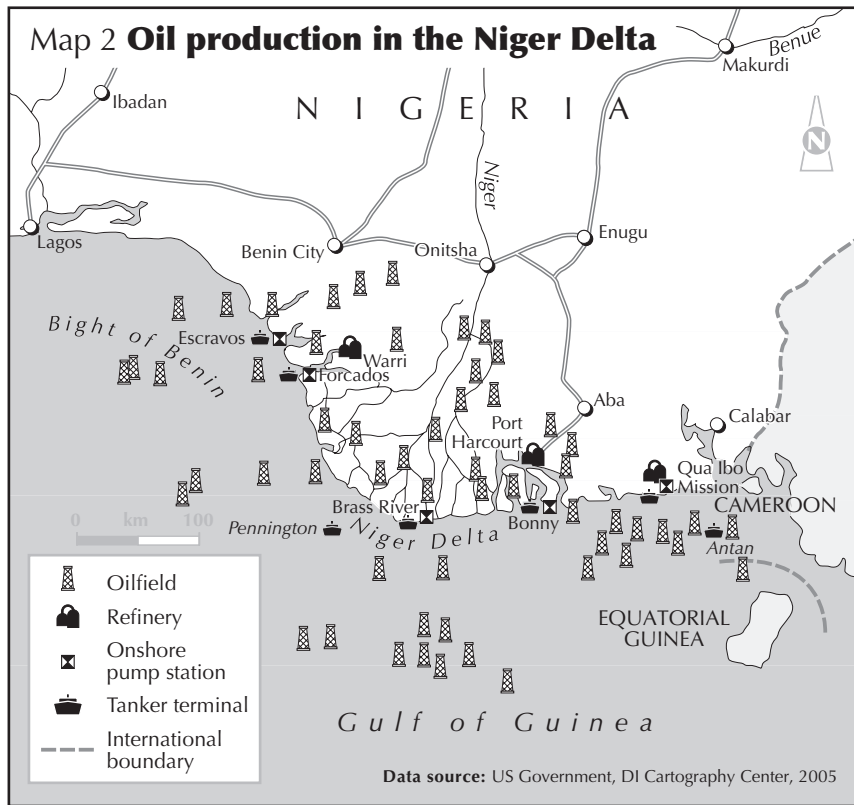
as a result a wave of violence spread throughout the Delta. With such devastating consequences arising from the politics of the 2003 elections, there was concern over what would happen after 2007 (BBC, 2007b).

Growing unrest in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta has been described by many as being both ungoverned and ungovernable, because the government lacks the capacity to resolve the crisis there (Chatham House, 2006; Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 1; Watts, 2007). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has gone a step further by describing the situation as one that 'could tip towards outright warfare' (UNDP, 2006, p. 18). The situation has deteriorated significantly since the 2003 elections due to the increase in militancy, the access to oil revenues and arms by armed groups, and the government's militant response to armed group activity while failing to address any of the legitimate concerns of the population in the Delta region.

There has been a rise in violence since 2003 (Chatham House, 2006; Odili, 2007; SDN, 2006a). Evidence of this can be found in a reduction in oil production, an increase in kidnappings, and the increased militancy of groups operating in the Delta. Oil production has been reduced by 10 to 25 per cent in 2006 and 2007.⁸ In 2006 a local NGO reported that an unprecedented crime wave had hit the Delta, including not only kidnappings for money, but also a rise in politically motivated kidnappings (SDN, 2006b, pp. 1–2). The finance minister, Nenadi Usman, stated on 9 January 2007 that violence had led to a decline in production of as much as 600,000 barrels per day in the preceding year, leading to a loss of USD 4.4 billion in oil revenues (Tayo, 2007, p. 8).

The Niger Delta lies in the south of the country and consists of nine states and nearly 70,000 square kilometres of land and waterways.⁹ This area accounts for over 90 per cent of Nigeria's known gas and oil reserves (see Map 2), which in turn accounted for nearly 80 per cent of total government revenues between 2002 and 2004 (SDN, 2006a; UNDP, 2006, p. 14). As Nigeria's economic powerhouse, the Delta is important to the country's economic standing, as well as to the politicians who benefit from the incoming revenue. Mismanagement of oil revenues since independence, corruption, the failure



to redistribute oil wealth, the utter lack of development in the Delta, and environmental damage have hardened the resolve of those living in the region to agitate for change, and increased popular support for those groups fighting for a better deal. Militancy has grown in the Delta in response to the continued lack of attention to the basic needs of the population:

Social instability, poor local governance, competition for economic resources and environmental degradation have taken a toll . . . The delta today is a place of frustrated expectation and deep-rooted mistrust . . . [where] [l]ong years of neglect and conflict have fostered a siege mentality (UNDP, 2006, p. 16).

The grievances of those living in the Delta are well founded. The population suffers from environmental contamination resulting from the operations

of oil companies and the oil bunkering (illegal tapping of oil pipelines) of armed groups. Oil spills and gas flaring have negatively affected agricultural land, water sources, and air quality. In return, the population has received very little from the government, which benefits from the high revenues earned from selling oil overseas. Legally, the population has no control over the oil that sits beneath their land, and no claim to the profits accrued through its sale. The percentage of revenue received by oil-producing states has increased to 13 per cent from less than 2 per cent under military rule, but this funding goes to state coffers, with few visible signs of it being spent to improve the lives of people in local communities. The amounts of money are not small. For example, Rivers state government received nearly USD 100 million per month from the federal government for the first eight months of 2006, as a result of high oil prices (HRW, 2007a, p. 75). Although the incidence of poverty has declined since 1996 in the Delta (UNDP, 2006, p. 58), the lack of roads, the limited health care and education facilities, high unemployment, and limited future prospects underline the neglect by the state and federal governments.

While there are legitimate grievances in the Delta, not all violence can be equated with a fight for justice, development, or equitable distribution of oil revenues. The Delta has witnessed the emergence of a plethora of armed groups over the past decades. Some of these groups agitate for change in the political situation and in the distribution of resources. More often, the push is not for democratic governance or an even distribution of oil revenues, but rather a call for the right to all oil revenues for oil-producing areas. In other words, it is a claim for resource control and financial revenue to be ceded to the oil-producing states where decisions about distribution can then be made, thereby taking this decision-making power out of the hands of the federal government. Other groups merely take advantage of the lack of law and order in the area to engage in criminal activities and oil bunkering aimed at profit or territorial control. Although many groups use the legitimate problems in the Delta to justify their actions, no group has come forward with a political and economic plan of its own on how to resolve the concerns of the Delta communities.

Given the difficulty in obtaining information on armed groups, as well as the fluidity with which they evolve, it is difficult to obtain an exact figure for the number of these groups active in the Delta or accurate information about

their activities. A June 2004 anti-cult law in Rivers state put the number of cult groups in the state at nearly 100 (Best and Von Kemedi, 2005, pp. 21–22). Other states have a variety of cult groups, ethnic militias, and armed groups operating in their territory. The numbers continue to change as groups emerge, merge, or disappear. While smaller groups certainly have an impact at the local level, there are perhaps only a handful of groups large enough to affect the dynamics of the region as a whole. The most prominent group currently active in the Niger Delta is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Other active groups include the Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta (COMA), the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and a number of cult groups, such as the Outlaws and Icelander.

Armed groups have increased their use of violent tactics over the past year in the form of kidnappings, battles with security forces, clashes with one another, and car bombs, which is a more recent tactic. Such groups are demonstrating increasingly sophisticated tactics and weaponry, raising concerns about future violence (Fisher-Thompson, 2007). Those groups with more purely economic motives have joined the fray by tapping into the illegal oil-bunkering trade and kidnapping international oil and construction workers for ransom. The response of the government has been an increase in the militarization of its approach to the Delta crisis, but this strategy has not yielded the dividends intended. Instead, this heavy-handed approach seems to have spurred on the armed groups, solidified their commitment to armed struggle, encouraged recruitment, and raised public support for some of these groups.

Religious and ethnic tensions: north and south

Although violent conflict has often been depicted as a clash between north and south, the reality is more complex, with tensions both within and between these regions. The north consists of 19 states. Of these, only four have not experienced major communal clashes over the past two decades (Hudu, 2004, p. 1). Since the end of military rule in 1999, numerous violent clashes have taken place in the north as a result of ethnic and religious tensions, communal competition over grazing and farming lands, and tensions over the

dubious distinction between indigenes and settlers. An official estimate is unavailable and exact numbers are difficult to assess, but many put the figure at roughly 10,000 persons who have been killed in several hundred separate incidents of violence and communal clashes, with many more displaced by the violence between 1999 and 2002.¹⁰ Large-scale fighting erupted again in the first half of 2004 in which hundreds were killed in inter-communal clashes with religious undertones and associated revenge killings (see HRW, 2005b).

One source of conflict has been religion. Since the 1999 election, Nigeria has been noticeably divided on issues of religion and ethnicity (Tayo, 2007, p. 4). *Sharia* (Islamic law) has exacerbated these tensions, which previous military regimes would have quashed (Tayo, 2007, p. 4). *Sharia* is not new in Nigeria; it has governed civil and personal matters in northern states, e.g. on issues such as divorce, for well over a century. The change has come in the extension of the jurisdiction of sharia courts to criminal cases, and the handing down of sharia sentences such as amputations, stonings, and death sentences.¹¹ Obasanjo rarely interfered in these matters and allowed the northern states to rule by sharia to a certain extent (Wee, 2006), but not without any restraint. His government did not create a federal court for sharia; instead, it maintained the system of appeals that provides for appeals from the highest sharia court to the Federal Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court, both of their federal and secular courts (HRW, 2004b, p. 18). The Obasanjo government also opposed the carrying out of death sentences, although it did not actively intervene to overturn them (HRW, 2004b, pp. 99–101). These death sentences were never carried out, and the function of sharia courts has largely been normalized over the past few years.

Northern states have relied upon *hisbah* groups, i.e. groups of local young men, to patrol neighbourhoods in order to maintain sharia. These groups have been compared to vigilante groups common in Nigeria, acting as community watch patrols and at times meting out justice themselves (HRW, 2004b, p. 74). The groups have operated with the consent and support of state governments and in an open fashion, often with identifiable uniforms (HRW, 2004b, p. 75). However, hisbah groups have in some cases taken the law into their hands, and this has led to the creation of rules governing their actions as well as tensions between these groups and the federal police. While Obasanjo's government

originally tolerated the role of hisbah groups in northern states, especially aggressive behaviour in enforcing sharia has come increasingly under fire. In February 2006 the police banned the hisbah from operating in Kano after they had undertaken an aggressive campaign to prevent men and women from travelling together on public transport (BBC, 2006b). Kano state, in defiance of the federal government, has largely ignored this ban and the hisbah continue to operate there. Such defiance reveals the ongoing tensions between the federal and state governments 'as each tests the authority of the other' under democratic rule (Peel, 2003).

The imposition of sharia by 12 of the 19 northern states in contravention of the national Constitution led to rioting by Christians in the north (HRW, 2004b, pp. 96–99; Tayler, 2006). The Constitution allows for plurality of religion, freedom of religion, and a secular state, with many arguing that the imposition of sharia, even though officially only for the Muslim population in the north, has led to restrictions on the rights of Christians. While Christians can refuse to be tried by sharia courts (HRW, 2004b, p. 20), this has not lessened the fear or concern of Christians in the north. The two religions, although by no means homogenous, manifest strong suspicions and distrust of each other (Ruby and Shah, 2007). The tense situation has provided fertile ground for both local and external incidents to spark violent confrontations (see Table 2.2).

The issues of religion and ethnicity are so controversial that questions about religious affiliation and ethnic background were omitted from the most recent census. The 2006 census originally planned to ask questions about the religion of the respondent and the respondent's ethnic group, but the proposal to pose such questions, which are considered standard census questions in many parts of the world, generated widespread protest. Political leaders in the north claimed they would mobilize their citizens to actively refuse to take part in the census if the questions were included, while leaders in the south argued the opposite: that they would boycott the census if the questions were not included (Odunfa, 2006a). This response was largely the result of claims by Christians and southerners that they now constituted the majority populations in the country. There were clashes in the south-east between militants trying to stop the census and the local police (ICG, 2006c, p. 1). The government decided to remove the contested questions from the census. The reason

Table 2.2 **Illustrative incidents of religious and ethnic violence, 1999–2006**¹²

Date	Event	Impact
May 1999	Clashes between ethnic Ijaws and Itsekiris in Niger Delta	Up to 200 killed
Nov. 1999	Clashes between Yoruba and Hausa in Lagos	100+ killed
2000	Protests against imposition of sharia across the north	Thousands killed
Sept. 2001	Riots between Christians and Muslims in Jos, Plateau state	915+ killed
Oct. 2001	Clashes in Kano between Christians and Muslims after protests against US bombing of Afghanistan	200+ killed
Feb. 2002	Clashes between ethnic Hausa and Yoruba in Lagos	100+ killed, 430 wounded
Nov. 2002	Riots in Kaduna over Miss World pageant	215+ killed
Aug. 2003	Ethnic clashes in Warri over oil rights and political power	100+ killed, 1,000+ injured
May 2004*	Clashes between Christians and Muslims in Plateau; government declares state of emergency	600+ killed
May 2004*	In spillover from unrest in Plateau, clashes between Christians and Muslims take place in Kano	200+ killed
Feb. 2006	Riots and protests across northern Nigeria and in southern city of Onitsha over the Danish publication of cartoons of the Prophet	100+ killed
March 2006	Ethnic clashes over land and property rights in the south-east	8+ killed

Sources: Based on Reuters AlertNet (2007); * from BBC (2004)

for the sensitive nature of these questions, according to one Nigerian scholar, is that their answers have serious 'implications for shaping regional, state and ethnic relations and balance of power' (Odunfa, 2006a). In other words, the size of a group's population determines its allotment of federal resources and its political weight.

Another source of conflict is the distinction between indigene and settler status.¹³ Whether a person is considered an indigene or a settler depends not on nationality or residency, but rather on ancestry (ICG, 2006a, p. 24). Thus,

Nigerians can be viewed as strangers in their area of residence simply because their ancestors did not live there. This has divided communities, alienating those seen as settlers. It has also served as a dividing line for the distribution of resources, government positions, and access to other benefits, marginalizing and discriminating against those deemed non-native to a specific area. This has led to conflicts over rights and resources between indigene and non-indigene groups in a number of states.

While differences in religion and discrimination against non-indigene persons have created tensions, some argue that the real root cause of conflict in the north is not differences in ethnicity, religion, or origin, but rather access to scarce resources (Isaacs, 2004). In a country where patronage politics remains strong, affiliations are important tools for gaining access to resources. Existing divisions within the population are thus easily exploited and exacerbated by politicians for their own purposes. This happens on a local scale, but also on a larger scale. The resource-poor north has opposed any change in the distribution of revenue from oil production, because any change would mean an increase for southern states and a decrease for northern states (Purefoy, 2005). This is a difficult tightrope to walk: resolving the concerns of the Delta could shift similar concerns to the north, thereby shifting the location of the conflict as well.

Strong economy, weak development

Nigeria is a classic example of the 'paradox of plenty' (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 2). It has, by all accounts, amassed a great deal of money over the past three decades, largely through oil sales, but has failed to use this windfall to develop the infrastructure and economy of the country. Instead, it has relied heavily on continuing oil revenues.¹⁴ By one estimate, Nigeria has earned more than USD 450 billion in the past 35 years in oil revenues alone (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 7). According to the International Monetary Fund, the country's oil revenues in 2005 amounted to USD 50 billion, and with oil well over USD 50 per barrel, between 2006 and 2020 Nigeria could pocket more than USD 750 billion in oil income (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 3). The juxtaposition of government wealth and personal

poverty has fuelled popular discontent, especially in oil-producing areas, where there is little evidence of oil revenues being spent on development.

Between 1970 and 2000 the percentage of people in Nigeria subsisting on less than one US dollar a day grew from 36 to 70 per cent (Watts, 2007), a tremendous increase, considering growing oil revenues. In 2007 estimates vary, but somewhere between 50 and 75 per cent of the population continues to live on a dollar a day.¹⁵ Between 1980 and 1996 poverty levels increased dramatically, and then fell slightly between 1996 and 2004 (UNDP, 2006, p. 35), suggesting that the situation might be improving, albeit marginally.

UNDP conducted a human development study of the Delta region in 2006. Nigeria maintains a relatively low Human Development Index score. The study revealed that although the Niger Delta scores slightly above Nigeria as a whole, it still ranks far below other oil-producing countries (UNDP, 2006, p. 2). These statistics may not be surprising for a developing country, but they are perhaps more striking when considered in light of the budgets for state governments in the Delta region. In 2005 the Bayelsa state budget was USD 560 million, which included USD 8.4 million for the construction of two official residences, of which USD 1.9 million was for decorating alone (Servant, 2006). In 2006 the Rivers state budget was USD 1.3 billion, which is more than the budgets of many West African countries (BBC, 2007a). The gap between large state budgets and limited development is increasingly clear and contributes significantly to the conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta.

Since 2003 the government has made a point of releasing the financial figures of how much money is being distributed to federal, state, and local governments (Peel, 2005, p. 7). With increased information about the funds allocated to state governments, the population has come to understand that the amounts are significant and that they are not being spent on the states' communities. This has fuelled discontent, provided a rallying point for armed groups, and provided a reason for unemployed youths to join armed groups. Whereas previously this discontent had been directed at foreigners, in particular the oil companies, and the federal government, the population is now refocusing its attention and ire on state governments. 'As centralized military control has relaxed, so politicians at the state and local levels have more power to run their territories autonomously and unaccountably' (Peel, 2005, p. 4). The pop-

ulation is beginning to see this shift, and is moving towards holding the state and local governments equally accountable. There is no evidence to suggest that full-scale civil war is brewing, but frustration and discontent appear to be growing, and this contributes to the set of already divisive factors at play, suggesting that the conflict in the Niger Delta will not simply fade away after the 2007 elections. 🗨️

III. Small arms in Nigeria

With an estimated one to three million small arms in circulation in Nigeria, these weapons pose a significant challenge to law and order and a high risk to personal security. The majority of these small arms are illegally possessed, due to highly restrictive national laws on possession. While this does not necessarily indicate intent to use these weapons in an illegal fashion, as self-defence is a primary motive for possession in some cases, it does mean that there are few records of the number of weapons in the country and ineffective means of controlling the importation and distribution of small arms in Nigeria. The military and police are increasing their stocks of weapons in an effort to modernize their forces and to combat rising armed violence in the country, while illegal civilian importation is also continuing. The problem is one of demand. The security forces are importing weapons in order to meet the demands of their role in securing the country. Individuals and groups are importing and purchasing small arms as a result of the failure of the security forces to provide security and, in some cases, due to the draw of rich profits from the use of small arms in illegal activities.

Circulation of small arms

There are an estimated seven to ten million illicit small arms and light weapons in West Africa (Small Arms Survey, 2003, p. 80). These figures are based on rough estimations, given population size and levels of conflict in countries and in the region as a whole. There are an estimated one million (Ebo, 2006, p. 1; Mensah, 2002) to three million (Obasi, 2002, p. 69) small arms and light weapons in circulation in Nigeria alone. Civilians possess the majority of weapons in the country. A 2001 estimate claimed that 80 per cent of the weapons in civilian possession had been obtained illegally (Obasi, 2002, p. 69), because of strict laws on civilian possession.

These estimates have been used for over five years without modification, suggesting that it is time to re-evaluate the situation and review the estimates. There is little quantitative or qualitative data available on small arms and light weapons in Nigeria (Ebo, 2006, p. 2), making it difficult to conduct such a review. This is true for both the legal and illegal flows of small arms. This lack of data also makes it difficult to determine a baseline for measuring rises or declines in the flows of arms into and out of the country. It is equally difficult to assess the numerous claims that there has been an ‘alarming increase’ in the number of illegal small arms in circulation resulting from the worsening security situation and fuelled by oil bunkering (BBC 2006a; Peel, 2005, p. 2; Servant, 2006). This raises questions about how widely available small arms are, how common possession is by civilians, and whether there has been a dramatic spike in the level of imports of illegal weapons over the past year.

Legal small arms

There are several security agencies operating in Nigeria (see Table 3.1). While all of these agencies play a role in either the internal or external security of the country, not all of them or their members are authorized to carry small arms. The primary agencies authorized to carry arms are the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the Nigeria Police Force, and some specialized units within the other agencies. Those official persons authorized to bear arms number over 400,000, but other agencies are pressing to be allowed to carry small arms. In 2000 one report suggested that of the one to three million small arms in Nigeria, only a few hundred thousand weapons were in official stocks (Obasi, 2002, p. 69). According to the current personnel figures and recent orders of weapons for the police and the military, this estimate is likely to be outdated, and the actual number of official small arms is likely to be higher.

The military

The Nigerian military is roughly 85,000 strong. This includes the army (67,000), air force (10,000), and navy and coast guard (8,000) (IISS, 2007, p. 286). There is little information available about the existing small arms stockpiles of the military forces,¹⁶ and military officers are reluctant to release this information.

Table 3.1 Security agencies in Nigeria

Classification	Agency name	Personnel authorized to carry arms?
Armed forces	Nigerian Army	Yes – all calibres
	Nigerian Air Force	Yes – all calibres
	Nigerian Navy	Yes – all calibres
Intelligence agencies	State Security Services	Yes – small arms
	National Intelligence Agency	Yes – small arms
	Defence Intelligence Agency	Yes – small arms
Police agencies	Nigeria Police Force	Yes – members of operational departments bear small arms while on duty; senior officers can maintain handguns
	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Yes – members of operational departments bear small arms while on duty
	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission	No – only police attached to the EFCC may do so
	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	No – it is seeking authority to do so
Penal agencies (adult and juvenile institutions)	Nigerian Prisons Service	Yes – a special unit is armed to provide security for prisons and for escort of ‘dangerous’ offenders to courts
	Borstal institution	No – this is a federal institution responsible for the correction of juvenile offenders
	Approved schools	No – these are state institutions
	Remand homes	No – these are state institutions
Law enforcement and regulatory agencies	Nigeria Customs Service	Yes – specialized units can bear arms during operations, especially patrols and raids
	Nigeria Immigration Service	Yes – specialized units can bear arms during operations, especially patrols and raids
	Federal Road Safety Corps	Yes – officials were authorized in December 2006 to bear arms while on highway patrol

Source: Small Arms Survey (2007a, pp. 2–3)

The military is primarily confined to its barracks domestically and is used for border operations or navy patrols of coastal waters, or for contributing to international peacekeeping operations. The military's role is currently defined by the 1999 Constitution. According to Section 217 of the Constitution, the military is responsible for defending Nigeria from external attack, maintaining territorial integrity and securing the country's borders, and suppressing insurrection and aiding civilian authorities when requested to do so by the president. The military can be called upon to conduct other activities by the National Assembly, but only through a legislative act by the Assembly.

The military is currently being used for one internal problem: the crisis in the Delta. Reluctant to refer to the growing conflict in the Delta as an internal conflict, military commanders instead use the euphemism 'disturbance' and suggest that the problem should be handled by the Nigeria Police Force rather than the military.¹⁷ The Joint Task Force (JTF) has been posted in the Niger Delta since 2003. Originally planned as an interim measure to quell rising violence in the Warri area and provide protection to the oil installations in the area, the JTF has remained in the Delta, and to date there are no plans for its removal. The army leads the JTF, which also includes officers from the navy, the paramilitary mobile police, and the regular police force. The JTF has held primary responsibility for security in the area, including responding to kidnapping incidents. It has been accused of excessive use of force in quelling protests or raiding villages believed to be harbouring or aiding militant groups (AI, 2005). This has raised questions about both the JTF's tactics and its level of firepower.

The military has acknowledged that it needs to procure weapons to counter armed groups, which are increasingly well armed.¹⁸ While there are reports and claims that armed groups are better equipped and trained than the Nigerian military (Ogbedu and Ogundele, 2007), this has been disputed by claims that the military faces problems of low morale and fighting a conflict against its fellow countrymen in unfamiliar terrain, but it is not yet outgunned. Newspaper reports emerged in early 2007 claiming that the government was to purchase military equipment worth NGN 2 billion (USD 16 million) for the purpose of suppressing militants in the Delta. Such reports were dismissed by government officials, who claimed that the purchases were being used to

Table 3.2 Nigerian military expenditures (NGN millions), 1996–2007

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
15,350	17,920	25,162	45,400	37,490	63,472
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
108,148	82,413	85,047	111,869	98,000	122,314

Sources: SIPRI (2007); IISS (2007); Nigeria (2007)

develop the military's capacity in general, and were not intended for any specific purpose (Buhari, 2007). The military is undoubtedly poorly equipped and requires additional and new weapons. Government expenditures suggest an ongoing attempt over the past seven years to infuse additional funding into the military in order to ensure a better equipped, better trained, and more professional force. Expenditures have increased significantly since the return to democracy in 1999 (see Table 3.2).

The Nigerian government has not only increased spending on the military forces, but has also increased funding for the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON). DICON, located in a large compound in Kaduna in the north of the country, is the only facility authorized to produce arms and ammunition in Nigeria. It was created in 1964 to supply arms and ammunition to the police and military in order to meet the needs of the newly independent country. Over the past several decades, successive administrations neglected the facility and failed to provide it with sufficient funding, and it fell into disrepair. From 1999 President Obasanjo refocused attention on internal production capacity and how to refurbish the defunct company. At least two companies, one in South Africa and one in China, have expressed interest in assisting with the refurbishment of the company, but these deals never came to pass. Instead, it appears the Nigerian government has decided to conduct the refurbishment on its own.

In 2006 Obasanjo authorized funding of NGN 1 billion (USD 8 million) for DICON to refurbish the company's production facilities and begin the process of designing an AK-47-type assault rifle for production in Nigeria. The refurbishment has reportedly brought the factory to nearly 70 per cent of its

normal production levels (Buhari, 2007). DICON has reported that it has finished the prototypes of the Nigerian-made AK-47 rifle, dubbed the OBJ-006 after President Obasanjo, and is now ready to commence mass production (*Vanguard*, 2007a). There are no figures available on how many rifles this would entail, or what other arms or ammunition DICON will now produce. DICON has reported that it has restored its production capacities for ammunition and rifles, which have not been manufactured for the past several years due to dilapidated equipment (*Vanguard*, 2007a). Undoubtedly the infusion of funds has assisted in the refurbishment process. The 2007 national budget provides NGN 413,700,904 (USD 3.3 million) for the company. While just under two-thirds of this amount will go toward salaries and benefits for company workers, the remainder will pay for the ongoing rehabilitation of the various facilities and infrastructure, and for capital investment, including NGN 35,000,000 (USD 280,000) for the new rifle (Nigeria, 2007).

Obasanjo stated that the investment in DICON is aimed at making Nigeria self-sufficient in ammunition production by September 2007 and in weapons production by September 2008 (Obasanjo, 2007). It is questionable whether these goals for self-sufficiency can be reached. Such statements are likely for local consumption, especially the military and police, who complain of inadequate equipment.¹⁹ The comments might also be aimed at the United States. The Nigerian government has complained that the United States has been too slow in providing military assistance to Nigeria to secure the Delta, and that the government has turned to China to source the necessary military equipment, with China fast becoming one of Nigeria's main suppliers of military equipment (Mahtani, 2006). Obasanjo might also have been reinforcing the role he wished to see Nigeria play in the sub-region, and in Africa as a whole. Nigeria has long played a strong role in peacekeeping missions, first in the sub-region, and now outside of it in places such as Somalia and Darfur. In order to perform well in these missions, the military must have the necessary equipment and resources. Such efforts to improve domestic production for national consumption took an unexpected turn when Obasanjo proclaimed that DICON should produce arms and ammunition not only for Nigeria, but also for the sub-region: 'By 2010 you must be able to supply the entire West African sub-region all the small arms they require' (Oji, 2007).

The police

The Nigeria Police Force is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. It plays the primary role in ensuring internal security, while the armed forces are responsible for security from external threats. The police force is a federal police force, and the only force with the authority to operate in the country. The Constitution makes this clear in Section 214, which states that no state or local government can establish its own policing force. This specification resulted from previous problems with local police forces. Prior to 1967, both local and federal police forces existed in Nigeria. This changed as a result of the 1967 report of the Working Party on Police and Prisons, which found that the local police forces had been used as political tools by local politicians to conduct political intimidation and commit fraud during elections between 1960 and 1965 (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 4). This report led to the dismantling of local police forces and the establishment of a centralized federal force. This did not resolve all concerns over the capacity of the police force to carry out its duties impartially and effectively. Complaints persist that the centralized nature of the force places too much power in the hands of the federal government.

The Nigeria Police Force is currently structured into 12 zones, with between 2 and 4 state commands within each zone, and then a series of area commands, divisions, police stations, and police posts under these commands. A commissioner of police leads each state command, and there is a hierarchical chain of command down to the lowest level, the police post. In addition to the state command, each state possesses at least 2 area commands, 10 divisions, and 11 police stations, with some states possessing far greater numbers.²⁰

Given the primary role of the military in the governance of the country over the past four decades and the neglect of the police force during the years of military rule, the police are only now coming to fill a role common to democratic polities. As a result, they have faced difficulties in obtaining sufficient personnel, resources, and equipment, and demonstrating their effectiveness in creating and maintaining law and order. The force has grown in size since the return to democracy in 1999 from 160,000 to over 300,000 officers in 2007. The government has taken steps to increase the resources available to the police, but still falls short of meeting the needs identified by the force. The

police, arguing that ‘crime fighting involves the use of arms and ammunition as sophisticated or even more than the ones used by the hoodlums’, complain that they possess insufficient numbers of small arms to perform their role of enforcing law and order, especially in areas with high levels of armed crime (Nigeria Police Force, 2005, p. 26).

In a submission by the Nigeria Police Force to the Presidential Committee on Police Reform in 2006, the police indicated that they would need over 500,000 small arms and over 5 million rounds of ammunition in the coming 5 years to fulfil their needs (see Table 3.3) (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, pp. 7–8). The government purchased 80,000 assault rifles in 2006, about one-sixth of what the police claim they need. These weapons were requested five years previously, but only purchased in 2006.²¹

The police claim they need the new arms to combat crime (BBC, 2006c). However, the purchase of 40,000 AK-47 assault rifles, 30,000 K2 assault rifles, and 10,000 pistols has raised concerns among Nigerians who think the police need to be better trained, not better armed, and that assault rifles are not the best option for a police force struggling to reform its reputation for brutality.²² The report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform, which has not yet

been released publicly, recommended that the police reduce the proportion of police officers on the streets carrying assault rifles. This recommendation was not accepted by the government. The 2007 national budget provides for NGN 297,500,000 (USD 2.38 million) for the procurement of arms and ammunition. There are no details on what this will entail in terms of particular purchases. The budget also provides for NGN 2,060,200,000 (USD 16.5 million) for riot equipment and bulletproof vests and helmets.

Illegal small arms

Given the difficulty in legally owning a gun, the majority of small arms in Nigeria are believed to be held illegally. Their illegality makes it difficult to track flows and possession. Weapons transit into the country across land borders and via sea ports. Sources of small arms include arms dealers, serving and retired military and police officers, returning peacekeepers, armed groups across borders, and other individuals. These weapons transit into the country and into the hands of armed groups, national dealers, political and community leaders, and individuals. Craft production provides a domestic source of small arms. Demand is the key to understanding the trade: as long as insecurity persists, and economic and political opportunities for gain exist through the use of force, demand for small arms will continue.

Entry points and transit routes

Since Nigeria has lengthy and porous borders, a number of airports, and numerous ports along the southern coast, smuggling and cross-border trade are difficult to detect and monitor.²³ Limited staff, vehicles, and resources make the job of customs officials, the police, and the navy all the more difficult. While many are certain that small arms and light weapons are coming into the country, as evidenced by the presence of foreign-made weapons in circulation, the exact entrance routes of these weapons are less clear.

A number of transit countries are often mentioned. These include the neighbouring countries of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger,²⁴ as well as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 228; Ojudu, 2007). Other reported sources include Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine,²⁵ as well as

Table 3.3 **Nigeria Police Force small arms and ammunition**

Types of arms	Present holdings	Estimated additional requirements over next five years
Rifles (various models): K2; FWC; SMG Model 12; SMG Beretta; Sterling; Beretta; pump-action shotgun; sub-machine gun; AK-47	65,000	510,500
Pistols (various models): Revolver 38 mm; revolver chief special shot; Browning 9 mm; revolver 38 mm chief long; Browning DA; Browning 32 mm; Beretta 9 mm	8,524	20,000
Ammunition:	(Rounds)	(Rounds)
5.56 mm for rifles	650,000	5,000,000
9 mm for rifles	434,000	100,000

Source: Small Arms Survey (2007a)

Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia.²⁶ While source countries are often named, the flows of small arms from source and transit countries are not well documented. The police have impounded a large quantity of arms and ammunition smuggled through neighbouring countries, with many coming from the Tudu arms market in Ghana and making their way to Nigeria through Togo and Benin (Olori, 2004).²⁷ This suggests that there are important entry points for small arms into Nigeria.

Reportedly, the three most notorious arms smuggling frontiers in Nigeria are in the south-west (Idi-Iroko in Ogun state and Seme in Lagos state), in the south (the port city of Warri in Delta state), and in the north-east at the border with Niger and Cameroon (Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states) (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 21). Warri has been referred to as the ‘hub of

the gun trade’ in the Niger Delta (Ojudu, 2007; Peel, 2005, p. 2), and its location in the Delta, as well as the demand for small arms in that area of the country, make this a logical place for the reception of shipments. However, relatively little concrete evidence of small arms transfers is available, making it difficult to assess trafficking routes, transit countries, and sources.

A number of towns are known for the availability of weapons, including Asaba, Benin City, Warri, Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri, Awka, and Port Harcourt (Small Arms Survey, 2007). Arms that come into the country through the southern ports may be distributed in this southern region, or they move further north to primary distribution points, and then on to secondary distribution points (see Map 3). Some of these weapons will move farther north, but the north appears to have additional sources of small arms through the borders with Niger and Chad in the north-east. Entry points here include Maigatari, Nguru, and Mallam Falori (Adejo, 2005, p. 93).



Sources of illegal small arms

Sources of illegal small arms and light weapons include purchases from international and national arms dealers, sales and rentals by serving and retired security personnel, sales by returning peacekeepers, sales of recycled weapons from decommissioning exercises, oil-for-arms exchanges in the Delta region, and purchases of locally produced craft weapons (see the section below on craft production). Illegal weapons are also obtained through thefts from dealers, armouries, and residences; seizures from security officials during robberies; and in clashes with other armed groups (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 16).

National weapons dealers remain quiet on the sources of their weapons. While a few international dealers have been named during interviews in-country, there is little information about these dealers or their operations. Both armed groups and dealers have been quiet on their operations. While this is not unusual for the illegal trade, some have specifically refused to share these details, show their weapons, or allow the recording of serial numbers of weapons, explaining that they do not want to threaten the future supply of arms by divulging their sources.

Despite the difficulty in obtaining details of transfers, there do appear to be different sourcing methods. Weapons entering the south, especially in the Niger

Delta area, appear to be acquired through more direct means, such as cash payments or bartering oil for arms between armed groups and offshore ships. Weapons entering through border areas and the south-east take a more indirect route to both dealers and buyers, often passing through primary and secondary distribution points (see Map 3).

While international arms dealers remain a primary source of weapons, the scale of imports and sales remains unclear. Some persons interviewed in Nigeria reported hearing of purchases of NGN 7 million (USD 56,000) or even NGN 20 million (USD 160,000), when translated into weapons, these amounts are roughly equivalent to 40 and 100 weapons, respectively, based on a price of USD 1,500 per weapon, which was the average price for an AK-47 in late 2006. Even at lower prices, the amounts imported would still number in the low hundreds. This does not limit the significance of their importation or the destructive effect of their use, but it does raise questions about the level of arms possession that exists in the country, and whether the often claimed high figures in circulation have been exaggerated.

Illegal sales by serving and retired security personnel pose a major concern with regard to the proliferation of small arms. This problem was publicly acknowledged by President Obasanjo in December 2002 when he stated that

Box 1 **A dealer's story**²⁸

A dealer will place an order for a client for specific types of small arms and specified quantities. The dealer does not keep these in stock, but instead purchases them as they are ordered. Once an order is made, the dealer, or an associate, will travel to the Tudu market in Ghana, where weapons traders from across West Africa can purchase small arms on the wholesale market. The weapons are purchased, disassembled, and transported by road back to Nigeria. The weapon parts are placed in empty fruit or vegetable tins or other innocuous containers to avoid detection. In Lagos, the shipment is shifted to another transporter, who is responsible for getting the shipment to its delivery point, the buyer. As security for safe delivery, the transporter carries NGN 50,000 (USD 400) in cash, provided by the dealer, to use to bribe security checkpoints or to ensure his delivery to a 'safe' police station that is regularly provided by dealers with funds to ensure its personnel's complicity, should he be stopped. This money ensures his release and his ability to complete his delivery.

'the majority of [small arms and light weapons] circulating in Nigeria were either sold or rented out by, or stolen from, the country's security agencies' (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005, pp. 6–7). Security officials have lost a number of weapons through theft. While a common occurrence, the numbers lost in this way appear to be relatively small (Bah, 2004, p. 4). Security officials have provided weapons to ethnic militias in their home areas, with one customs official claiming the donation of 16 G3 rifles as his 'contribution to the Niger Delta cause' (Ebo, 2006, pp. 11, 25). A survey of armed group members conducted in Bayelsa state revealed that the majority of respondents received assistance from the police (30.4 per cent), the mobile police (14.7 per cent), and the military (24.5 per cent) in obtaining small arms (Isumonah, Tantua, and James, 2006, p. 74). There is also some evidence of the diversion, or recycling, of weapons from decommissioning exercises into the illegal trade (SDN, 2006b, p. 8). In addition to providing access to small arms, serving and retired service personnel have also provided training to militants (AAPW, 2006). The armed groups in the Delta have displayed 'superior strategies and tactics using better training and organization' (Von Kemedi, 2006, p. 3). The use of military trainers would explain how militants in the Delta have developed more organized and sophisticated tactics over the past years.

Nigerian peacekeepers have also been identified as a source of black market weapons. Nigerian soldiers have served in a number of peacekeeping missions in Africa, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, among others. This has provided Nigerian soldiers with access to small arms. Soldiers returning from peacekeeping missions have sold small arms on the Nigerian black market, providing 'a ready source of assault weapons' for the Nigerian population.²⁹ Although perhaps not a significant source of weapons in terms of numbers, this has been recognized as a source of small arms, especially for inter-communal conflicts (Bah, 2004, pp. 4–5).

Increasingly, in the Delta region, oil bunkering by armed groups has provided an important source of funding and small arms to groups. Bunkering is the illegal tapping of oil pipelines and wellheads to siphon off crude oil. The oil is then sold to foreign buyers or bartered for small arms. Oil bunkering is believed to be a lucrative endeavour, providing an estimated USD 1–4 billion per year (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 9). Bunkered oil provides

significant funding necessary for armed groups to purchase more powerful weapons from external sources (BBC, 2007b), and in some cases the oil is exchanged directly for weapons, usually new AK-47 assault rifles (Davis, Von Kemedi, and Drennan, 2006, p. 29).

International oil companies operating in the Delta region have also contributed to the problem of small arms proliferation. A decision by the government to allow oil companies to import weapons in order to arm police assigned to oil installations reportedly brought in a number of arms (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 22). Oil companies operating in the Delta do utilize Nigerian police to protect their installations; however, they argue that these police are employed by the government and allocated to the companies for this specific work, even though the companies pay the normal salaries and benefits of these officers (Peel, 2005, p. 4). Shell, the largest oil producer in the Delta, argues that these police are not armed (Peel, 2005, p. 4). The large revenues attached to oil production ensure a close relationship between government and the oil companies. This has led many communities to view them as one and the same, and such perceptions have been reinforced by reports of oil companies directly calling upon the police, military, and navy to quell problems at their installations rather than seeking assistance through the government (Ibeanu, 2000, p. 22). Oil companies have also provided payments to groups and communities in return for being allowed to operate in peaceful conditions. While payments to militant groups might provide a modicum of security and stability, they also threaten to empower militants and provide them with the financial means to improve their arsenals (ICG, 2006b, p. 25).

There are no hard figures on the levels of bunkering. Figures vary widely, ranging between 100,000 and 700,000 barrels per day, and oil companies are reluctant to provide their own estimates, but even at the lower end of this range, oil bunkering would provide significant funds to armed groups.³⁰ There are claims that military officials, businessmen, and high-level government officials are involved in the bunkering business (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 9), suggesting collaboration between armed groups and local officials, and protection from prosecution. The scale of bunkering activities suggests that senior Nigerian officials have protected and backed armed militias to enable the latter to continue operating without interference by security

forces (BBC, 2006a). Some have suggested that there is a tipping point for engagement by the military at a level of theft of 8–10 per cent of oil production (WAC Global Services, 2003, p. 6). There is little evidence to support this theory. Oil companies do not appear to be able to track oil production sufficiently closely to determine the level of bunkering this precisely, nor is there evidence that they could then convince the Nigerian government to act on this. The Nigerian military is also not capable of tracking oil bunkering with great precision and therefore of determining when it should intervene. There is also the problem of military involvement in oil bunkering (ICG, 2006b, p. 9; Peel, 2005, p. 3), which reduces the incentives to eliminate the practice.

*Craft production*³¹

Locally produced small arms, or craft weapons, are widely available in Nigeria. They are inexpensive and easy to acquire compared to more expensive and sophisticated models of factory-made small arms, which must be imported or bought through the black market. Locally produced small arms include mainly revolvers and shotguns (see Table 3.4). Craft weapons are used for hunting, community policing, and self-defence. As such, hunters, cattle herders, businessmen, politicians, elites, and vigilante groups are among those purchasing such weapons.

There are a number of well-known craft production markets in Nigeria, including Katsina, Kaduna, and Calabar (see Map 3).³² One primary centre for craft production is Awka in Anambra state. Awka has been a centre for craft production since the Nigerian-Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, when Awka produced explosives. Since this time, the expertise for local production has remained a family business, with knowledge of fabrication techniques passed down through generations. Some interviewees claimed that a group of Ghanaian craft producers had visited Awka in 2003 to provide additional training to Nigerian producers.³³ However, it is clear that the trade preceded this by several decades. The predominance of Awka in the production of craft weapons is evidenced through the common reference to craft weapons as 'Awka-made' or more simply 'Awka'.

Production techniques remain rudimentary. No machines are used in the production process. Vices, steel saws, manual drills, and files are employed in the

Table 3.4 **Craft-produced small arms in Awka**

Weapon	Features	Ammunition	Cost
Pocket single-shot handgun	Approximately 13 cm long; steel muzzle to wooden stock; extremely rudimentary hammer requiring cocking; effective only at a distance of 1–2 m; uses single shotgun cartridge	Various calibres of shotgun cartridge	NGN 4,000/ USD 32
Four-shot revolver	Available in manual and automatic configurations	9 mm, 7.5 mm, or 8.5 mm	NGN 8,000/ USD 64
Eight-shot revolver	Available in manual and automatic configurations	9 mm, 7.5 mm, or 8.5 mm	NGN 12,000/ USD 96
Single-barrel shotgun	Breech-loading; safety cocking mechanism	Various calibres of shotgun cartridge	NGN 10,000– 11,000/USD 80–88
Horizontal double-barrel shotgun	Breech-loading; one trigger for each barrel; safety cocking mechanism	Various calibres of shotgun cartridge	NGN 25,000– 30,000/USD 200– 240
Vertical double-barrel shotgun	Automatic configuration firing both rounds without need for cocking; breech-loading	Various calibres of shotgun cartridge	NGN 45,000/ USD 360

Source: Interviews with craft producers, Awka, March 2007

fabrication process, with small makeshift furnaces used to heat the metals. Fabrication of craft weapons usually takes place in producers' homes or backyards. In addition to producing craft arms, these blacksmiths often produce other tools, such as hunting traps, gardening implements, and machetes.

The materials used in the process are sourced locally. There have been reports that components are often brought in from foreign sources for assembly in-country.³⁴ While this might be the case on a limited scale, and there has been one report that a group in the Delta is trying to develop its own mortar,³⁵

there is no evidence that this is happening on a large scale. Craft weapons are based on the designs of imported arms, but this process remains restricted to rifles, shotguns, and pistols. Craft production does not currently entail the production of more sophisticated small arms.

According to the 1959 Firearms Act (Nigeria, 1959, para. 13), it is illegal to sell or transfer any firearm unless it is permanently marked, or stamped, with the maker's name and number, or other prescribed identifier, unless this information is specified on the purchaser's licence or permit. Currently, craft weapons are not marked with individual identifiers. Until several years ago, craft producers had marked their weapons with their own number or symbol. However, these identifying marks were used by police to trace weapons used in crimes. This led to the prosecution of craft producers whose weapons had been implicated in criminal activities, and consequently a halt to the practice of marking. There have been recent proposals and discussions within the police force to try to implement a system of marking craft weapons by local producers, but to date this initiative has not moved forward. The police have yet to devise a strategy for implementation, due in large part to the belief that craft producers would be unlikely to obtain the necessary equipment for marking due to its high costs.³⁶ Thus, the initiative remains an idea on the drawing board. More recent attempts to bring craft weapons in Nigeria under the legal framework have been partly successful, with many of these weapons provided with ad hoc serial numbers and their owners licensed.

Craft *production* is only legal when the craftsman is licensed by the government, and thereby authorized to produce firearms. According to the 1959 Firearms Act, 'no person shall manufacture, assemble or repair any firearms or ammunition except at a public armoury or at arsenals established for the purposes of the armed forces with the consent of the President' (Nigeria, 1959, para. 23). Nevertheless, most craft producers have continued to operate without authorization, and without being under threat of prosecution. That seems to be changing in some areas. In Awka, for example, the craft production community had enjoyed the support of a senior police figure. The retirement of this officer and the stricter attitude of his successor have meant that producers must now operate with greater care and secrecy. Some producers have responded by reducing their production and only producing weapons made

to order, rather than stockpiling for future sales. There was also rising concern in 2007 about police crackdowns in the tense pre-election climate. Producers claimed they had witnessed similar crackdowns in the lead-up to the 2003 national elections and 2004 local elections.³⁷ This suggests that police attention to craft production might decline again in the post-election period.

The *possession* of craft weapons is legal only when the weapon is properly licensed. According to the 1959 Firearms Act, such individual licensing is possible through application to the police. In practice, the licensing process appears to be less rigid. In some cases, this process has been done by the producer himself after the buyer has provided the necessary paperwork. In Awka, the local police chief and the chairman of the Anambra Vigilante Service, formerly the Bakassi Boys, must both sign the licensing application for it to be valid.³⁸ This suggests government support for craft production or, at the very least, a reluctance to eliminate the practice altogether.

It remains unclear how strictly the licensing of craft weapon owners is monitored or enforced. The government announced a ban on all licensing of firearms in 2004 as part of an effort to reduce the circulation of all firearms. The continuation of craft production and sales in imported arms suggests that the ban is not entirely effective. Instead, those who do possess firearms, both craft and sophisticated, are more likely to possess them illegally, i.e. without a formal licence. Due to the strict laws on gun ownership and the lengthy bureaucratic process to obtain a licence, few people own guns legally (Ojodu, 2007).

Measuring the illegal trade

Reliable data on illegal arms transfers into Nigeria is unavailable. In part, this is the result of the illegal nature of the trafficking, and in part due to poor record keeping. The illegal nature of the sale and movement of arms and ammunition in Nigeria means that few involved in the trade are willing to discuss the operational side or the scale of the flows. Interviews with those in the illegal arms business provide some insight, but this information is also difficult to verify. Records of seizures and arrests are kept by the customs service and the police, but the data is inconsistent and often incomplete. While not an exact estimation of the scale of movement of illicit arms and ammunition, data on the pricing of arms and ammunition, the seizures of weapons, and arrests for

arms possession do give insight into the types of weapons and ammunition coming into the country, as well as patterns of sales, and to some extent the scale of flows. This information suggests that while arms are flowing into the country, they do not appear to be coming in in large quantities (i.e. by the thousands), and that the primary product coming in is ammunition. This suggests that there are sufficient weapons in the country to meet demand, but that the primary need is ammunition for weapons already in-country.

The flow of illegal weapons into the country remains difficult to assess. A commonly cited report from December 2003 states that one respondent had claimed that every village had 20–100 AK-47 assault rifles in its community armouries (WAC Global Services, 2003, p. 48). This number has since taken on a life of its own, and has been reported in a number of publications as a fact, rather than as a report by one informant. It has also been used, inaccurately, as a measure of circulation.

There are no official figures for the illicit trade. Interviews in Nigeria revealed competing views on the topic. One person interviewed claimed to have heard reports of shipments of weapons coming into the country, but had little evidence to support such second-hand reports, and little to point to in the way of incidents on the ground to indicate that large shipments had arrived.³⁹ Others disputed the contention that arms were flowing into the country in large quantities, but instead believed they were coming in on a smaller but steady basis. Interviews conducted in Nigeria in early 2007 suggest a smaller but

Table 3.5 **Reported prices of AK-47 assault rifles in Nigeria, 2003–07**

Date of purchase	Price*
Late 2003	USD 1,700
December 2004	USD 1,000
May 2005	USD 300
November 2006	USD 1,000–1,500
December 2006	USD 1,500–2,500
March 2007	USD 400

* Prices vary depending on whether the weapon is new or used.
Sources: Davis and Von Kemedi (2006); author and consultant interviews

more consistent flow of illicit arms into the country. One arms dealer claimed that the increase in purchases had come nearly a year earlier in April 2006, and that demand had been consistent since then.⁴⁰ Members of armed groups stated that they had already purchased what they needed, and that government efforts to crack down came too late.⁴¹ Pricing and seizure data give support to the assessment that it is not large numbers of guns that are being sought, but rather ammunition for the weapons already in the country.

These prices are not an exact measure of the illegal arms market in Nigeria (see Table 3.5). Prices fluctuate over time, depending on the quality and age of the weapon, and where the weapon is being sold in the country. Prices tend to be higher in the south, where there is reportedly more demand. While not an exact measure of price, the pattern of pricing does suggest times when demand has been higher, and these time periods coincide with important events in Nigeria. In late 2003 the clashes between the NDVS and the NDPVF were escalating. In December 2004 the disarmament process was starting to fail. Higher demand could have arisen for two reasons: efforts to purchase weapons in order to turn them in for disarmament benefits, or groups were re-arming on the understanding that the disarmament process was indeed failing. Higher prices in late 2006 suggest groups were bringing in arms in preparation for the election season, with the prices falling off just before the elections, when groups were reporting that they had already purchased what they needed. The higher prices also suggest that there is a limited supply of weapons and that the market is not flooded with available arms.

Ammunition, on the other hand, appears to maintain a steadier price at NGN 150–500 (USD 1.20–4.00) per round, but this is a significant increase from past years. Ammunition is often sold in paint tins, with about 700 rounds per tin running at NGN 150,000 (USD 1,200). The same tin of ammunition would have cost NGN 80,000–100,000 (USD 640–800) in 2004 and 2005.⁴² This suggests that demand for ammunition has increased or supply has declined. Militants in the Niger Delta have stated that ammunition often bought from Anambra and Abia states is harder to find and the cost is rising.⁴³

Another measure of the illegal flow of arms and ammunition into Nigeria is the data on official seizures. Table 3.6 provides information on the seizures by the Nigeria customs service between 1999 and 2006. The data indicates that

customs seizes very small quantities of arms each year, but by contrast rather large numbers of rounds of ammunition. While this would be expected, as more ammunition is required than weapons, the number of weapons is disproportionately small compared to the amount of ammunition seized.

Table 3.6 **Nigeria Customs Service seizure data, 1999–2006**

Year	Date	No. of arms seized	No. of rounds of ammunition/ cartridges seized	Location
1999	5 Feb.	1	1,200	Lagos
	20 July	0	2,900	Lagos
	23 July	1	0	Port Harcourt
2000	n.d.	0	1,075	Lagos
2001	27 April	2	0	Abuja
	10 Feb.	0	1,290	Seme/Badagry
	12 June	0	1,712	Seme/Badagry
2002	15 Dec.	0	5,924	Seme/Badagry
	n.d.	2	20	Lagos
2003	21 April	1	6	Lagos
	15 Jan.	8	0	Lagos
	22 Jan.	0	1,250	Minna (Niger state)
	7 Feb.	4	15,000	Seme/Badagry
	1 April	1	0	Port Harcourt
	n.d.	0	250	Seme/Badagry
	22 Jan.	0	15,000	Seme/Badagry
	11 Feb.	0	10,000	Seme/Badagry
	23 June	0	102,000	Seme/Badagry
	9 Nov.	0	170,000	Ogele-Shagamu
	23 Nov.	0	1,875	Lekki-Ajalah beach
24 Nov.	0	38,000	Ijebu Ode waterside	
2004	16 Feb.	1	500	Gwagwalada (FCT)
	21 May	9	0	Lagos
	8 May	1	0	Idiroko
2005	13 Jan.	1	0	Borno
	18 April	0	216	Lagos
	28 June	0	32,510	Abuja
	1 Aug.	0	500	Jos (Plateau state)
	1 Aug.	1	6,740	Osun/Oyo
2006	23 Jan.	0	750	Owerri

FCT = Federal Capital Territory

Source: Nigeria Customs Service, Enforcement and Drugs Statistics Section, Abuja

There is inconsistency in national reporting and data collection, which makes it difficult to assess the full scale of the illegal arms trade in Nigeria. The figures reported by the customs service in Table 3.6 do not match newspaper reports of seizures, nor do they match newspaper reports of figures attributed to the customs service. For example, according to the data provided by the customs service in Table 3.6, 2 guns and 3,002 rounds of ammunition were seized in 2001, while 2 guns and 5,944 rounds of ammunition were seized in 2002. A newspaper report provided figures of 20 guns and 122,494 rounds of ammunition seized in 2002, and 9 guns and 110,283 rounds of ammunition in 2001 (Oritse, 2002). The newspaper reports in Table 3.7 more closely match this single newspaper report, but there are still discrepancies.

Table 3.7 **Arms seizure data from newspaper reports, 2002–07**

Year	Date	No. of arms seized	No. of rounds of ammunition/cartridges seized
2002	2 Feb.	0	5,924
	24 June	0	102,000
	14 July	2	15
	19 July	13	189
2003	22 Jan.	0	15,000
	17 Nov.	0	170,000
	27 Nov.	0	38,000
2004	25 Jan.	16	1,527
	1 Sept.	0	75
2005	21 May	0	1,094
	19 Dec.	3	0
2006	17 March	5	580
	29 April	'Weapons'	0
	11 Oct.	51	0
	27 Oct.	5	105
2007	13 Feb.	11	'Ammunition'
	14 Feb.	7 trailers of arms	0
	19 March	'Weapons'	0
	31 March	21	17
	10 April	2	'Several rounds'

Sources: Based on *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and AllAfrica.com articles

Table 3.8 **Small arms seized by police, 2000–03**

Year	No. of arms seized
2000–01	1,941
2002	3,150
2003	3,451

Source: Dambatta (2004)

Whereas the newspaper reports indicate fluctuations in the number of weapons seized across years, data released by the inspector general of police on small arms seizures by the police suggests an upward trend in the number of seizures (see Table 3.8). Whether this is the result of better policing, more weapons in the country, better data, or something else entirely is difficult to determine.

One problem with obtaining consistent data is that no centralized data collection and analysis system exists to collate inputs from the police, the customs service, or other agencies involved in weapons seizure and destruction. In addition to various government agencies, there are also numerous field offices of each agency, requiring coordination both across and within agencies. Such coordination is difficult, given the lack of computerized systems and systematic data collection. These challenges are compounded by the failure of the police to understand the importance and utility of data collection and its use in formulating and directing policy (Alemika, Igbo, and Nnorom, 2006, pp. 12–13).

Even with the concerns noted above about the incomplete nature of the data available, a consistent picture is painted of the balance of the flow in favour of ammunition over guns themselves. This suggests that either the interdiction efforts have been more successful in capturing ammunition than guns, or there is simply far more ammunition, by proportion, flowing into the country. If the latter is true, then this would support the argument that there are already sufficient guns in the country to meet demand, and that what is needed is ammunition. This would then suggest that the demand for ammunition is the likely result of the expenditure of existing ammunition stocks in the country.

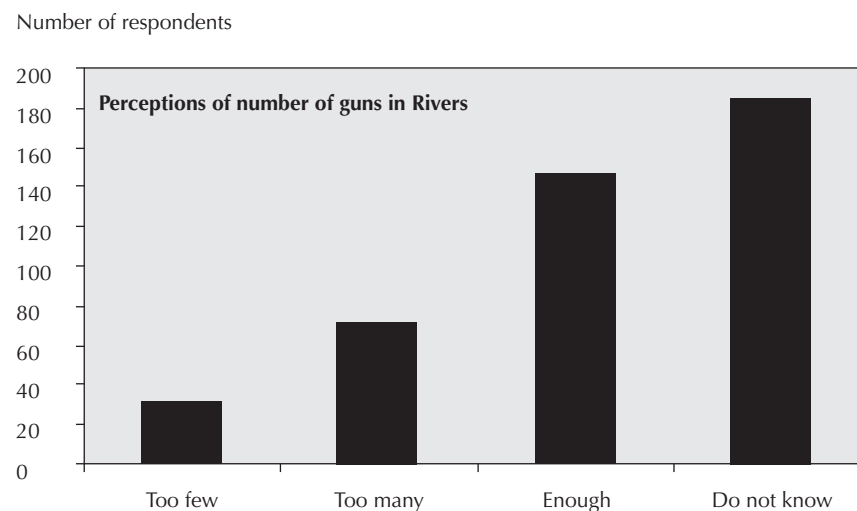
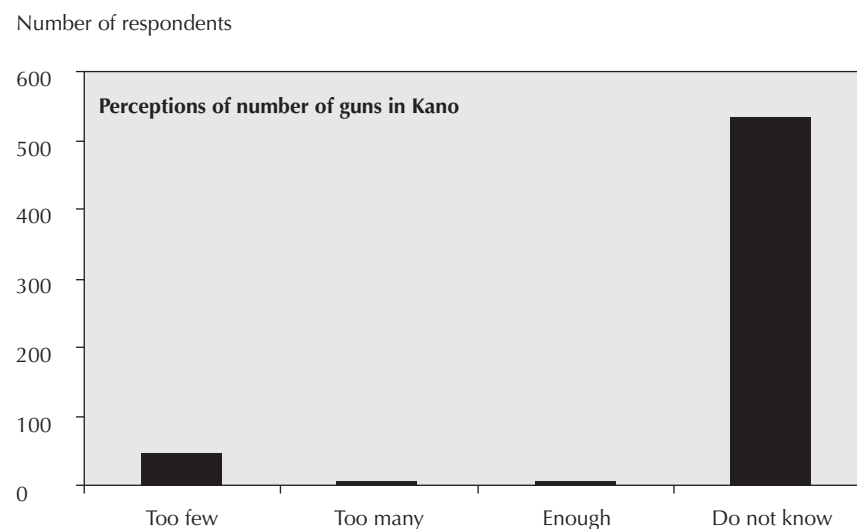
Demand for small arms

There are two primary factors that drive demand for small arms in Nigeria: security and personal gain. National security forces obtain small arms primarily for the purpose of enforcing the law and protecting the country. While these forces have arguably used their weapons for more than their constitutional duties—e.g. human rights abuses, renting weapons for personal gain, excessive use of force in performing their duties, and suppressing political dissidents—the primary reason for the government to supply weapons to national security forces is to uphold law and order and maintain the security of the country. Demand in terms of the national security forces has increased over the past decade, as indicated in the rise in the military budget. However, most within the military and police, as well as a number of outside observers, would argue that the security forces remain under-equipped.

Among the civilian population, the reason behind demand is still based on these two factors: security and personal gain, but the procurement and use of small arms reveal a more diverse pattern. Civilians procure small arms for security as a result of the inability of the police to maintain law and order in a consistent and reliable fashion. The threats to personal security include crime, communal clashes, and land disputes. Procurers of weapons for security purposes include individuals, communities or community leaders for community arsenals, and vigilante groups and ethnic militias. Armed groups have also claimed that they need to obtain arms as protection against the excessive use of force by the military.⁴⁴ Civilians also obtain small arms for personal gain. Personal gain might be sought individually through armed robbery, or collectively, e.g. by a cult group or criminal gang, through armed robbery, oil bunkering, or clashes with other groups. Personal gain has also been sought by politicians who have armed youth gangs and wielded them as a personal election campaigning tool.

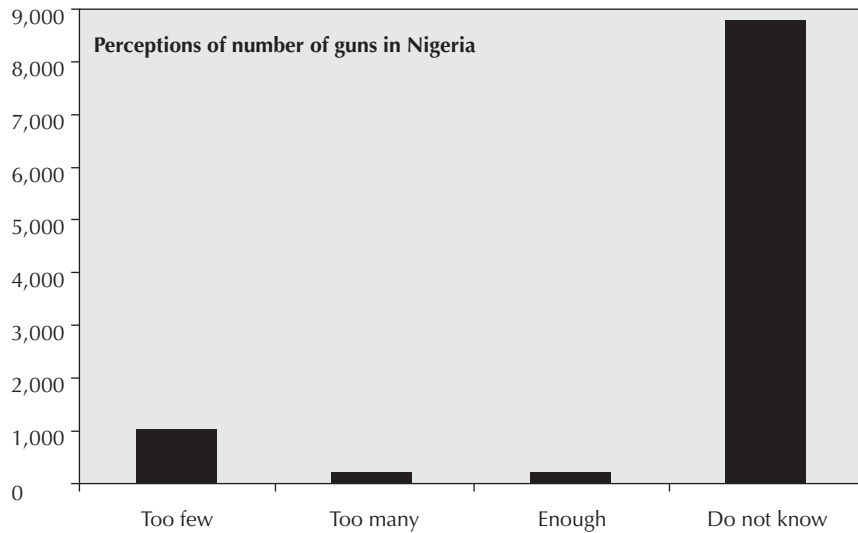
In a 2006 national survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation, when asked whether there are too many or too few weapons circulating in the community, most respondents replied that they did not know (CLEEN, 2007). Of those who did answer the question, nine per cent stated that there were too few, while only one per cent said that there were too many. A similar pattern of responses emerged from the Small Arms Survey's household questionnaire in Kano,⁴⁵

Figure 3.1
Community perceptions of the number of guns in communities in Kano and Rivers states and Nigeria as a whole, 2006–07



Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459
Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p)

Number of respondents



Source: CLEEN Foundation (2007)⁴⁶

with the majority of respondents not knowing how many weapons were in circulation, but of those who did respond, seven per cent stated that there were too few small arms in the community, while one per cent said that there were too many (Small Arms Survey, 2007o). The pattern was reversed in Rivers, with far more respondents answering the question, and of those answering, 7 per cent stated there were too few guns in circulation, 15 per cent stated that there were too many, while 32 per cent stated there were enough (Small Arms Survey, 2007p) (see Figure 3.1).

These are not large percentages, and given the large number of respondents who claimed that they did not know how many guns were in circulation, the results are not representative of the states or the country as a whole. However, these responses do portray a pattern that suggests the population maintains mixed views about the need for small arms possession. One explanation of the results suggests that perhaps people believe that guns afford protection to the owner, and therefore those claiming there were too few guns in the community would think that obtaining a gun for protection would enhance

individual security.⁴⁷ Yet, when respondents were asked whether they believed that guns were a source of protection or a source of danger, the majority of those responding claimed that guns were more a danger than a source of protection, although this varied geographically. This question requires further research. It remains possible that even those who believe that guns are a source of danger would seek to obtain a gun if they felt threatened by the growing number of guns in the community or by perceptions of rising insecurity. As such, individuals may see small arms as necessary for individual protection, even if such small arms ultimately decrease overall community security. 📌

IV. Armed violence in Nigeria

Although violence in Nigeria has often been depicted as a fight over religion, or, more recently, a fight over oil, the reality on the ground is more complex. There are a number of dividing lines within society that provide the tinder for conflict (see the discussion in Section II). One suggested typology of armed violence in Nigeria includes inter- and intra-communal violence, ethnic militia and vigilante violence, political and electoral violence, armed criminality and gangsterism, state armed violence, state-sponsored violence, ethno-religious violence, and arms racing (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005, pp. 7–10). Such categorization is often difficult in practice, as many conflicts overlap in their cause and nature. The dynamics of conflict also evolve over time, leading to the prevalence of certain types of conflict at different times.

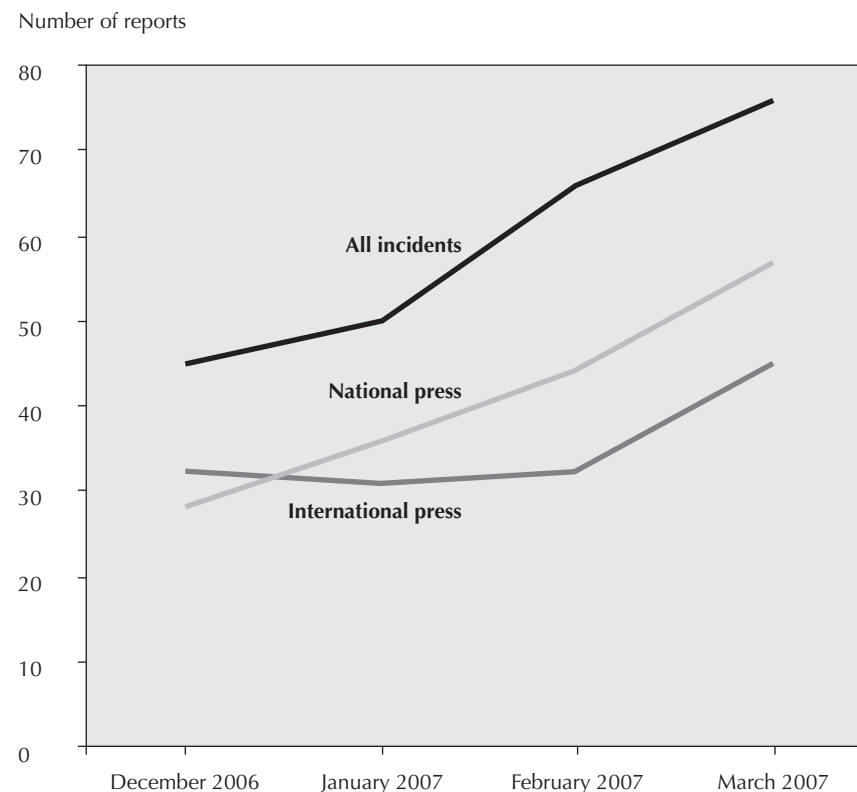
The thread underlying all types of conflict in Nigeria is access to and control over scarce resources, whether economic or political. While armed violence is not a rare occurrence in Nigeria, it is important to note that the country should not, and cannot, be viewed as homogenous in terms of criminality or security. The frequency and nature of crime vary across the country. The type of perpetrator involved depends on the context, as do the tools used in committing armed violence. These have evolved over time as well. The following presents some of the current trends in armed violence in Nigeria.

Trends in press reporting

The Small Arms Survey is conducting a study of press reports of armed violence in Nigeria.⁴⁸ The preliminary data from this study illustrates a number of patterns.⁴⁹ First and foremost, the overall level of violence in the country appeared to be increasing in the lead-up to the April 2007 elections (see Figure 4.1).

The Small Arms Survey identified 234 incidents of armed violence during the reporting period. These incidents occurred in 27 of the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), indicating that armed violence is common

Figure 4.1 **Reports of violent incidents in Nigeria: trends in the number of reports, Dec. 2006–March 2007**

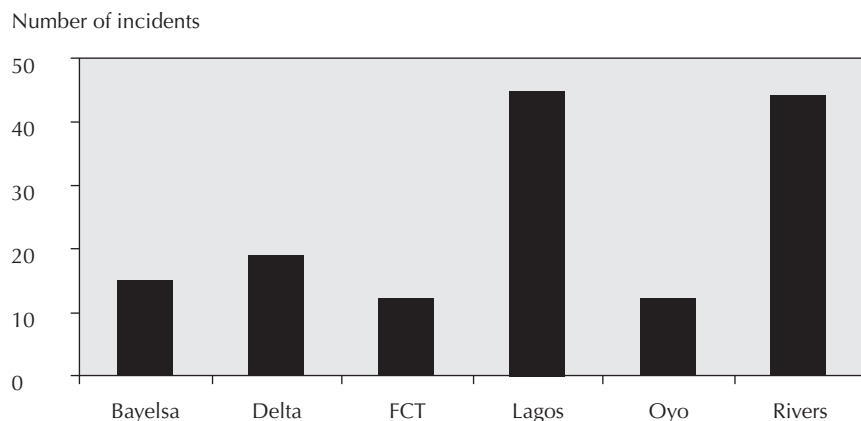


Source: Small Arms Survey (2007g)

to a number of states. Incidents of armed violence appeared more concentrated in Lagos state (45) and in the Delta states of Rivers (44), Delta (19), and Bayelsa (15), followed closely by the FCT and Oyo state (12 each) (see Figure 4.2). The incidents in Lagos and the FCT were primarily criminal in nature, while those in the Delta states were a mixture of criminal and oil-related violence.

In international reporting, violent crime was the most common incident (48 per cent),⁵⁰ followed by political and election-related violence (23 per cent), and oil-related violence (20 per cent). There were no reports of large-scale ethnic or religious violence in the international press during the reporting period.

Figure 4.2 **States with the highest number of violent incidents reported in the press, including the FCT, Nov. 2006–March 2007**



Source: Small Arms Survey (2007g)

Reports in the international press suggested that the pattern of violence varied over time (see Table 4.1).⁵¹ In looking at the pattern of violent incidents, there are clear changes in the levels of crime; interpersonal violence; battle-like incidents of confrontation between criminals, and between criminals and the police;

Table 4.1 **Reports of violent incidents in the international press, Nov. 2006–March 2007**

	Politically related	Oil-related	Crime	Interpersonal	Battle-like	Other
November 2006	10	5	8	0	6	2
December 2006	11	4	15	1	1	0
January 2007	3	7	15	0	5	1
February 2007	4	12	6	1	0	9
March 2007	11	6	19	2	6	1

Source: Small Arms Survey (2007g)

and politically related incidents.⁵² The variation in levels of certain types of crimes suggests the possibility of the substitution of criminal activities, depending on the current situation in Nigeria and the opportunities available at the time. Interviews with actors on the ground, especially in the Niger Delta, put forward this notion of ‘substitution’, wherein groups alter their targeted activities depending on the opportunities available. For example, a government official in Rivers state explained that at the time when the military was acting to reduce oil bunkering in late 2005–early 2006, the state witnessed a rise in kidnapping and robberies, suggesting that armed groups had switched activities as a way of compensating for the loss of income from no longer being able to steal oil.⁵³ Another example comes from the electoral cycle. There was a higher number of politically related incidents of armed violence in December 2006, the month of party primaries, than in January 2007, a month with little electoral significance. As politically related incidents declined in January, there appears to have been a rise in oil-related incidents, once again suggesting substitution. A third example comes from the national monitors of the electoral process, who predicted that kidnappings would decrease in the lead-up to elections as armed groups focused their attention on election-related violence (NAPE, 2007b, p. 5). Armed groups did in fact free all of their remaining hostages on 4 April, to the surprise of many (BBC, 2007e), suggesting that perhaps these groups were shifting their attention to the elections. This assumption of substitution was, however, challenged when two hostages were taken a few days later. Although anecdotal reports suggest that there is a relationship between the types of armed violence and the opportunities available, and that substitution occurs, the current data is too limited to reveal a direct relationship between a decline in one type of crime and a rise in another.⁵⁴

A second explanation is the source of the information, i.e. the international press, and the possibility that it is the choice of events to cover, as opposed to the number of incidents actually taking place on the ground, that influences reporting, and therefore the pattern of incidents reported. In the case of international reporting, election-related and oil-related violence appear to be priorities. Table 4.2 depicts a different level and pattern of reporting by national newspapers, with data suggesting that the overall level of violence was increasing, not remaining steady, and that there was a different pattern of violence.

Table 4.2 Reports of violent incidents in national newspapers, Dec. 2006–March 2007

	Politically related	Oil-related	Crime	Interpersonal	Battle-like	Other
December 2006	4	3	16	3	1	1
January 2007	3	4	16	5	7	1
February 2007	4	5	17	4	7	7
March 2007	16	4	24	5	5	3

Source: Small Arms Survey (2007g)

In contrast to international reporting, the number of incidents⁵⁵ per month reported in the national newspapers increased steadily during the observation period, with 28 incidents in December, 36 in January, 44 in February, and 57 in March. The pattern of violence included violent crime as the most common type of incident (56 per cent).⁵⁶ Politically related violence (16 per cent) was the second most common type of reported violence, followed by oil-related and interpersonal violence (10 per cent each).

Common types of violence

In Nigeria, while violence is not the norm, there are significant levels of violence that offer cause for concern. The type and intensity of violence vary across the country. According to a national survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation, assault, and grievous harm and wounding are the most common violent incidents nationwide. Murder and manslaughter are far less common. This survey suggests that the overall level of violence in Nigeria has increased on the whole over the past several years (see Table 4.3). This finding gives support to the popular belief that violence has escalated since the return to democracy in 1999. The household questionnaire conducted by the Small Arms Survey indicates that although overall violence has increased, it is not evenly distributed throughout the country.

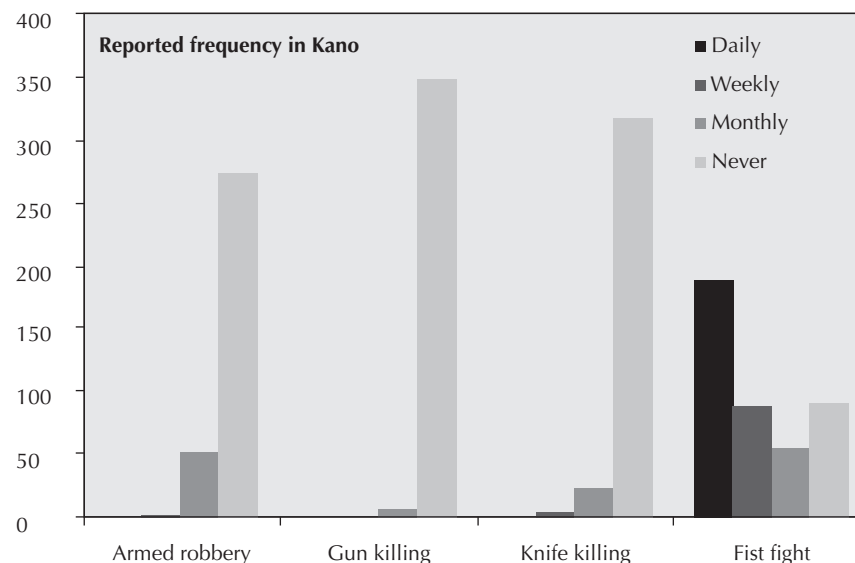
Table 4.3 Nigerian crime statistics, 1999–2006

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Murder	1,645	1,255	2,120	2,117	2,136	2,550	2,074	2,000
Manslaughter	14	101	14	13	233	23	11	2
Attempted murder	220	76	253	267	6	315	283	389
Suicide	323	146	241	152	191	131	128	199
Attempted suicide	30	41	27	29	38	19	20	51
Grievous harm and wounding	15,931	9,756	15,241	17,580	17,666	18,733	22,858	26,434
Assault	33,881	17,909	37,531	29,329	29,125	29,863	33,991	32,838

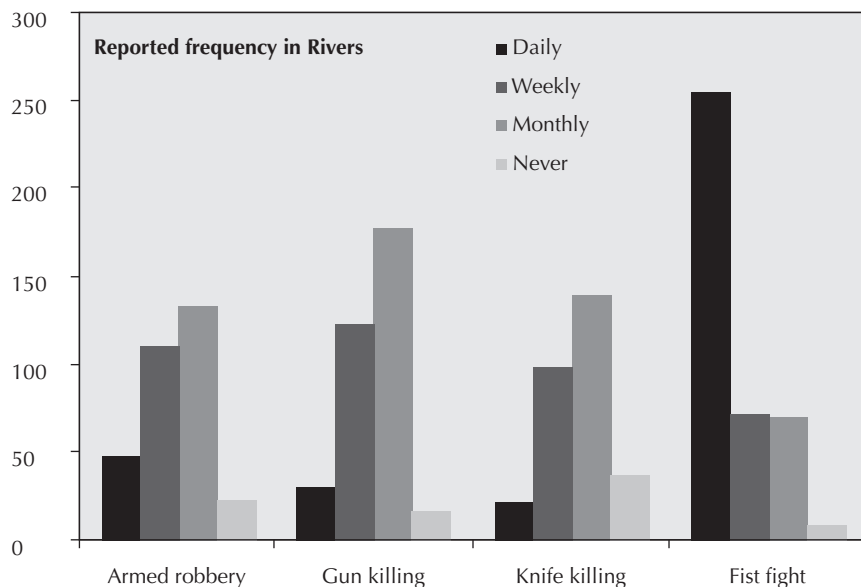
Source: CLEEN Foundation (2007)⁵⁷

Figure 4.3 Perceptions of the frequency of violent incidents in Kano and Rivers states, 2007

Number of respondents



Number of respondents



Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459
Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p)

Although the responses to the household questionnaire are not representative of the actual number of violent incidents in these states, they do suggest much higher levels of violence in Rivers state than in Kano state. They also suggest a different pattern of violence. While Kano has experienced armed violence in the past, Figure 4.3 suggests that the predominant form of violence is a common fist fight. In Rivers, by contrast, armed violence, whether with a gun or a knife, appears to be far more common. These patterns correspond with widespread perceptions that the north of the country is less violent than the south. This does not imply that violence does not occur in the north; it does, and there are widespread concerns about armed robbery in Kano. However, on the whole, these reported perceptions suggest that armed violence is far more common in Rivers than in Kano, that the level of violence is greater, and that small arms are used more frequently as tools of violence.⁵⁸

Electoral violence

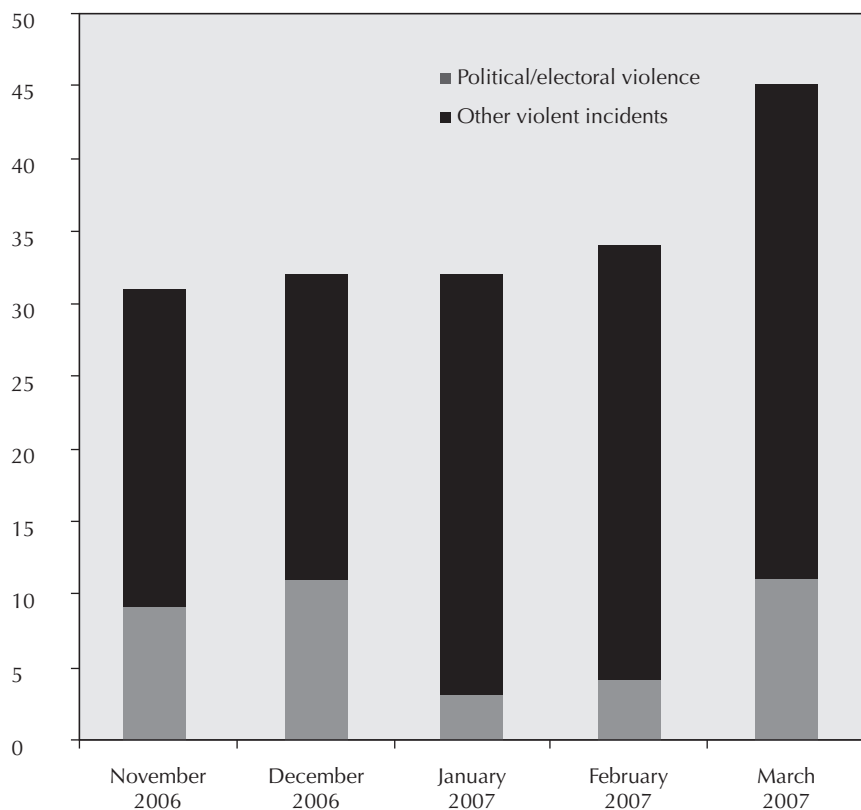
Democratic elections in Nigeria have become known for violence. The 2003 elections witnessed electoral violence, and since that time there have been a number of kidnappings, assassinations, and violent clashes between party supporters (ICG, 2007a, p. 9). There were early signs that the 2007 elections would also be marred by violence. In July 2006 Funsho Williams, a contender for the governorship in Lagos, was murdered (SDN, 2006c, p. 1). One month later, a second high-level assassination of Dr Ayo Daramola, a contender for the governorship of Ekiti state, took place (SDN, 2006d, p. 2). Violent clashes took place in a number of states, including Kogi, Abia, Rivers, Delta, Yobe, and Ibadan (Houreld, 2006; Odunfa, 2006b; SDN, 2006d). Even the police admitted that November and December had seen dozens of incidents of politically related violence (Houreld, 2006). The response to the violence of elites and politicians was to arm themselves—politicians surrounded themselves with armed guards; candidates from the ruling party used armed policemen as guards and escorts; while others hired unemployed youths, whom they provided with arms (Odunfa, 2006b; ICG, 2007a, p. 11). Between November 2006 and April 2007, more than 100 people were killed in election-related violence (BBC, 2007f).

The data obtained from the Small Arms Survey study of press reports suggests a particular pattern for electoral violence (see Figure 4.4). This type of violence is not consistent across time in the lead-up to the elections, but rather follows a pattern that fluctuates in line with large electoral events. Of the violent political incidents reported between December and February, the majority took place in November and December, with very few incidents reported in January and February. Party primaries were held in December, while no significant electoral events took place in January.

The primaries, and the lead-up to them, witnessed a number of violent intra-party clashes (ICG, 2007a, p. 10; SDN, 2006b, p. 2; 2006g, p. 1). The Small Arms Survey press report data supports the assessment that the majority of the political violence was intra-party in nature, again adding weight to the assessment that violence follows the electoral cycle, and that intra-party violence would be more common than inter-party violence during the party primaries (see Figure 4.4). This was especially true during the primary season, when candi-

Figure 4.4 **Political/electoral violence in Nigeria, Nov. 2006–March 2007**

Number of reports



Source: Small Arms Survey (2007g)

dates were hand-picked and imposed upon the electorate, causing ‘bad blood within the parties and aggravat[ing] intra-party violence significantly’ (ICG, 2007a, p. 9). Early results of the Small Arms Survey study of press reports suggest that, as the day of elections approached, the context of violence shifted towards more incidents of inter-party conflict, with intra-party conflict declining after the candidate lists were established. Violent political incidents increased again in March 2007.

The preliminary conclusions from the Small Arms Survey study of press reports are supported by data collected by a group of national monitors in

Nigeria. The Nigeria Alliance for Peaceful Elections (NAPE) used a network of monitors throughout the country to monitor and report on electoral or election-related violence from January to March 2007. According to NAPE reports, the number of violent incidents increased from January to March, with 77 incidents reported in the period 13 January–13 February, 114 incidents reported in the period 14–28 February, 125 incidents reported during 1–14 March, and 162 incidents during 15–31 March (NAPE, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2007d). The difference is even more marked when the relative time periods are considered: four weeks covered in the first report versus two weeks each in the second, third, and fourth reports. The second report suggests a shift in the nature of violence from intra-party to inter-party incidents (NAPE, 2007b, pp. 6–9). The third and fourth reports confirm this trend as inter-party incidents continued to climb, while intra-party incidents declined (NAPE, 2007c, p. 9; 2007d, p. 3).

Violence on election days remained localized. The state elections, held on 14 April, proved more violent than the presidential elections. Estimates in the media of deaths resulting from state election violence ranged from 20 to 40 (AFP, 2007; *This Day*, 2007). A number of people also died in election violence during the presidential election on 21 April. There are no official statistics for election violence or deaths resulting from the violence. The European Union has given a figure of over 200 persons killed during the elections, but there has been no verification of this figure (BBC, 2007g). While violence did occur in some areas of the country, the main concern arising from reports of international and national observers was fraud, not violence.⁵⁹ The late arrival of ballot papers, the late opening and early closing of polling stations, the inadequacy of privacy for voting, insufficient ballot papers or tallying papers, and the actual theft of some ballot boxes and materials all contributed to an atmosphere of fraud and misconduct.

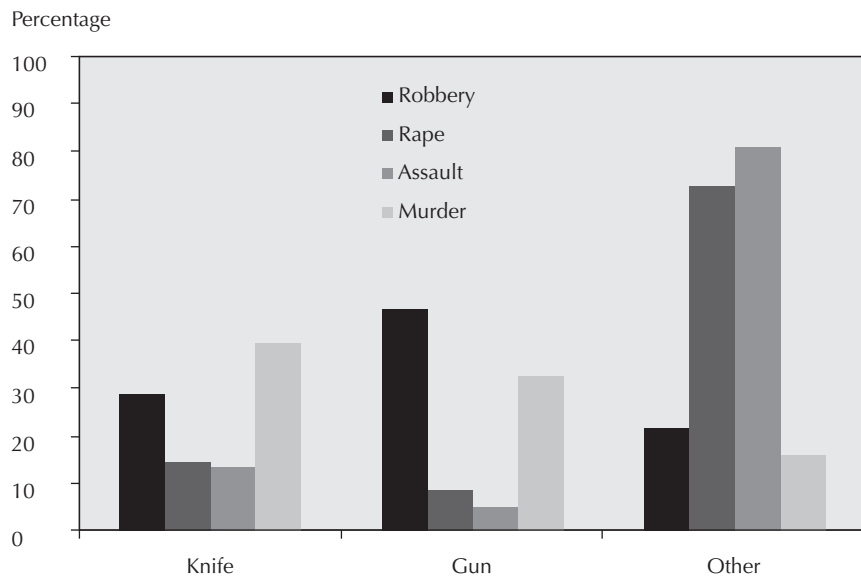
Common tools of armed violence

There is a wide range of small arms and light weapons circulating in Nigeria. These include AK-47 assault rifles, automatic pump-action shotguns, shoulder-launched rockets, Beretta pistols, Browning pistols, carbine rifles, double-barrel

shotguns, G3 rifles, general-purpose machine guns, and sub-machine guns (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005, p. 4). While small arms are certainly in circulation, and are favoured by some groups, knives, machetes, and blunt instruments remain equally common instruments of armed violence. Within the Nigerian context, there is no distinction made between bladed weapons and guns in terms of language used. Bladed weapons are also considered as 'small arms' (Small Arms Survey, 2007e; 2007f).⁶⁰ The distinction that is made is between small arms or weapons and 'sophisticated weapons', the latter being AK-47 assault rifles or similar types of weapons and other higher-powered weapons. There are differences in the types of weapons used and the types of crimes committed with small arms or bladed weapons. These patterns underline the difficulty in making generalizations about armed violence in the country as a whole.

Figure 4.5 suggests that the choice of weapon varies according to context or the type of crime committed. It suggests that knives and guns are the primary tools in robbery and murder, while other instruments are used as weapons

Figure 4.5 Use of weapons in violent crimes, 2006



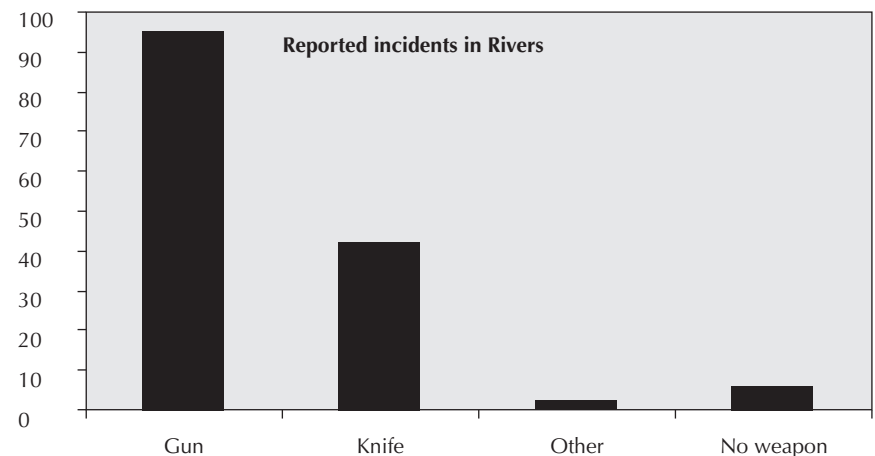
Source: Alemika, Igbo, and Nnorom (2006, pp. 28–29)

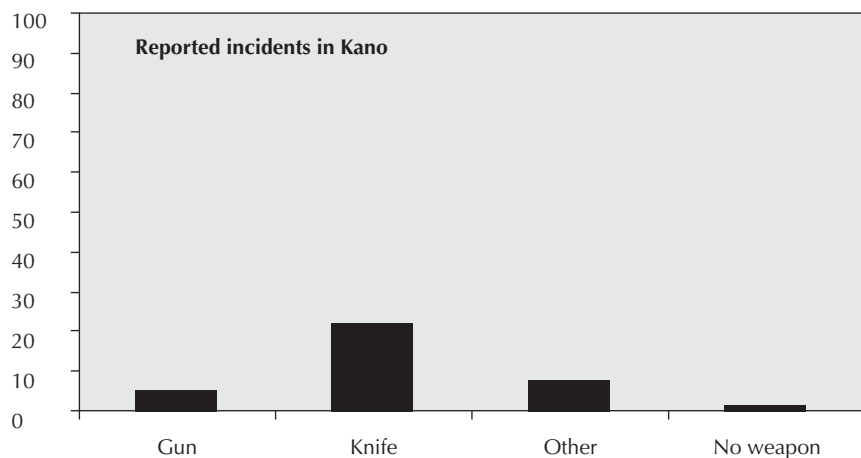
during the majority of the reported rapes and assaults. Given that grievous harm and wounding, and assault are the most common violent crimes according to the CLEEN survey (CLEEN, 2007), this would suggest that the majority of these crimes are committed with instruments other than knives and guns.

The household questionnaire administered in Kano and Rivers provides some insight into the variance in small arms knowledge and use.⁶¹ While the results of this questionnaire cannot be extrapolated to the state or country level, they do strongly suggest that there are stark differences between the two states and their experience of violent crime. For example, in Kano, very few respondents stated that they saw guns being carried in their area, or that they had personally experienced a violent crime in the past six months. By contrast, in Rivers state, about one-third of the respondents described experiencing a violent crime in the past six months.

In terms of knowledge of weapons, in Kano, the majority of respondents demonstrated very limited knowledge about guns, their availability, or pricing. The majority of respondents could not name or describe the most common gun in the local area when showed a picture of common small arms in Nigeria, or discuss the price of guns. This suggests that many people in Kano are not familiar with guns, nor do they see or handle them often. Instead, bladed

Figure 4.6 Reported weapons use in Kano and Rivers states, 2007





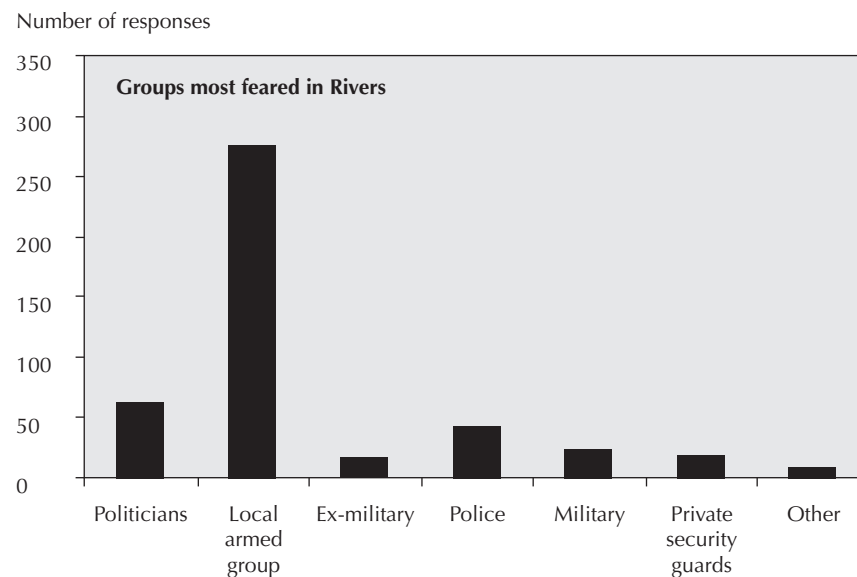
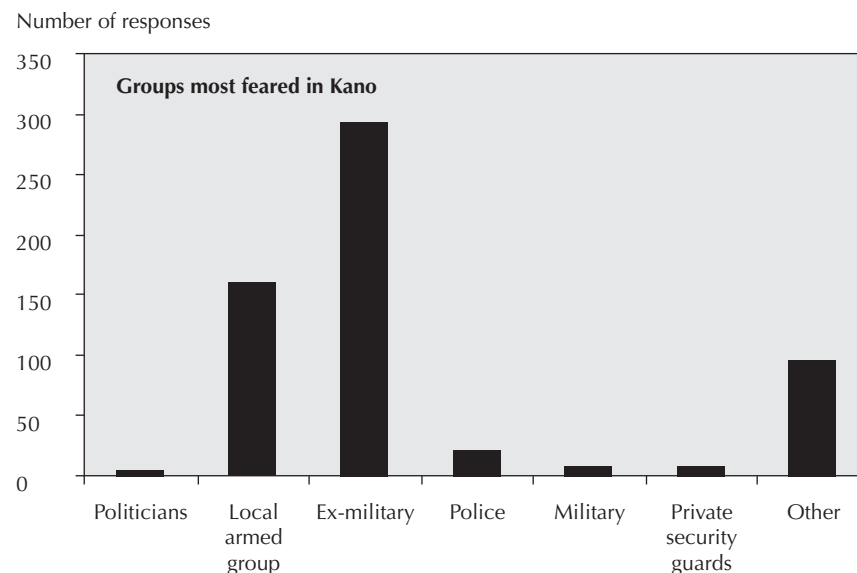
Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459
 Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p)

instruments appear to be far more common tools of violence in this state (see Figure 4.6) (Small Arms Survey, 2007l). By contrast, respondents in Rivers state demonstrated much more knowledge of guns, their availability, and their pricing. In Rivers, many of the respondents could name or describe the most common gun in the local area when shown a picture of common small arms, and could discuss the prices of guns, suggesting more familiarity with guns. In both cases, respondents identified the most common small arm as an assault rifle, while in Rivers, respondents also pointed to shotguns, pistols, and revolvers as common small arms in that area. In both cases, respondents also stated that other dangerous weapons, such as machetes, cutlasses, and axes, were also common.

Primary actors in armed violence

Although there are clearly regional differences in the prevalence and use of small arms in Nigeria, there appears to be far less variance in the types of people who possess and use small arms. Small arms and light weapons appear to be more concentrated in the hands of armed groups, criminal gangs, and elites. Data taken from the Small Arms Survey study of press reports suggests

Figure 4.7 **Groups most feared by the populations of Kano and Rivers states (one group selected), 2007**



Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459
 Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p)

that most civilians are unarmed and that civilian possession is not widespread (Small Arms Survey, 2007g). In the study, in cases of reported violence, civilians rarely responded as armed actors. Instead, small arms appear to be held by select groups. In a 2005 national crime and victimization survey, only 1.3 per cent of the respondents claimed to have obtained weapons as a measure for responding to insecurity (Alemika, Igbo, and Nnorom, 2006, p. 48). Responses to the household questionnaire conducted by the Small Arms Survey reinforced this assessment.⁶² In addition to the military and police, politicians, armed groups, and political thugs were the most commonly cited possessors of small arms, and the most feared groups in the community (Figure 4.7).

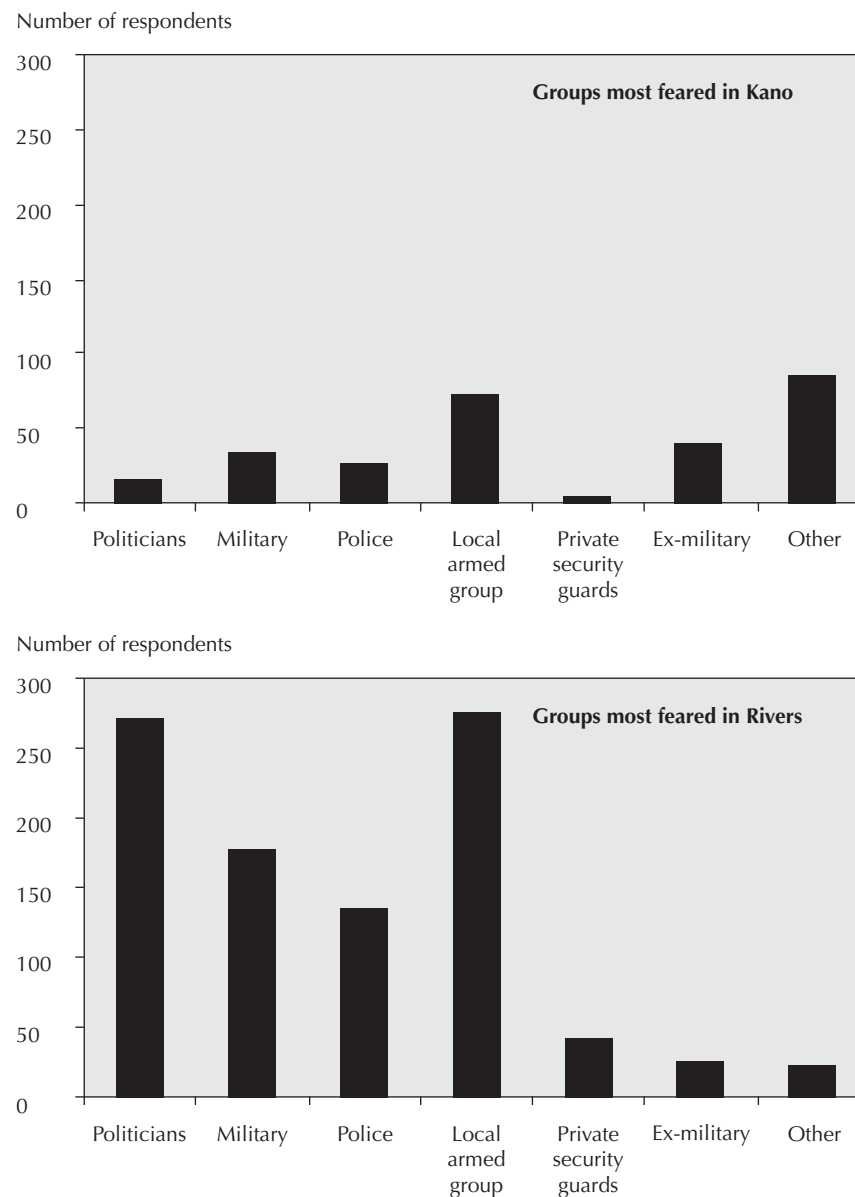
Although this data does not represent the state or the country as a whole, it does suggest trends in concerns in communities. While armed groups are clearly a concern in both places, they are the primary concern among respondents in Rivers, while the primary concern for respondents in Kano are ex-military personnel. In Kano, respondents reported that they rarely saw anyone other than police officers carrying guns, but that when they did, those most often seen carrying a gun were local armed groups. In Rivers, respondents pointed to politicians, cultists, and militants as the primary possessors of guns.

However, when respondents were asked which groups of people were feared, and were allowed to select more than one group, the results suggest a slightly different pattern of concern (Figure 4.8). Respondents in Rivers were primarily concerned with politicians and armed groups, followed by the military and the police, while in Kano, respondents were primarily concerned with local armed groups and armed robbers (included in the 'other' category of the chart). In Rivers, respondents reported that armed violence was common. They expressed concerns about militant groups and cult groups, and their activities as the primary cause of violence. Respondents also commented that civilian possession is more common now than in the past, due to a rising feeling of insecurity in the state.

Effects of armed violence

The pattern of victimization in Nigeria matches more closely patterns seen in countries at war than those at peace. For example, an analysis of the 212

Figure 4.8 **Groups most feared by the populations of Kano and Rivers states (more than one group selected), 2007**



Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459

Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p)

incidents of armed violence reported in the Small Arms Survey study of press reports between November 2006 and February 2007 revealed that 189 incidents involved the use of firearms, while 34 involved blunt instruments and 2 involved bombs.⁶³ In these 212 incidents of armed violence, 413 people were killed, 410 injured, 197 abducted, and 5 reported missing. These are only the events captured by the international and national press, suggesting that the numbers were probably higher in reality. Overall, most of the effects of armed violence during this period were suffered by unarmed civilians, while the armed perpetrators suffered the fewest negative effects. Unarmed civilians suffered 53 per cent of all effects.

The data suggests that overall the most common victims of armed violence were unarmed civilians, a pattern that is common to situations of conflict, weak rule of law, and limited effectiveness of state security forces. In over half of the recorded incidents of armed violence, no law enforcement official was involved. This could suggest that such officials were simply not near the incident when it took place, or could not respond. But it also suggests a reluctance by law enforcement officials to get involved in violent situations. Interviews in Nigeria suggest the latter might be a more common explanation, with many interviewees claiming that police officers are unwilling to engage armed criminals because they lack the necessary equipment and training, or they simply do not want to risk their lives.⁶⁴ In this situation, armed groups are able to inflict high levels of violence on society with relative impunity.

'Crime rates and the perception of crime have been exacerbated by the high proliferation of small arms throughout the country' (HRW, 2005c, p. 12). Crime, especially armed robbery, remains a primary concern of citizens in Nigeria. Respondents to the household questionnaire in Kano suggest that armed robbery was the primary security concern in that state (Small Arms Survey, 2007o). While fear of armed robbery remains, fear over rioting and communal violence has fallen over the past two years in Kano (DFID, 2007). In Rivers, respondent answers to the household questionnaire suggest that the activities of armed groups remained the primary concern of citizens there (Small Arms Survey, 2007p). The types of crimes common to areas within Nigeria appears to be having an impact on the levels of fear felt by communities, and perceptions of crime and safety vary in different parts of the country. Responses from the

household questionnaire suggest that people feel safer in Kano than in Rivers due to the level of insecurity in the community. For example, in Kano, very few people expressed concerns about going out of their homes and conducting their daily business. By contrast, in Rivers many people expressed fear at leaving their homes and stated that they were increasingly afraid to be in public.

Kidnapping: a different type of violence

Kidnapping is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, and has been ongoing since the early 1990s (Chatham House, 2006). Hostages have been taken for two primary reasons: political bargaining and economic gain. Groups in the Niger Delta have used the kidnapping of international oil workers to raise international attention regarding the plight of those living in the Delta, the environmental damage caused by oil spills and the oil industry, and the demand for more local ownership of the extraction of natural resources.

The use of this tactic has not been entirely political in nature, as there are reports of significant ransom payments, which have then been used to fund the activities of these groups further. In fact, the tactic has proven so lucrative that a number of criminal groups appear to have taken on the task in order simply to make money. This raised a controversy over ransom payments when the Delta witnessed a significant increase in kidnapping in August 2006.⁶⁵ This prompted President Obasanjo to declare that force would be met with force, and prompted a major player in the Niger Delta, MEND, to declare an end to all kidnapping on 28 August 2006 and to threaten any groups who broke the moratorium (SDN, 2006d). The moratorium held for the month of September (SDN, 2006e, p. 1), but was broken in October, and kidnappings have again become a common occurrence in the Delta. By February 2007, kidnapping had become a 'booming business' (BBC, 2007b).

Although kidnappings are often committed by armed groups, very few hostages have been harmed. Those who have died or been injured did so during rescue attempts by the Nigerian military or at the time of the kidnapping, and the deaths and injuries resulted from being caught in the crossfire, not as a result of intentional shooting. In most cases, ransoms are reportedly paid and hostages released within days or weeks of their having been captured. In Table

4.4, all of these hostages were released prior to the April 2007 elections, except for those listed as killed.

In some cases, hostages have been held for over a month, but the situation has not yet reached that pertaining in Colombia, where hostages have been held for years, nor has it reached the level of violence in Afghanistan or Iraq, where hostages are routinely killed. In large part, this appears to be the result of the armed groups having little interest in killing the hostages, with their purpose being achieved by simply taking their victims hostage and raising the level of insecurity for international workers or by receiving hostage payments. A second

contributing factor to hostages' safe release is the role of government officials in negotiating with the armed groups and securing deals for the release of hostages. While negotiations normally take place out of public view, enough media reports have surfaced indicating state government involvement in negotiations to suggest that state governments have working relationships with these groups, and that the preference for both is to resolve the hostage crises without violence.

As Table 4.1 suggests, kidnapping is neither a new phenomenon nor a rare one. Numerous individuals have been kidnapped. One report put the number at 300 persons who were taken hostage between January 2006 and February 2007 (Bernard, 2007b), and others have claimed that anywhere between 60 and 150 have been taken in the same period. There is no apparent pattern in the number of kidnappings per month or over the year. What is clear, however, is that the number of kidnappings is not increasing steadily over time, but instead has run in highs and lows, suggesting an underlying dynamic that determines when groups seize hostages and when they do not. The number of kidnappings increased significantly in the early months of 2007. While some have argued that this was related to the April elections (IRIN, 2007a), there is no clear evidence to suggest a strong link between militant actions and the elections. Instead, it seems that the militants are simply pushing harder for change. In February, MEND, a militant organization well known for kidnapping and oil bunkering, issued a written statement threatening war, claiming that: 'We will fight a war that has never been fought in Africa and disintegrate Nigeria if we have to do so to get justice' (Odunfa, 2007). This suggested that the fight is about far more than elections, and that the kidnapping and violence would continue well past the April polls. This held true, and the month following the elections witnessed nearly daily kidnappings (see Table 5.2). Some militant groups also changed their tactics, turning to kidnapping children following the election. MEND has condemned the kidnapping of children and vowed to punish the kidnapers (Shirbon, 2007). This raises questions about the level of control within and among militant groups in the Delta, and suggests that some groups are simply out to make money. 📌

Table 4.4 **Kidnapping and sabotage in the Niger Delta, Jan. 2006–March 2007***

Month	Kidnapping	Hostage killed	Incidents of sabotage
January 2006	4		1
February	9		2
March	0		1
April	0		2 car bombs
May	4		
June	15		
July	1		
August	16		
September	0		
October	25+		
November	2	1 hostage killed, 1 wounded in rescue attempt	
December	4		1
January 2007	50+		1 3 car bombs
February	36		
March	8		

* Note: This is not a complete list of all kidnappings or incidents of sabotage during this period.

Sources: Based on Tayo (2007); SDN (2007); Reuters and BBC news articles

V. Armed groups

Although armed groups have existed in Nigeria since independence, the prevalence of military rule over the past four decades largely kept these groups in check. With the return to democracy in 1999, the government's control over discontent in the country waned. This was compounded by the difficulties the government faced in providing for law and order, a task once largely performed by the military, but which now fell to a police force atrophied by neglect during military rule. With rising insecurity, ongoing contests for resources, and new opportunities for acquiring wealth through crime, the number of armed groups has proliferated since the 1999 elections. The government has proven relatively impotent in terms of controlling these groups, on the one hand, while certain political actors appear to have taken advantage of the opportunity to use such groups for political gain, on the other. The situation has become increasingly serious with advances in the tactics and types of weapons used by armed groups. This is especially true in the Delta region, where oil money has fuelled legitimate grievances over the lack of development, and financed the purchase of more sophisticated weaponry. Although armed groups exist in many parts of the country, the focus of many observers has largely fallen on the Delta, where monthly kidnappings have raised the profile of groups active in that region, and access to oil, and to oil profits, remains a concern for internationals and nationals alike. While this section also focuses largely on armed groups in the Delta, it is important to note the numerous other armed groups active in the country, and the section begins with a more general discussion of armed groups in Nigeria.

Armed groups in Nigeria

The number of armed groups in Nigeria easily numbers in the hundreds. Such groups exist in many communities. In some cases, these groups are viewed as criminal groups or as consisting of misguided youths. However, armed groups

are not always perceived of as threats to security, and in some cases are seen as community defenders. In these cases, the groups receive community support through logistics, food, money, information, and even arms. The majority of armed groups operate on a local or regional level. At present, there is no nationally active armed group.

Given the diversity of the armed groups, it is difficult to generate a simple typology (see Table 5.1). Such groups are often characterized by observers as (ethnic) militias,⁶⁶ confraternities or cults, vigilante groups,⁶⁷ or (criminal) gangs, but these terms have often been used interchangeably, creating confusion as to the distinctions among the various categories. Some groups fall into more than one type, further blurring the distinctions. The definitions below provide a starting point for delineating the differences among the armed group classifications. Regardless of their motivations or activities, many members of armed groups preferred to be called 'freedom fighters' as opposed to any other label, suggesting a strong belief in the reasons why they fight (AAPW, 2006).⁶⁸

Ethnic militias are defined as youth groups formed to promote and protect the interests of a specific ethnic group, and therefore operate across the territory of that ethnic group (Adejumobi, 2003). They are not rebel movements, and are not seeking to capture territory or political power; instead, they serve as a pressure group on government.

Confraternities and cults are similar in their origins, but differ in their areas of operation. These are small groups that originate in tertiary academic institutions. Their origins are in fraternities, initially comprising groups of men with similar interests, but they have since developed over the past few decades into armed groups that are often involved in criminal activities. Confraternities operate on campus, while their affiliated cults operate in off-campus locations. Their activities tend to be localized in proximity to the tertiary institution.

Vigilante groups are community groups created to fill a security gap and provide protection from violent crime and armed robbery to a specific community (AI, 2002, p. 6). They consist of community members and are extremely localized in their area of operation.

Criminal gangs tend to be groups of unemployed, poor, and illiterate youths who engage in small-scale crime and offer their services for hire to politicians and others (ICG, 2007a, p. 11). These gangs go by various local names, such

as 'area boys' in Lagos or *yandaba* in the north. They are small groups with little organization, locally formed, and operating in small areas.

Table 5.1 **Types of armed groups in Nigeria**

	Ethnic militias	Confraternities/ cults	Vigilante groups	Criminal gangs
Purpose	Aims are to redress grievances and injustices and protect and defend the rights of the ethnic group	Self-enrichment and defending territory	Provide security to communities; provide law and order services in areas where police presence is minimal; provide economic opportunities to members	Economic gain
Membership	Ethnic group; other sympathetic ethnic groups	Confraternities: students Cults: unemployed youth	Community organization	Unemployed youth
Support base	Typically grassroots organizations receiving widespread support; able to mobilize more widely	Members; alliances with other armed groups; politicians	Community support; community funding through dues; many receive government support	Members; politicians
Area of operations	Communities of ethnic group; also across states where ethnic group is dominant	Confraternities tend to be on campus, similar to US fraternities; cults operate off campus, tend to be the more violent of the two; localized area of operations	Localized area of operations, usually at community level	Dominate particular neighbourhoods; localized area of operations

Main activities	Defence of ethnic group rights might include: political protest, attacks on politicians, attacks on oil pipelines, kidnapping, oil bunkering	Control and defend territory; drug trafficking; oil bunkering; reputation for being brutal and secretive, with elaborate rituals for initiation	Activities aimed at community security; sometimes administer physical punishments to suspects, or take the law into their own hands; some groups work with police to enforce law and order	Engage in armed robbery and other criminal activities
Arms	Paramilitary groups; of all armed groups, best trained, armed, organized; usually armed with sophisticated weapons	Not all are violent, but most are armed; prospective members must demonstrate bravery and ability to use weapons	Not all are armed	Not all are armed
Examples	NDPVF MEND Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC)	NDVS/Icelander Deebam Deewell Greenlander Outlaws	Bakassi Boys Anambra State Vigilante Service O'odua People's Congress (OPC)	Area boys <i>Yandaba</i> groups

Sources: Based on AI (2002); Best and Von Kemedi (2005); DFID (2007); Rotimi (2005); Von Kemedi (2006)

Armed groups in the Niger Delta

Oil, or more specifically the proceeds from the sale of oil, has long been a source of contention in the Delta region of Nigeria. Although originally seen as a blessing by those living in the Delta, oil has become something of a curse to the local population. Prospectors first struck oil in the 1950s, with Shell finding high-quality oil in 1956 in Oloibiri, Bayelsa state (Olojede, 2004). Additional discoveries quickly followed across the Delta. The promise of lucrative exports

raised hopes that this newly found source of wealth would lead to improvements in the living and economic conditions of the region and the country. Such hopes did not turn into realities. Instead, the population remains impoverished, despite large revenues accrued from oil, and the environment has been severely damaged by the practices of oil companies. Discontent over limited economic opportunities and poor environmental practices has led to organized but non-violent protest against poor practices.

Resistance movements have existed since the 1960s, but oil is not the only contributor to violence and the rise of armed groups. There have long been and continue to be clashes between communities over land and security concerns, as well as a number of criminal gangs and cult groups who contribute to the atmosphere of insecurity and violence. Yet oil has become both a cause to rally around and a source of necessary funding for continuing the fight. One of the first armed activists was Isaac Adaka Boro, who led a protest against oil exploitation by foreign corporations as an impingement upon the rights of those in the Delta to benefit from their lands. Boro died in the late 1960s, but he had sown the seed of resistance. This fight was taken up by Ken Saro-Wiwa, albeit in a non-violent form, in the 1990s. The Ogoni movement called the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, led by Saro-Wiwa, was extremely effective in the early 1990s at organizing peaceful protests against oil companies and demanding compensation for environmental destruction and back royalties from oil revenues. The response of the government to the protest was heavy-handed. The declining economy, the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections, and the November 1995 execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight others contributed to the growing sense of frustration among the population and led to an escalation in violence in the Delta.

Evolution of armed groups in the Niger Delta

An important part of understanding the armed groups operating in the Delta today is to understand the evolution of such groups over the past decade and the continuing alliances and battles between groups. Figure 5.1 provides a rough chronology of the evolution of armed groups in the Delta. This schematic is not exhaustive in that it does not include every group active in the region. Instead, it depicts the evolution of the primary players in the lead-up

to the 2003 elections and the important changes that took place in the aftermath of those elections. It also provides insight into the fluidity with which groups and inter-group alliances evolve.

Two of the main driving forces in the evolution of armed groups in the Delta have been Ateke Tom and Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. These men, the leaders of Icelander and the NDPVF, respectively, have been at the centre of armed violence, oil, and politics since early in this century. Tom took on the leadership of Icelander, a cult group, at the time of its formation in 2000. Icelander drew its membership from its mother cult, the Supreme Vikings Confraternity (SVC), as well as from a street wing of the SVC, Deewell. Icelander became well known for its violent tactics. As a result of this reputation, the leadership of Icelander changed the name of the cult to the Niger Delta Vigilante Services in 2003. While the group remained under Tom's leadership and largely maintained the same tactics as before, it was hoped that the new name would promote a better image.

Asari's road to armed group leadership took a different path. Supported by local politicians, he rose to the presidency of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). The IYC is not an armed group, but rather a civic group agitating for justice and the protection of the rights of the Ijaw people. Asari served as its president in the lead-up to the 2003 elections. In this role, he held great sway as a political figure, and as such became sought after by politicians as a source of support and, ultimately, electoral victory. Asari reportedly collaborated with Tom under the direction of Peter Odili, then governor of Rivers state, to rally support for Odili's re-election campaign. Following the elections, a disagreement between Asari and Odili over the re-election of Obasanjo and the neglect of Ijaw concerns led to a split between the two. Asari stepped down from the presidency of the IYC and established his own armed group, the NDPVF. The split with Tom and the group's political benefactor marked a dividing line that can still be seen today.

Violence in the Delta region blossomed in 2003 and 2004.⁶⁹ In the lead-up to the 2003 elections, violence became a tool for politicians to gain power.⁷⁰ This included the provision of small arms to groups to rally support for certain politicians and deter the opposition from challenging these politicians. The aftermath of the elections witnessed a solidification of armed groups along two lines: those supporting Tom and those supporting Asari. Smaller armed groups

New groups include MEND, the JRC, COMA, and Martyr's Brigade, to name a few. Others have also emerged but remain less prominent. The most prominent of the groups is MEND. Figure 5.2 provides a schematic of the current affiliations of armed groups in the Delta. This schematic is not exhaustive, but instead depicts the primary players engaged in the Delta today. It also suggests that there is growing collaboration among many groups.

While the dividing line between Tom and Asari still exists, the prevalence and importance of this line appears to have waned considerably. In large part, this is the likely result of Asari having been in prison since late 2005 and the fact that while Icelander (or the NDVS) continues to exist, it remains extremely weak and relatively small in size, with its operations largely localized to the Okrika area.⁷² Tom and Asari remain key players in the Delta, and retain influence over the agenda there; however, it remains unclear how much influence they have, particularly Asari. He became a rallying point for armed groups, who claimed his release from prison as one of their key demands, but there is

little to indicate that he controls the actions of either the NDPVF or MEND. After his release from prison Asari worked to rebuild his leadership role in the Niger Delta, but faces a number of challengers to that position. MEND appears to have split into three factions, one of which Asari apparently heads.

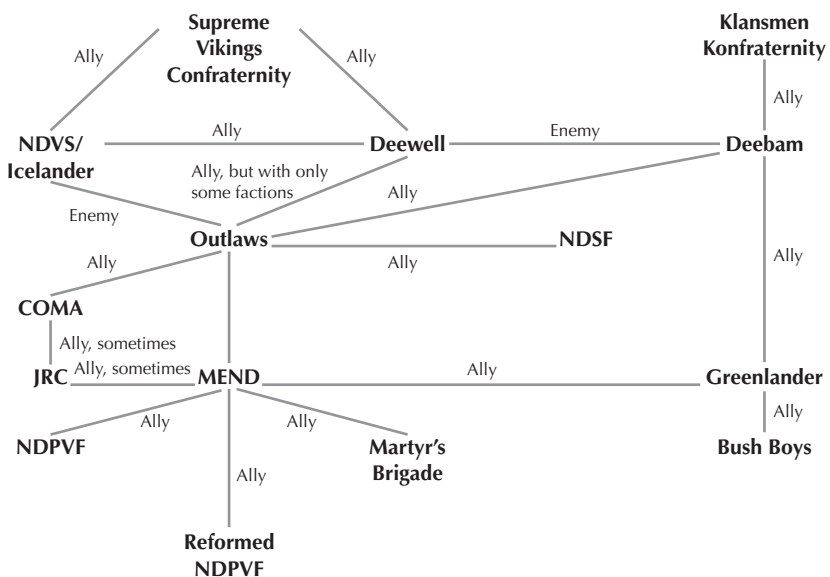
The current centrifugal pole in the Delta is MEND, reportedly the best armed, trained, and coordinated of all of the groups currently operating in the region. Such strength is undoubtedly a factor drawing other groups to affiliate with MEND. Yet while there appear to be many friendly alliances, there is as yet no clear hierarchy among the groups. MEND has maintained its distinct identity, remaining separate from other Ijaw groups, including FNDIC and the IYC, as well as other militant groups. At the same time, MEND's leadership reportedly consists of individuals who play significant roles in other armed groups. Such cross allegiances have fuelled the dispute over whether MEND is a group or a coalition of groups.

To many observers, MEND appears to be a loose coalition of armed groups rather than a single, unified organization. As such, some argue that it provides an 'umbrella' structure for a variety of smaller groups, including the Outlaws, Martyr's Brigade, and the Reformed NDPVF,⁷⁴ while at the same time maintaining alliances with a number of other groups. However, it is unclear how such an 'umbrella' formation works, or whether MEND has any real influence or control over the other armed groups.

Some have also claimed that MEND operates beneath the broader 'umbrella' of the JRC. Again, the term 'umbrella' is used, and appears to be a favoured term in Nigeria, but with little explanation of what this means. Although MEND and the JRC maintain a friendly relationship, MEND has made a point of disassociating itself from some kidnappings claimed by the JRC, suggesting that the two groups do not always work in tandem and that there is no hierarchical chain of command (SDN, 2006f, p. 1; 2007, p. 1). Although MEND undoubtedly collaborates with other Delta groups, it is unclear whether this cooperation gives it an overarching role in coordinating activities in the Delta.

There is still no overarching organizing force in the Delta. Instead, there is a fluidity of alliances, and groups continue to emerge, merge, and disappear, just as armed group members continue to switch allegiances, depending on their own needs and perceptions of a particular group's activities and goals.

Figure 5.2 Configuration of armed groups in the Delta, 2007⁷³



Source: Based on Small Arms Survey consultant armed group profiles

What is clear is that many of the armed groups work together; what is less clear is whether there is any real gelling of these groups into a larger front. Several armed groups participated in a congress in March 2007 to discuss the solidification of existing alliances and the coordination of activities.⁷⁵ To date, there is no apparent change in tactics or alliances to suggest that much has changed as a result of these discussions. However, MEND appears to be positioning itself to be the coordinating force in the Delta, and if it can avoid factionalizing itself, it might succeed in this. News reports in mid-2007 suggest that MEND split into two factions in late 2006, with one operating in Delta state, while the other operates in Bayelsa (BBC, 2007h). A third faction appears to have materialized following Asari's release from prison in June 2007. Little is known about these three factions, or how they operate in relation to one another. Reports of MEND's activities rarely distinguish among the factions, suggesting that they may still be cooperating as an organization, even though their leaders continue to vie for the leadership position of the group as a whole.

Shared characteristics

Although there are a number of armed groups active in the Niger Delta of varying shapes and sizes, the Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) survey of such groups in three Delta states suggests that they do share a number of characteristics (AAPW, 2006).⁷⁶ Most of them are relatively small in size, from 50 to a few hundred members. Some groups claim quite large membership, reporting 2,000 or even as many as 4,500 members.⁷⁷ Many of the groups are armed, though the level and sophistication of equipment varies, and many rely on less sophisticated small arms (or 'local' arms), machetes, knives, and traditional charms. The types of arms possessed by armed groups included AK-47 and other assault rifles, automatic and semi-automatic rifles, general-purpose machine guns, RPG-7s, shotguns, and handguns. The large groups, numbering a few thousand, appear to have relatively small arsenals of a few hundred weapons. In no case was there a ratio of one weapon to one member, or anything approximating this. The main sources of weapons included neighbouring countries, local dealers, captures from opponents, retired military and police officers, soldiers returning from peacekeeping missions, and politicians and patrons. In terms of training, an interesting dichotomy appears from the

surveys, indicating that while around 20 per cent of the members of armed groups received some form of armed training in Rivers and Akwa Ibom states, nearly 80 per cent received some form of armed training in Delta state.

According to the AAPW survey, armed groups often operate and recruit locally. Most groups consist of members from a specific community, or, in the case of larger groups, from within the state of origin of the group. The vast majority of members are male, unmarried, Christian, and between the ages of 20 and 40.⁷⁸ While only a handful of armed group members participating in the survey were female, women do play a role in these groups. While not active in fighting, women play a large supporting role in terms of logistics, the movement of arms and ammunition, and the trafficking of drugs.⁷⁹ Focus group discussions in Rivers state suggested that armed groups are interested in recruiting more women because they pass through security scrutiny more easily than men.

At least 50 per cent of the armed group members who responded to the AAPW questionnaire claimed that they were unemployed, had no profession, or worked in unpaid jobs. Yet many claimed a secondary source of income through occasional unidentified business in the neighbourhood. Leaders of the groups tend to be slightly older, and the majority of them are employed. Members of armed groups possess some degree of education, with 50 per cent or more of respondents claiming they had completed secondary school. The main reason for not continuing with schooling was a lack of financial resources, and the majority of respondents failed to find jobs after leaving school.

The majority of armed group members joined an armed group between 1995 and 2006, with the largest number joining since 2000. The motivations for joining varied. The most common reasons included protection of indigenes, employment and additional income, marginalization, self-protection and resource control, and the desire for freedom. Importantly for future prospects in the Delta, the AAPW study revealed that the majority of armed group members were willing to leave militia activities, with a 95 per cent positive response in Delta state. The primary reasons stated for being willing to leave the armed group were employment and the restoration of peace in the area. These findings suggest positive prospects for disarmament campaigns in the region, but that participation will be heavily dependent on improving community security and creating viable alternatives to violence for making a living.

Community leaders also supported disarmament initiatives and believed that the best approach to resolving the problem of non-state armed groups must include employment opportunities, youth empowerment, social responsibility, and education.

Future prospects

The goals and intentions of armed groups in the Delta remain diverse. Many young men may use armed violence and participation in armed groups as sources of political voice and power, seeing violence as the only means to alter the current situation and improve their own position. While some armed groups continue to proclaim political goals and offer strong rhetoric about defending the rights of the local population as justification for militant activities, many groups pursue economic interests and are little more than criminals. The criminal element of some groups has created divisions among armed groups, especially between those proclaiming more lofty goals and claiming the use of violence as a means to an end only and those who have less pronounced goals (ICG, 2006b, p. 7; Marquardt, 2006, p. 5). It remains unclear how much cohesion exists among the many armed groups operating in the Niger Delta today.

Despite the lack of overall coordination, ongoing inter-group rivalries, and even intra-group clashes, the government has failed to stem the violence or diminish the power of most armed groups in the Delta. The inability of the government to tackle the problem of armed violence has led some observers to argue that it is unable to impose law and order and is losing control of the situation in the Niger Delta (Ibrahim, 2007, p. 7; Watts, 2007). Even the newly elected vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, has stated publicly that the army and navy 'cannot cope' with the Niger Delta and the situation in the region (Minna, 2007).

These assessments appear to be holding in the aftermath of the 2007 elections. Marred by widespread fraud and localized violence, the elections appear to have had little positive impact on the situation in the Delta. The number of kidnappings and attacks on pipelines increased dramatically in the weeks following the announcement of the electoral results (see Table 5.2). MEND declared a 'month of mayhem' on 9 May, urging militant groups to press forward with their cause of more autonomy for the region (Reuters, 2007). Militant groups

responded to the call. The militants, especially MEND, claimed they were taking a parting shot at the outgoing president in an attempt to embarrass him, and giving a clear warning to the incoming administration that the problems in the Delta have not yet been resolved. Some observers also suggest that the increase in attacks is being used as a political tool by armed groups to demonstrate their power and therefore their relevance, and to ensure that they are included in any attempts by the incoming administration to attend to the grievances of the Delta population.

The inauguration of President Yar'Adua on 29 May did not end the kidnapping or the attacks on oil operations. On 1 June three Indonesians were kidnapped from Port Harcourt, and youths in Ogoni shut down a valve on an oil pipeline, decreasing oil output by 150,000 barrels per day. While the violence has not completely subsided, more positive signs have arisen with the declared willingness of at least some militant groups to give newly elected state and national government officials an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to change. Observers have expressed scepticism about the possibility of a quick resolution, in large part due to the economic benefits accruing to some of the militant groups through kidnapping and oil bunkering.

The newly elected president is pressing forward quickly to keep his promise to resolve the crisis in the Delta. Initially, President Yar'Adua offered to hold a summit meeting with stakeholders in the region on 4 June to work towards a solution. Militants accepted this gesture, but expressed scepticism. The new president also called for a ceasefire, which MEND has agreed to observe for one month to give the new government time to demonstrate its commitment to a new way forward in the Delta. At the request of stakeholders in the Delta, the president postponed the June summit until a later unspecified date, to enable stakeholders to prepare better for the meeting.

The government released the NDPVF leader, Asari, on bail on 14 June. His release has been viewed as part of government efforts to bring peace to the Delta (BBC, 2007i). Asari has stated publicly since his release that he is ready to engage in talks with the government, but on the condition that the military ceases its violent campaign in the Delta (BBC, 2007j), referring to the increased military activity targeting militants in the region. Asari has also urged his followers to stop taking hostages (BBC, 2007k).

Table 5.2 **Armed group attacks between 21 April 2007 presidential elections and 29 May inauguration**

Date of attack	Type of attack	Impact	Location	Responsible group
27 April	Attempted kidnapping	2 policemen killed in attempted kidnapping	Port Harcourt	Unknown
1 May	Kidnapping	4 Italians, 1 US citizen, and 1 Croatian seized; 1 navy officer shot	Offshore, Bayelsa state	MEND
	Kidnapping	Newly elected Governor Celestine Omeiha's mother kidnapped	Rivers state	Unknown
3 May	Kidnapping	8 Filipinos, 3 South Koreans seized; 1 policeman shot	Rivers state	Unknown
	Kidnapping	1 Dutchman seized	Port Harcourt	Unknown
	Kidnapping	1 Briton, 2 Croatians, 1 Australian, 1 Romanian, 1 Chilean, and 2 Poles seized	Offshore, Rivers state	Unknown
5 May	Kidnapping	1 Briton seized	Offshore rig, Bayelsa state	Unknown
	Kidnapping	1 Belarusian woman seized	Port Harcourt	Unknown
8 May	Pipeline	Bombing of three oil pipelines	Bayelsa state	MEND
9 May	Kidnapping	4 US oil workers seized	Offshore	Egbema 1
14 May	Kidnapping	1 Nigerian manager seized	Port Harcourt	Unknown
15 May	Seizure of Shell oil facility	Reduction of oil production by 170,000 barrels per day	Ogoniland	Ogoni youths
16 May	Attack on house of incoming vice president	Damage to house	Bayelsa state	Unknown
	Attack on police station	Police station destroyed; 2 officers killed	Bayelsa state	Unknown

19 May	Kidnapping	Attempt to seize 10, but only 2 Indian petro-chemical workers seized after gunfight between militants and military; 3 Nigerians killed	Port Harcourt	Unknown
21 May	Attack on oil facility	No casualties; no damage; pushed world oil prices above USD 70 per barrel	Unidentified	Unknown
22 May	Kidnapping	1 Lebanese seized	Warri	Unknown
24 May	Kidnapping	1 Pole seized	Warri	Unknown
25 May	Kidnapping	4 Britons, 3 US citizens, 1 Filipino, 1 South African seized	Bayelsa state	Unknown

Sources: Based on BBC, Reuters, and AllAfrica.com news articles

The summer months witnessed heavy battles between the military and armed militants in the Delta. There has been a clear push by the military to take a strong stand against the militants, especially to reduce inter-clan clashes, even as the government is pushing for a broader Delta dialogue. In August the military attacked the suspected hideout of militant leader Soboma George, leader of the Outlaws and a commander in MEND. The military had claimed success in eliminating George, but reports emerged in August of his survival, and his willingness to engage in negotiations to reach an end to the fighting (Amaize, 2007b).

Despite these clashes, the peace process appears to be moving very slowly forward. Vice President Jonathan is leading this process and has met with leaders of militant groups and local governments in the Delta. These efforts have reportedly led to an agreement that the president will meet with militant leaders, and that militant leaders will abide by a three-month ceasefire in order to provide time for the government to address their demands (Amaize, 2007a). The vice president has also met with Asari, who reportedly promised to help the government end the violence (BBC, 2007l). Nevertheless, there are still incidents of heavy violence in the Delta. The military took over Port Harcourt in mid-August in response to clashes between armed militants. While the military is currently in charge, many residents believe it is only a matter of time before the militants return (IRIN, 2007b). 📄

VI. Tackling armed insecurity

The Government of Nigeria faces numerous challenges in tackling the problems of small arms proliferation and armed violence. Some of these challenges are self-imposed and reinforced through greed-based behaviour, while others are the result of poor institutional capacity and the complexities of addressing widespread crime and the general situation in the Niger Delta. Nigeria has national firearms legislation that is comprehensive and restrictive, but poorly enforced. The country has signed on to a number of regional and international legal instruments aimed at reducing small arms proliferation, but national committees designated to implementing these measures have been poorly resourced and ineffective. Arms continue to flow into the country, raising questions of whether there is a lack of commitment or a lack of capacity to tackle the problem. In the Niger Delta, the government has adopted a 'carrot-and-stick' approach to managing the violence there. This approach has not yet yielded positive progress in terms of violence reduction. Instead, many on the ground claim that the militaristic nature of the approach has exacerbated tensions and led to an increase in small arms proliferation and a hardening of the positions of armed groups. The government has yet to engage fully in a broader security sector reform initiative. Reform attempts over the past eight years have progressed in fits and starts, and remain limited in their impact. The newly elected president has stated that security is a priority. It remains to be seen what initiatives will be implemented, and whether these will have an impact on addressing insecurity in the country.

Politics as a hindrance

One of the important impediments to managing small arms proliferation and armed violence is the tendency of politicians to utilize this violence to their own ends, coupled with the financial capacity of politicians to foment violence or buy political victory. There have been numerous allegations since the

2003 elections of political leaders creating and arming groups of young men as tools of electoral intimidation. Similar allegations arose in the lead-up to the 2007 elections. Politicians have used violence to ensure political victory and, through that victory, access to government resources.

Political violence is not, however, limited to election years. High-level political officials have been accused of involvement in oil bunkering, community clashes, and ethnic and religious clashes for personal gain (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 224, citing Amaize, 2003), or accused of complicity by lacking the political will to arrest and detain officials known to be involved in these activities (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 224). The strength, level of equipment, and skills demonstrated by armed groups has increased speculation that these groups must have some form of high-level support (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 224, citing Abia, 2003), and that they could not have established themselves without help from 'high-ranking' politicians (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 27) who use them for self-interested gains. Those who should be instrumental in pushing for action to limit the use of armed groups by politicians are therefore the same politicians who benefit from their use.

One important source of funding for standing politicians to pay for armed groups is the so called 'security vote'. This is a nebulous allocation in each state and local government budget. The allocation is allegedly intended for 'the purpose of maintaining peace and security in the local government area' (HRW, 2007a, p. 32). Even though this allocation is often one of the largest single allocations in a state's budget, there is no clear definition of what qualifies as an activity that maintains peace and security (HRW, 2007a, p. 32). Furthermore, the use of the allocation remains opaque, and the state government is under no obligation to justify the amount allocated or explain how that money is spent. Observers allege that the security vote allocation is used by many politicians to hire political thugs to carry out political violence on their behalf, while publicly justifying the expense as youth empowerment (HRW, 2007a, p. 33). The security vote could also be used as a siphon for state funds, given the lack of accountability attached to the sums involved.

The security vote is not simply a budget item in state budgets, but also something that occurs in the national budget. In 2007 a security vote line item was placed in every embassy budget, as well as in the budgets for the State

House, the Ministry of Police Affairs, the Police Formations and Command, the National Boundary Commission, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission, the Ministry of Defence, Defence Headquarters, the Nigerian Navy, the Nigerian Air Force, the Defence Intelligence Agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, among others.

The amounts allocated to the security vote vary, and there appears to be no clear correlation between the amount allocated and any potential threats to the corresponding government agency. In some cases the amounts are small, less than NGN 10 million (USD 80,000). In other cases, the allocation was quite significant in terms of financing. In 2006 Rivers state had in its budget an allotment for the security vote of USD 38.5 million (HRW, 2007a, p. 77), while local government areas in the state received allocations of USD 200,000–460,000 each (HRW, 2007a, pp. 32–33). In 2007 the federal budget allocated NGN 145,500,000 (USD 1.16 million) to the State House, NGN 780,000,000 (USD 6.24 million) to the Independent National Electoral Commission, and NGN 10,874,583 (USD 87,000) to the Nigerian Embassy in Tokyo in security votes to these government institutions (Nigeria, 2007).

Limited capacity of the security forces

The problems of armed violence and small arms proliferation are further exacerbated by the inability of the police to reduce violent crime, ensure law and order, and provide security to the population at large. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the police are the main security force charged with ensuring law and order. They are assisted by the customs service, the army, the navy, and the Mobile Police Unit, who also patrol the borders and the flow of goods and people into the country. However, none of the security services currently possesses the training, resources, or personnel to do its job effectively. The lengthy and porous nature of the borders contributes to these logistical problems.

Poor police capacity has led to the development of a security gap in which communities have often been forced to create their own local security arrangements. This has involved the creation of vigilante groups, which are intended

to function as community watch patrols, and the establishment of community armouries. The use of vigilante groups is widespread. In some cases they have enhanced community security and reduced crime, while in other cases they have taken the law into their own hands and meted out punishments. While they appear to have contributed to a reduction in crime levels in some areas, they are not a substitute for an effective police force.

Community armouries appear to be a common phenomenon. These are small collections of guns, usually 100–200, that are stored by and for the community in a known central location for use in self-defence should the community be attacked. Reportedly, the weapons are stored in a central location because of concerns over illegal ownership and the potential for individuals to be arrested for possession if the weapons were kept at home by individuals.⁸⁰ This suggests that most of the weapons in the community armouries are not properly licensed and therefore illegally possessed. Weapons in the community armouries include shotguns, rifles, and Dane guns, as well as more sophisticated small arms, such as AK-47 assault rifles.⁸¹ In some cases, the control of community armouries has devolved to self-appointed local commanders, or warlords, who have used the weapons to engage in criminal activities (Davis and Von Kemedi, 2006, p. 22). While community armouries can serve a self-defence purpose, their commandeering by leaders for self-enrichment suggests that these armouries pose as much of a threat to communities as they provide a means of defence.

Legal measures to address small arms

Nigeria has been an active participant in international and regional discussions on small arms proliferation. The country has signed on to a number of international measures pertaining to small arms and light weapons (see Table 6.1). It supported the adoption in 2005 of the *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*, and has argued that this political document needs to be transformed into a legally binding instrument in order to control effectively and criminalize the illicit movement of small arms (Adekanye, 2006). Nigeria has also recommended consideration of sanctions for those found diverting arms into illegal networks, the estab-

Table 6.1 **Nigeria's participation in measures to address small arms proliferation, 1997–2006**

Year	Instrument
1997	<i>Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction</i> (entered into force in 1999)
1998	<i>Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons ('ECOWAS Moratorium')</i> (renewed in 2001)
2000	<i>Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons</i>
	<i>United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime</i> (entered into force in 2003)
2001	<i>(UN) Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ('Programme of Action')</i>
	<i>Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition</i> (entered into force in 2005)
2005	<i>International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons</i>
2006	<i>ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials ('ECOWAS Convention')</i> (has not yet entered into force)

ishment of a common international standard for regulating the activities of arms brokers, integrating small arms measures into comprehensive national development strategies, and the establishment of a common standard for end-user certification and stockpile management (Adekanye, 2006). In addition, Nigeria has supported West African regional measures aimed at reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

At the national level, Nigeria continues to rely on the national Firearms Act of 1959 as the legal instrument governing small arms possession, manufacture, and use in the country. The act has been amended and complemented by additional legislation since its introduction. On paper, the national legislation provides clear indications of what is legal and illegal, and all weapons without proper licensing are illegal. However, the legislation has been inadequately implemented and enforced. In addition, many fines imposed for breaches of the legislation are relatively minor, leading some to claim that they have no

deterrent effect (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 24). Proposals were made that the laws be revised and updated following the *UN Programme of Action* in 2001, but to date there have been no efforts to overhaul the national legislation on small arms. President Obasanjo initiated a number of committees aimed at addressing the issues of proliferation, disarmament, and related matters, but to date these committees have made little progress in tackling these issues.

In July 2000, the government established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons to respond to the growing crime in the country and the proliferation of small arms. The purpose of the committee was to determine the sourcing of illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria (PANA, 2000). In May 2001 the government established a second committee aimed at implementing the 1998 *ECOWAS Moratorium*. These two committees were later merged into a single committee after determining that redundancy in efforts made two committees superfluous.

The committee has accomplished very little in the past five years. In large part, this is the result of a lack of political will, financial support, technical expertise, and capacity. Rather than being established as an independent commission, the committee has been placed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Staffing of the committee is not permanent, but, rather, individuals with other full-time posts are asked to serve on the committee. The committee did produce an ambitious work plan in 2003, but has been unable to implement these activities. Originally conceived of as a primary documentation centre on small arms and light weapons, the committee has not yet demonstrated its capacity to act in this role.

There were renewed efforts in 2007 to revive the activities of the committee, and legislation is being written to convert the committee into a national commission. This conversion would be significant in that it would change the nature of the institution from an ad hoc measure to a permanent institution with a budget from the national government and financial and institutional autonomy (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 26). The committee is currently preparing to conduct a national survey of small arms by the end of 2007. It is seeking support from the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme⁸² to

conduct the survey and to undertake other activities in support of the implementation of the 2006 *ECOWAS Convention*. The survey is expected to provide a baseline for devising policy, determining future activities, and assessing any programmes implemented.

In March 2007 Obasanjo established a committee to assess the problem of vandalizing oil pipelines and recommend measures to reduce effectively the occurrence. The committee has a large task, which includes assessing the frequency and causes of sabotaged pipelines, identifying those areas most prone to sabotage and those involved in the damage, and recommending measures for reducing sabotage (*Nigeria First*, 2007). With 600-plus oil fields, over 5,000 oil wells, and over 7,000 kilometres of pipelines in the Delta region (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 5), the task is enormous, and the committee was given only one month to complete it. To date, this report has never been released to the public, and it is unknown whether it was submitted before the deadline.

Disarmament efforts in the Niger Delta

The Nigerian government has attempted a number of disarmament exercises in the country over the past several decades. Many of these have taken place in the Delta region, but their implementation was never fully documented. To date there are no reliable figures on the numbers of weapons collected during any of the disarmament programmes, nor accurate data on the amounts paid for weapons submitted to the process. Many claim that the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria began following the end of the Biafran civil war, due to the lack of an effective disarmament programme at the time (Obasi, 2002, p. 69). This trend has continued, most recently in 2004 in Delta state. The impacts of these unsuccessful disarmament programmes continue to be felt through the prevalence of armed robbery across the country and the growing role of armed groups.

Between 1997 and 1999 the Delta state government initiated a disarmament programme calling on warring ethnic factions from the Ijaw, Urhobo, and Itsekiri ethnic groups to hand in their weapons. The call went unheeded (Lewis and Davis, 2006, p. 64). Shortly thereafter, the governor of Warri offered

cash, short-term training, and employment to militant youths who gave up their weapons. This call was met with scepticism, and ultimately little success (Lewis and Davis, 2006, p. 64). These initiatives failed to reduce significantly the number of arms in circulation.

In July 2004 the governor of Rivers state initiated a disarmament programme. The programme provided financial benefits and amnesty to those who turned in their weapons (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 5). Although some weapons were handed in, the programme failed to deliver a sustainable peace.⁸³ Renewed fighting between the NDPVF and NDVS, as well as a declaration of all out war by Asari, led to the intervention by the federal government. In September 2004 President Obasanjo invited the leaders of the NDPVF and NDVS, Asari and Tom, to meet with him in Abuja. This initiative for peace negotiations to end the rising violence in Rivers state in the Delta was successful, and a peace agreement was signed on 1 October 2004.⁸⁴ This agreement, which provided payments for weapons turned in to authorities, a general amnesty, and promises of employment, paved the way for another disarmament programme to take place.

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme was established, but it failed to live up to the expectations of the militants. The government had promised 4,000 jobs (HRW, 2005a, p. 21). Although training was provided through the reintegration phase for nearly 2,000 youths, the inability of those youths to obtain jobs following the training programme resulted in growing disenchantment with the process (Bekoe, 2005). Although the disarmament programme collected nearly 3,000 weapons (Bekoe, 2005),⁸⁵ observers claim that this was only a small fraction of what was circulating in the Delta (NDPEHRD, 2004, p. 7), that the weapons turned in were old or unserviceable (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 7), and that the process actually encouraged the purchase of additional weapons in order to benefit from the high prices being paid for weapons submitted to the disarmament process.⁸⁶ An inventory of weapons destroyed in early November 2004 supports the claim that the weapons were old. Of the 848 recorded weapons, more than one-third of them were AK-47 assault rifles from the late 1960s.⁸⁷

The disarmament process failed to secure a sustainable peace. Disputes over levels of disarmament and cash payments received for submitted weapons

increased tensions within and between groups. Disagreements over payments and accusations of leaders keeping the money for themselves led to a split within the NDPVF,⁸⁸ while smaller groups threatened the government with violence unless they were paid (NDPEHRD, 2005, pp. 7–8). By early November 2004 armed groups had broken the ceasefire in a series of clashes and attacks.⁸⁹ The peace process continued despite these attacks, but leaders of the groups remained suspicious of the process (Asuni, 2006, p. 82). The Rivers governor held a meeting of all factions on 19 November, at the end of which another peace agreement was signed, which set the stage for a Peace Ambassadors Camp to be held in January 2005, with more than 700 representatives from armed factions and youth groups attending (Asuni, 2006, pp. 82–83). The camp took place, but failed to resolve the remaining contentious issues.

The 2004 disarmament process not only failed to disarm the factions, but also reduced confidence in the government, thereby making future disarmament measures more difficult. The key element preventing real progress on the 2004 disarmament process was the lack of attention to reintegration efforts and opportunities for former militants to earn gainful employment. Although over 4,000 jobs were promised, the posts that materialized were temporary, low paying, and oddly located in areas not directly affected by the conflict (Asuni, 2006, p. 83). As a result, the militants felt short-changed by the process. The failure of this disarmament process left armed groups distrustful of the government and its motives, and apprehensive about any future disarmament initiatives. This shadow continues to hang over ongoing government efforts to resolve the crisis in the Delta.

A split strategy of ‘carrot and stick’ in the Niger Delta

The government strategy pursued in the Niger Delta has been a mixture of incentives for reducing militancy and punishments for failing to do so. This carrot-and-stick strategy has so far failed to bear any fruit. The ‘carrots’ offered have come in the form of a number of development initiatives in the Delta region. These initiatives, although numerous, have failed to produce any significant changes in the economic situation. The ‘sticks’ have come in the form of heavy-handed military tactics against militants and communities accused

of aiding or harbouring militants. These too have failed. Militancy appears to be on the rise, and the more heavy-handed the government tactics, the more committed the militants are to their causes.

The ‘carrot’: development programmes

Obasanjo initiated a series of economic programmes aimed at improving development in the Niger Delta region. While these programmes have contributed at the margins to addressing the economic concerns of the population, none of them has led to sustainable development or easily recognizable change in the economic situation in the Delta. Instead, there has been a series of development initiatives, projects, and commissions that have failed to alter significantly the control of resources, levels of corruption, or lack of development. Each new initiative is judged by an increasingly suspicious and doubtful population.

In December 2000 Obasanjo established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The purpose of this commission is to address the economic problems in the region through development initiatives. According to the NDDC, it has initiated over 2,000 development projects and 300 electrification projects (ICG, 2006c, p. 7). Yet residents dispute the effectiveness of the commission, saying they have not seen any real evidence of development, and do not believe that the government is sincere in delivering on its promises (Onyeka-Ben, 2006). Progress has been slow. The government finally launched the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan in late March 2007. The plan provides USD 50 billion over a 15-year period for development efforts (*Vanguard*, 2007b). The plan aims to target poverty and community needs; develop a strong economy, physical infrastructure, and human capacity; and provide care for the natural environment (Odili and Agande, 2007). Already, concerns have been raised about implementing the plan. Its acting managing director pointed to problems of finance, cooperation, governance, and security as potential obstacles to implementation (*Vanguard*, 2007b). As one newspaper editorial pointed out, Nigeria does not have a strong record of implementing master plans (*Vanguard*, 2007b).

The government created the Niger Delta Peace and Security Strategy in 2005. This strategy brings together the major stakeholders in the region to address issues of conflict and sustainable development. This includes efforts to address

oil theft, corporate responsibility, reconciliation, illicit arms, money laundering, good governance, implementing an early warning system, and developing a disarmament strategy (Bekoe, 2005). The Peace and Security Blue Print, developed as part of the strategy, will identify key issues, recommend conflict management measures, consider a regional disarmament and demobilization strategy, and suggest conflict-reduction programmes (PASS, 2006, p. 4). The Niger Delta Peace and Security Working Group has led this process in order to coordinate various activities and set a timeline for delivering on them. The Peace and Security Blue Print is intended to complement the economic strategy embodied in the Niger Delta Master Plan (Bekoe, 2005).

In April 2006 Obasanjo created the Consolidated Council on Social and Economic Development of Coastal States of the Niger Delta. It was to be a response to the growing violence in the region and a 'Marshall Plan' for development (ICG, 2006c, p. 8). The council has achieved very little, in large part as a result of its poor origins. The 50-member council draws its membership largely from the same government leaders seen by communities as a source of the problem, it failed to bring in civil society, and it offered jobs in the security forces that have imposed hardship on these communities (ICG, 2006c, p. 8). This series of economic initiatives has failed to contribute substantially to the development of the region, has involved large sums of money, and as such has led to complaints about corruption.

The newly elected president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, has promised to implement the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, and the government hopes to begin with the process in 2008.

The 'stick': a strategy of militarization

Given the role of the military in governance over the past four decades, the military has often been used as the internal mechanism to control armed violence and political dissension in the country. As such, the national security services have acquired a 'reputation for brutality and impunity' in Nigeria (Peel, 2005, p. 5). Many regard the army and the police as occupying forces, rather than protectors, because they use violence to subdue challenges to government authority, but do not provide security for the broader population. In the Delta, there is a widespread feeling of being under siege because of the

constant presence of the military in the area. This feeling of occupation and the resultant siege mentality are exacerbated by the violence used by the police and military to clear towns of armed militias and alleged supporters of armed groups (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 29; Servant, 2006).

There have been several examples of the military using excessive force and killing numerous civilians in response to militant violence. These include incidents in 1999 in Odi (HRW, 1999), in 2001 in Benue state (HRW, 2002), in 2003 in Ogbakiri, and in 2006 in Aker Base (HRW, 2006; O'Neill, 2007). There also has been a reported crackdown on militias, piracy, oil bunkering, and illegal arms since June 2004, involving massive military operations (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 223, citing Omonobi, 2004). These military actions resulted in widespread destruction and the loss of civilian lives. They also increased popular support for some armed groups among the affected communities.

Initial military efforts to address the growing insecurity in the Delta and other parts of the south largely failed to have any positive effect in reducing armed violence. The vigilante group the Bakassi Boys stopped troops from entering Onitsha in July 2000 (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 29). Street fighting in Lagos between the OPC and the police resulted in 200 men lost by government forces (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 30). This suggested that the police and military have been largely unable to address the rising violence. In late 2004 some evidence of a decline in losses of oil from bunkering and pipeline vandalization suggested that the military approach might be working (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 223, citing Ozoemena, 2003). Given the difficulty in measuring levels of bunkering, the task of assessing any reduction in bunkering would be equally difficult, and many believe that the practice remains widespread.

Even if military action has succeeded in reducing bunkering, the overall result of the military strategy may have produced the opposite outcome to the one desired. Many believe that the militarization of the Delta has simply exacerbated the problem; that each time the military responds with extreme measures, the number of people involved in the violent struggle increases (O'Neill, 2007).⁹⁰ A Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas, created in 2001, supported this position, arguing that the problem in the Delta is a political one, requiring a political solution (ICG, 2006c, p. 7). Perhaps the military is realizing this, as it has publicly stated that the solution to the situation

in the Delta must be a political one, and that there is no military solution to the problem (ICG, 2006c, p. 10; BBC, 2007b).

Despite evidence to the contrary, Obasanjo continued to pursue a military strategy to end the violence in the Delta. In August 2006 he instructed the military to meet force with force (SDN, 2006b, p. 2). This statement focused on the military's handling of the problems in the Delta and came in response to a marked increase in kidnappings. Hostage takings were followed by military attacks on villages (Chatham House, 2006). In October 2006 the military arrested more than 160 suspected militants and burned settlements to the ground, accusing them of harbouring militants (Tayo, 2007, p. 8). Obasanjo further escalated his rhetoric against militants, without any greater success, in response to another rise in kidnappings in early 2007 and a statement by MEND that it had been treating the government with kid gloves and that it was clear that a military solution was not an option (Odili, 2007).

The militants have demonstrated a number of times that they hold the upper hand in the Delta region. This is not because they possess overwhelming military power, but because the military has proven unwilling to unleash a full-scale war in the Delta. The balance of power between the militants and the military remains unclear, and it still appears to favour the military, should they be willing to engage in a full-scale battle. The reality is they are not. While the military does not sit by idly and allow the militants complete freedom of movement and action, neither does it actively seek out militant groups in a consistent fashion. A heavy military response usually comes when the military is under direct attack, or when there has been a perceived egregious amount of kidnapping and violence by an armed group. This results in a heavy engagement by the military, but one that is limited in scope and duration.

The role of the United States

There has been much discussion of the role of the US military in Nigeria. There have been numerous reports in the media about US activities: the United States providing military training to Nigerian troops in and around the Delta port of Calabar in 2004 (Peel, 2005, p. 6); the United States patrolling the waters off the coast of the oil fields as assistance to Nigeria (Watts, 2007); Shell and other oil companies approaching the US military to provide protection for oil

facilities in the Delta (Watts, 2007), a request that was denied; and the government requesting the presence of the US Marines in the Delta to counter the threats of militants to the oil production, which was also denied (Hanson, 2007). While the specifics of US support remain unclear, the fact that the United States is supporting Nigeria is certain.

US support to Nigeria appears to be targeted at helping the Nigerian armed forces tackle the problems themselves. A US defence official stated in March 2007 that the United States 'is partnering with Nigeria to counter growing violence in its oil-rich delta region that is threatening an ally' (Fisher-Thompson, 2007). The deputy assistant secretary of defence for African affairs, Theresa Whelan, pointed to a number of joint training and equipment programmes that were 'aimed at helping Nigeria's military counter the growing violence against oil facilities and their workers', as well as a regional maritime awareness capabilities programme aimed at improving the Nigerian navy's understanding of the situation in the Delta and enhancing its capacity to tackle illegal bunkering, and a small arms and light weapons identification programme to assist the military with identifying and tracking illicit small arms (Fisher-Thompson, 2007). In addition, the United States has increased its military presence in the Gulf of Guinea, increasing its naval patrols from nearly zero activity in 2004 'to nearly continuous visits by US Navy vessels in 2006' (Crawley, 2006).

Another platform for trying to address insecurity and volatility in the Niger Delta is the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy, which was initiated in 2005 between the United States and Nigeria. The United Kingdom quickly followed in joining the strategy. The group holds quarterly meetings to discuss the oil security situation. Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, and Switzerland participated in the meeting in August 2006 as observers, and were expected to join the group after the meeting. The aim of the strategy is to promote security of oil production and reserves, while contributing to sustainable development in the Delta region. There are four special committees as part of the strategy to coordinate action in specific areas: trafficking in small arms, maritime and coastal security, community development and poverty reduction, and money laundering and financial crime (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 19). There has been slow progress in terms of turning these discussions into substantive reforms and initiatives.

Security sector reform: the police force

Security sector reform remains a difficult task in Nigeria. Although President Obasanjo endeavoured to implement a programme for the reform of the security forces after his election in 1999, he proved unable to get past the traditions of the military. One of Obasanjo's major concerns upon his election, an election that removed the military from political power and sent it back to the barracks, was how to ensure that the military remained under democratic control. To this end, he engaged the assistance of Military Professional Resources Incorporated, a US security training firm. This initiative was short-lived. Military leaders, unhappy at the lack of consultation on the decision to hire an external firm, rejected the reform process (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, pp. 3–4). Since this time, there has been no effort to put in place a comprehensive and coherent security sector reform programme. One agency that has received significant attention has been the police. While there has been some progress in reforms, these have come slowly, and there remains significant resistance to a broader reform programme.

An important element of addressing insecurity and violence in Nigeria is the strengthening of the national police force to enforce the rule of law and to prevent and respond to violence. Police reform has been a slow process in Nigeria. In part, this is the result of the size of the problem and the need for widespread reform. Decades of military rule had produced a militarized police force well known for its authoritarian practices, its political affiliations, and its poor relations with the community (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 127). Reform is also difficult due to the reluctance within the police force to implement far-reaching reforms, which often threaten access to resources. Some reforms have, however, been undertaken. The government held a recruitment drive in 2000–04 to raise force numbers. The Presidential Committee on Police Reform developed a set of recommendations in 2006 that have been partially accepted by the government. The United Kingdom has contributed through a community policing programme aimed at improving police capacity and community relations. Yet the police still suffer from a lack of training, equipment, and incentive to tackle violent crime.

Although several successive Nigerian administrations, both civilian and military, have proclaimed a need for and commitment to reform, very little was

done to reform or restructure the police (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 102). When President Obasanjo came to power in the transition to democratic rule, he declared his government's intention to reform the police, recruit more officers, and increase salaries (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 102). The police launched a recruitment drive in 2000, with a target of 40,000 new recruits per year. The drive was ended in 2004, with a police force nearing 330,000 in strength. While a large force in numbers, it has proven ineffective in tackling crime and armed violence. The overall average meets the United Nations recommended ratio of one police officer to 400 citizens, but with wide-ranging discrepancies among Nigeria's states. In many states, the average ratio far exceeds this, with one police officer to 600 or even 900 civilians. But more important than mere numbers is the quality of those on the force and their capacity to enforce the rule of law. Although bringing in large numbers of recruits, the programme has been accused of hiring the wrong people in a rush to fill quotas. The police themselves admit that the recruitment process was flawed, enabling the entry of a number of people who were not qualified for their posts.⁹¹ There are allegations that insufficient screening of the new recruits led to the inclusion of criminals, as well as a rise in illegal activities by newly recruited officers, such as the rental or sale of arms to civilians and the extortion of civilians (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5). In 2007 the police have engaged in a restructuring process whereby nearly 11,000 officers have been decommissioned. The majority of these were recruited during the 2000–04 period.

In addition to problems with the quality of those recruited, the police also face a number of obstacles. There are challenges in training the massive influx of recruits produced by the recruitment programmes. These high numbers stretched the capacity of training facilities and resulted in the sub-standard training of the new recruits (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5; Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). The police lack sufficient equipment, including communications equipment, vehicles, and small arms. By contrast, the military has been better equipped, staffed, and paid, producing tensions between the two national forces (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 99). Salaries are a concern for the police, being both low and often late. A new recruit into the police force earns roughly USD 422 per year, an inspector just over USD 1,000 per year, and the

inspector general of the force USD 9,300 per year (Small Arms Survey, 2007a). Poor salaries, poor training, and poor conditions of service contribute to low morale, inefficiency, and incentives for corruption.

Since 1999 police reform has proceeded at best on an ad hoc basis. There has been no overarching framework for reform (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5; Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). A common response of the police to tackling crime is to increase the number of police officers and ensure that they have more firepower than the criminals (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). But Chukwuma (2000, p. 130) argues that more men and more guns are not a replacement for more effective police performance, and that there is no serious effort to transform the police into a democratic police force responsive to the community and effective in tackling crime.

Police reform must be considered within a broader reform of the security sector, including democratic control and adherence to human rights standards. Simply expanding the numbers within the force and providing officers with more arms will not provide better security. In fact, it might produce the opposite effect. Police reform and effective policing must also be seen as part of a broader reform of government and further expansion of democratic principles within governance practices. Security forces have long been viewed as the brutal arm of government. Changing this perception will require improving the capacity of the police to provide security to the population at large and ensuring that the police cannot be used as enforcers of partisan and personalized politics.

The Presidential Committee on Police Reform was established in January 2006. The committee was given a three-month mandate to review the structure, administration, morale, operations, training, and community relations of the force. The committee submitted its report on 25 May 2006, with a number of recommendations for reform. The government responded with a white paper, which has not yet been publicly released. A comparison of the committee's report and the white paper reveals that the government accepted a number of recommendations pertaining to funding, operations, and recruitment, but rejected a number of others aimed at reducing the politicization of the police and improving the independence and professionalism of the force (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 6).

One initiative that appears to be making some headway is a community policing programme. This programme is part of the larger GBP 30 million (USD 62,535,300 million⁹²) DFID Security, Justice and Growth Programme aimed at supporting reform of the security and justice sectors. The activities of this programme include alternative commercial dispute resolution and women's rights under sharia, as well as the community policing initiative. The impetus behind the community policing programme is to improve community relations, service delivery, and violence prevention and reduction through formal and informal policing and partnerships with communities. The programme was initially launched in Enugu state in 2004. It was expanded to a total of 6 states in 2005, and now it is likely to extend to a total of 18 of the 36 states. The idea is to begin to change the approach to policing and attitudes towards policing. The focus is on changing attitudes and behaviours at the state level as a first step in a more comprehensive national reform programme.

There is evidence to suggest that the community policing programme is making progress in improving police–community relations. A survey conducted by DFID in 2007 reveals that the overall experience of police corruption is down and reports of excessive use of force have declined, and that a number of respondents attribute this to the introduction of the community policing programme. The police also received high scores for performance, and 87 per cent of respondents reported a reduced fear of crime since community policing was introduced (DFID, 2007).⁹³

The inability of the police to enforce the rule of law has resulted in the creation of a number of community defence groups. Other factors contributing to their rise include the role of politicians in supporting these groups, the lack of democratic institutions to settle disputes through non-violent means, and the lack of public confidence in the state to contain violence and protect groups within the population (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 27). These groups, often referred to as vigilante groups in local parlance, provide services akin to community watch programmes. In theory, these groups are supposed to conduct patrols as a deterrent to crime, and to hand over any suspects to the police. But in practice, some groups have taken the law into their own hands, meting out punishments, arresting individuals, and acting as their own police force. The result has been the outright banning of some vigilante groups and a population

that has grown fearful of those community groups they once supported.⁹⁴ In a 2005 national survey, 56 per cent of respondents claimed to have a vigilante group in their community (DFID, 2007). In a 2007 survey, the percentages ranged from 38 per cent to 82 per cent, depending on the state in which the respondent lived (DFID, 2007). Clearly, vigilantes remain a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. However, this appears to be the result of a lack of options, not a preference for a non-state force. While most respondents to the police survey claimed that they were satisfied with the performance of vigilante groups in their communities, the vast majority preferred to report crimes to the police (DFID, 2007; see below). This suggests that there is popular support for the police to perform their security role, provided they are capable of doing so.

Although the police are often poorly referenced by the national population (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 131), public perceptions of the police are more complex than viewing them as simply good or bad. In the 2007 study conducted by DFID, when given a choice between reporting a crime to the local vigilante group and the police, the response across six states was clearly in favour of reporting to the police, ranging from 54 per cent to 85 per cent (DFID, 2007). In a similar survey in 2005, the national response to the same question was 72 per cent in favour of reporting to the police rather than the vigilante groups (DFID, 2007). Nevertheless, members of the public remain cautious. While they remain supportive of the police as an institution for security, concerns persist about police brutality,⁹⁵ police torture,⁹⁶ bribes, and the ineffectiveness of the police in responding to violent events, indicating that there is still a long way to go in terms of bolstering community confidence and trust in the police force. 📄

VII. Conclusion

President Yar'Adua faces significant challenges in office. Although a large segment of the population contested the election results and widespread fraud that brought him to power, it appears the country, including the militants in the Delta, is willing to give him a chance to demonstrate his commitment to development and a break from the past. The duration of this honeymoon will depend on what progress is made and how quickly change is achieved. Less than two months after his inauguration, Nigerians were already showing frustration at the new president's slow pace, which many say is further hindering government action (Murray, 2007).

Even before Yar'Adua's inauguration, the militants made it clear that they remained willing to push forward their demands, conducting a number of hostage takings in the month between the election and the presidential inauguration. Although the vice president is making some progress on negotiations with militants, and another ceasefire has been declared by armed groups, the negotiation process is likely to be a long one, fraught with stops and starts.

Nigeria remains divided along numerous lines: ethnicity, religion, settler/indigene status, and political affiliation. The national elections held in 2007 did little to resolve these tensions. The fraudulent manner in which the elections took place only exacerbated popular discontent with the ruling party, the PDP. Although it appears that the population is willing to give the new president a chance to present his agenda and begin his work, it is unlikely that this honeymoon period will persist if Yar'Adua does not demonstrate a commitment to changing the status quo. The prospects for civil war appear slim, but the likelihood for the continuation of the use of armed violence remains high.

Two key concerns of the population are development and security. The lack of development in the country coupled with few visible signs of economic improvement have contributed to rising discontent. Although the government has benefited from high oil prices, these benefits have not been widely dis-

persed. The redistribution of benefits remains a rallying call for the armed groups active in the Niger Delta. Addressing the problem of armed violence in this region will require tackling the thorny issue of resource distribution.

Armed violence remains a common problem in Nigeria. In much of the country, such violence takes the form mainly of armed robbery. But this is not the only security concern. There is heightened insecurity in the Niger Delta specifically due to the operation of numerous armed groups, and clashes continue between various community groups over resources. These tensions and violence are not election-related. As such, they will persist until the underlying problems of access to and distribution of resources are more equitably dealt with.

Nigeria also faces a problem of combating small arms proliferation and use. This problem results from a combination of large numbers of arms in circulation and a number of incentives for individuals and groups to resort to violence. This situation is compounded by the inadequacy of the security forces and the inability of the government to track the licensing, possession, and use of small arms.

Widespread feelings of insecurity result from the failure of the police to maintain law and order. This feeds the desire for self-defence measures, such as the procurement of small arms and the creation of vigilante groups. This in turn contributes to the cycle of violence and ongoing threats to safety.

A key element of addressing insecurity and armed violence is comprehensive security sector reform. The government has yet to engage in a comprehensive reform programme, and will need to bring on board key leaders in the military and police in order to implement any strategic reform programme. 📌

Annexes: Profiles of armed groups in the Niger Delta

Annexe 1: The Bush Boys

Overview

The group known as the Bush Boys exists to protect Okrika community in Rivers state from incursions by its Eleme neighbours, and fights to gain territory disputed by these two communities. This inter-communal conflict is stoked by the presence of oil refineries in the area. Lucrative rights to the territory around these communities provide considerable fuel for armed violence and have led to widespread small arms proliferation as the two communities continue to clash over ownership of this land.

Background

The Bush Boys are a vigilante community defence group composed exclusively of Ijaws. The Bush Boys' ideology is based in Ijaw ethnic nationalism and irredentism. The group's narrow and focused mandate is to protect Okrika and its population. Its activities remain focused on the ongoing war between its native Okrika and neighbouring Eleme communities.⁹⁷ The group's members do not tend to engage in alternative criminal or anti-government activities.

The Bush Boys emerged in 1999 as the communities of Okrika and Eleme mobilized and armed their youths to prosecute a war between the communities. Dispute over the land on which the Port Harcourt Refinery Company was situated prompted the chiefs of Okrika to task each family with nominating two able-bodied men for the defence of the community (Kalio, 2006). The resulting force was then known as the Bush Boys. The conflict's escalation meant increased demand for small arms and light weapons.

The Bush Boys have also faced conflicts with neighbouring groups. Upon return from initial prosecution of the Eleme conflict, the group accused those members who had been charged with maintaining security and order on the Okrika home front of numerous crimes against the community. Among those

accused was Ateke Tom, the leader of the Icelander cult group. This confrontation drove Tom to seek exile in Port Harcourt in late 2000. The situation then degenerated into intra-communal warfare. The IYC, then led by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari of the NDPVF, attempted to intervene in the crisis between Tom and the Bush Boys. At this time, Tom and Asari were still enjoying amicable relations. The dispute led to further polarization between supporters of rival claimants to the Okrika throne. Many viewed Tom's Icelander as attacking the Bush Boys and its members' families. This prompted Asari to side with the Bush Boys against Tom (DonPedro, 2006, p. 91). This would contribute to later tensions and divisions between Asari and Tom.

The acknowledged leader of the Bush Boys is Sunny Opuembe. Within the Bush Boys, he is known as the general commanding officer. Prior to his ascendancy to the leadership role, Opuembe was a popular youth leader in Okrika.

Continuing discord over ownership of oil-bearing land around Okrika and Eleme means that the group remains active. While group numbers have remained relatively steady, despite a selective system of recruitment, recent attacks by Icelander have weakened the group.

Support

The Ijaw community of Okrika provides a solid base for the Bush Boys. The group is well supported by the 200,000-plus population of Okrika because of its community-protection orientation (Alagoa and Derefaka, 2002). The group is politically independent. However, there are allegations that it has provided support to former Rivers state governor Ada George, and to Chief Sergeant Awuse, the Rivers state 2007 gubernatorial candidate.⁹⁸

Local recruitment remains the key to membership and local support. At the time of the group's formation, two men from each family were recruited to become members of the Bush Boys. Since this time, recruitment has been aimed at men considered to be courageous. During times of conflict, recruitment is less discriminating and the group draws from the Okrika male population more widely.⁹⁹ As of 2004 the group claimed to have some 3,000 combatants; however, internal crises and violent conflict with Icelander have reduced numbers, with some Bush Boys members deciding to leave to join other armed groups.¹⁰⁰

Financial support also comes from local leaders. Initial funding and subsequent large donations of revenue have come from powerful and wealthy members of the Okrika community.¹⁰¹ Okrika politicians and chiefs, including former governor Ada George, have also provided funding (Joab-Peterside, 2006).

Activities

Initially based in Okrika town, the Bush Boys were driven out by Icelander in 2001. Since late 2001 the group has been camped in Amadi-Ama, outside the town; however its members regularly move in and out of Okrika proper.¹⁰²

Temporary population displacement occurs whenever clashes occur within Okrika; however, residents are generally able to return soon after tensions have dissipated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more permanent displacement does occur as a result of armed clashes; however, this goes unrecorded officially and is difficult to confirm.¹⁰³

The Bush Boys regularly collaborate with the NDPVF. This partnership originated in 2000 during Asari's tenure as president of the IYC (DonPedro, 2006, p. 91). Asari was eager to consolidate his affiliation with the Bush Boys after his move to the NDPVF in 2004 as a way of solidifying a partnership with this Okrika-based group that could share the NDPVF's more revolutionary stance. Collaboration between the two was seen most clearly in 2004 when the NDPVF launched an offensive to 'liberate' Okrika from Icelander. During this conflict, the Bush Boys provided technical and logistical support to the NDPVF fighters, who eventually succeeded in their campaign.¹⁰⁴ Asari's partnership with the Bush Boys also resulted in the NDPVF providing weapons to the Bush Boys.¹⁰⁵ The Bush Boys also collaborate with Greenlander, a break-away group of Icelander.

Because the Bush Boys do not maintain a mandate to pursue grievances against government and petroleum companies, dialogue with local and national government to resolve the inter-communal crisis is possible. A key element of resolving the crisis is better defined and accepted divisions of land and resources between Okrika and Eleme. However, there is the potential for the Bush Boys to be drawn into the broader fighting in the Delta and to be used by politicians for political gain. Important factors in this include the Bush Boys'

relationship with ethnic militias such as the NDPVF and MEND, their relationship with some local politicians, and their organizational and numerical strength.

Small arms and light weapons

The main source of small arms has been purchases from illegal arms dealers. Funds for such purchases are derived from the support of community, politicians, and chiefs.

Annexe 2: Deebam

Overview

Deebam is the street wing of the Eternal Fraternal Order of the Legion Consortium, known more commonly as the Klansmen Konfraternity (KK) (Ndubuaku, 2001). The group is a violent and secretive cult comprising mainly unemployed youth. It has no political agenda. Instead, it simply strives to expand and consolidate its territorial control. Deebam, which translates to 'be strong' in KK vernacular (CEHRD, 2006, p. 6), views Deewell, another cult, as its primary and direct rival. While many of its activities are directed against Deewell, the group will strike at any person or group that is perceived to have offended it or encroached on its territory.

Background

Deebam has several affiliated cult cells scattered across much of southern Nigeria. The cult is most deeply rooted in the Niger Delta region. Deebam does not directly oppose the state; however, the cult group has engaged in clashes with state security forces as a result of its violent running rivalry with Deewell. Most of Deebam's involvement in violence revolves around clashes with Deewell and clashes with state security forces attempting to crack down on the group's activities.

Deebam lives by a creed of *debt na debt*, meaning that if a person offends one member of the group, that person offends the entire group, and as a result that person and his/her group must be punished.¹⁰⁶ Deebam also claims to be fighting injustice and oppression, particularly when this involves any other member of the group.

The group is currently active and has been responsible for regular outbreaks of violence in Port Harcourt, both during and after the 2007 election period. Its tendency to strike at the slightest provocation adds to the group's reputation as an actively violent gang. Despite retaliatory attacks from the police and military, as well as clashes with Deewell, Deebam continues to witness a growth in membership (CEHRD, 2006).

As the street wing of the KK, Deebam was founded to widen the group's struggle for territorial control. The KK draws its membership from university

students, while Deebam draws its membership from non-student community youth.

The KK was founded in 1983 at the University of Calabar in Cross River state. Deebam was subsequently created in Rivers state in 1991 by Onengiye Ofori Terika (also known as Occasion Boy). Terika had established Deebam in his Buguma village community in Degema local government area (LGA) as part of the struggle for space and compensation owed to the community by Shell and other oil companies in the area. After enrolment in a graduate programme at the University of Port Harcourt, Terika spent a decade building and strengthening Deebam until his murder by Ateke Tom's Icelander/NDVS in October 2003.¹⁰⁷ Terika's death, however, did little to curtail the growth of the organization.

Former head of the Tombia Youth Council Prince Glad Igodo became the leader of Deebam in late 2004.¹⁰⁸ In February 2007 posters of Igodo flooded major areas of Rivers state controlled by Deebam, such as Gambia, Diobu, and Port Harcourt, announcing his gubernatorial intentions. Although a member of the PDP ruling party, he lacked strong party support in his bid for state governor in the 2007 elections.

Igodo had been in hiding to avoid capture by security forces as a result of a warrant for his arrest, along with 13 other Deebam members, for drug trafficking, gun running, and several incidents of kidnapping of expatriate oil workers.¹⁰⁹ Igodo was killed in June 2007. Deebam leadership has a history of violent ends: Igodo's predecessor, Ichechi Owaka (also known as Angel), who had been instrumental in forging an alliance with the NDPVF, was killed during a raid on a joint Deebam-NDPVF training camp in Ogbakiri.

Support

Deebam draws its membership from the large pool of unemployed youths, school dropouts, and criminal elements of rural communities and urban slums. The group claims that all those who join do so entirely of their own accord.¹¹⁰ One element of recruitment is peer pressure. While there are no specific cases of children being involved in Deebam operations, anecdotal evidence points to boys as young as 14 being recruited into Deebam as combatants.

The group derives funding from a wide range of sources. Deebam has hired out the services of its members as mercenaries. Given its lack of a political ideology, the group has proven indiscriminate in its missions, fighting for anyone with sufficient funding. The group levies membership dues of differing levels, depending on geographic area. These dues provide a significant portion of the group's funds. Many members are involved in organized crime, including drug trafficking, the weapons trade, hostage taking, and armed robbery (Okpongata, 2007). In the past, the NDPVF has provided significant support to Deebam, including both cash and arms.¹¹¹ Politicians have also allegedly provided funding to the group in order to secure political victories and to provide support against the rival Deewell cult (CEHRD, 2006). Such benefactors have reportedly included Sir Celestine Omehia, aide to former governor Peter Odili (Eugene, 2007); the Rivers state commissioner of finance, Kenneth Kobani; and Chief Fred Barivale Kpakol, chairman of Gokana LGA.

Activities

Deebam operates mainly in Rivers state, though it has significant presence elsewhere in the Delta. The group has active cells through much of the south-western parts of Port Harcourt, including Gambia, Mile 1, Mile 2, and Emenike. Ogbakiri has been the group's headquarters since 2002, when Ichechi Owaka (Angel) brought the group to this community.¹¹² Many Ogoni villages and towns are destinations for Deebam followers since a concerted effort to expand the group's presence in Ogoni areas (CEHRD, 2006).

The group's former leader, Prince Glad Igodo, had claimed that Deebam had a membership larger than any of the other prominent cult group active in the Delta, including Deewell, Greenlander, the Outlaws, and Icelander.¹¹³ Deebam operates in disparate units, each one of varying size and strength. It claims to have some 3,000 members in Tombia, Degema LGA;¹¹⁴ 2,500 in Bukuma, Degema LGA,¹¹⁵ and 6,000 in Port Harcourt.¹¹⁶ Currently, there are no verified figures for the group's actual strength.

Deebam's simple mandate is to undertake reprisal attacks on rival groups and to gain territory or protect its existing areas of operation. The group does not deploy any specific tactics in its attacks, except to use large numbers when launching an attack.¹¹⁷ Training of Deebam combatants takes place in

isolated areas, such as sacred forests or abandoned villages. Deebam combatants are known for their determination and bravery during conflict. However, in the event that their leader is killed in battle, they are known to fall into disarray and to retreat immediately, taking some time to reorganize for conflict.¹¹⁸

In 2004, former leader Owaka forged a solid relationship with the NDPVF. This relationship provided a source of cash and arms for Deebam. Under Igodo's leadership, this relationship was being reviewed, as the NDPVF had not approved of the aimless nature of the cult group's activities. Deebam also collaborates with the Gberesaakoo Boys, the Black Brazier (a women's cult group), and the Mafia. Deebam's size means that partnership with other armed groups is not necessary for it to achieve its objectives.¹¹⁹

Former Deebam leader Igodo had warned that should security operatives provoke the group, it would make the Niger Delta region ungovernable.¹²⁰ This belligerent stance provides little hope for negotiations in the foreseeable future. The group is entirely opposed to negotiations with its sworn enemies, Icelander and Deewell. There seems to be little prospect for the disbanding or pacification of Deebam, which continues to wage street battles against its primary enemy, Deewell.

Small arms and light weapons

Deebam uses funding from a wide range of sources, including funds derived from ransom payments for abducted foreign oil workers, illegal oil bunkering, drug trafficking, bank robberies, and other organized crime, in order to purchase small arms and light weapons from arms dealers (AAPW and Our Niger Delta, 2006).

Annexe 3: Deewell

Overview

Deewell is a cult group that engages in armed violence and organized crime. The SVC formed Deewell in the late 1990s in response to the formation of Deebam by the rival KK. Deewell fights to protect the interests of its members, achieving this aim through the perpetration of violence and gangsterism.

Background

In 1999 the SVC decided to shift the violent battle for territorial control from university campuses to the streets, slums, and creeks of the Delta.¹²¹ The SVC believes that because it was founded in Rivers state, no other group should be able to operate there.¹²² After an unsuccessful attempt to create the Junior Vikings Confraternity, the SVC created Deewell in the Diobu district of Port Harcourt. Deewell translates into 'be well' in SVC vernacular. The SVC subsequently created Icelander to support Deewell militarily. Deewell claims to be fighting against the intimidation, oppression, and abuse of its members.¹²³

Many view Deewell as simply a street gang. The group directs its violence against rival cult groups in the ongoing fight for territory and security. Retaliatory attacks by rival cult groups such as Deebam and arrests by the police have more recently limited Deewell's activities. However, new members, mostly younger men, continue to join the group on an almost daily basis, and it remains highly active.

Deewell is generally known to be less organized than other cult groups or street gangs. The group has no central leadership. 'Skull executioners' (bosses) head its various cells or units and coordinate the group's activities.

Support

Deewell draws its membership from the large pool of unemployed youth in the Delta. Initiation is characterized by some physical torture and other degrading treatment. Training in obtaining and using weapons is then provided to new recruits.¹²⁴ In 2005 Deewell claimed a membership of over 4,000 members scattered across Bayelsa and Rivers states.¹²⁵ A considerable number of teenage boys of age 16 and older are involved as Deewell combatants.¹²⁶

Political figures reportedly provide the bulk of the group's financial support. Among those alleged to be providing such support are Rotimi Amaechi, speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, who backs the group in his struggle with his cousin, Sir Celestine Omehia; Gabriel Pidomson Jr, a former member of the Rivers State House of Assembly;¹²⁷ and unnamed officials within the Rivers state government (Ebiri, 2006). Deewell members have often been hired as political thugs by Niger Delta political figures (Naagbantton, 2007b).

Activities

Deewell operates in the slum communities in Rivers and Bayelsa states. The areas in which its members conduct operations or engage in clashes with rivals tend to be different from the areas they consider to be their territory.

Most collaboration is undertaken with the group's SVC cousins, Icelander/NDVS. Icelander was created largely to support Deewell, which had shown weakness militarily. Since February 2007 several units of Deewell have formed alliances with the Outlaws of Soboma George.¹²⁸ The Deewell cult under the leadership of Gabriel Pidomson Jr now bases itself with the Outlaws at Marine Base, Port Harcourt after being chased out of Bodo by Deebam.¹²⁹ Deewell had formerly worked closely with the now-defunct Elegemface cult group.¹³⁰

Small arms and light weapons

Using funds provided by politicians, Deewell purchases weapons from arms dealers.

Annexe 4: Icelander (also known as Germans and NDVS)

Overview

Icelander is a cult group founded as a street wing of the SVC. The SVC created the group to support its other street wings, which were in decline and losing territory and supporters. The group has used several names, including Niger Delta Vigilante Services (NDVS) and Germans (a term used to refer to senior Icelander officers). Neither of these pseudonyms alters the group's cultist roots and belief system. Under the NDVS banner, the group has provided vigilante services for sale, most often to the Rivers state government (Sahara Reporters, 2006).

Background

Despite the group's reference to being a 'vigilante' group, Icelander remains primarily a cult group. Its *raison d'être* has little to do with any political goals. In most cases its members are the instigators and perpetrators of violence, particularly in Rivers and Bayelsa states. They are generally available for hire by the highest bidder, particularly during electoral periods. They have a history of fighting for members of the Rivers state government in exchange for weapons and cash.

Icelander has a long history in other groups. The SVC, also called the Adventures of De Norsemen club of Nigeria, created Icelander. The SVC is a campus cult founded around 1984 at the University of Port Harcourt (known as 'Alpha Marine'). The SVC broke away from the Buccaneers Association of Nigeria (the Sealords), another notorious campus gang. Since its creation, the SVC has spread through tertiary institutions across Nigeria (CEHRD, 2006). The Rivers state government co-opted the SVC by creating a select group of leaders, known as the '5 wise men,' who were brought together by members of the SVC working in government house.¹³¹ The '5 wise men' comprised Ateke Tom, Julius Oruitemeka, Theophilous, Cassy, and Cockman. Some of these men had previous ties to other cult groups. The SVC then trained this select group in the philosophy and practice of the cult group. Icelander has been working with the government from mid-2000 onwards.¹³²

Icelander's *raison d'être* is simply to fight against any form of oppression from other groups,¹³³ and it has little in the way of ideology. Its members are primarily involved in gangsterism and violence (Joab-Peterside, 2006). However, Icelander does have strong ties to the ruling party, the PDP: a vast majority of the group, some 90 per cent, are registered members of the PDP (AAPW and Our Niger Delta, 2006). Leader Ateke Tom has made clear Icelander's support of the PDP government: 'We are government children. And we are all members of the PDP. We don't fight the government. We support them.'¹³⁴

Tom is the acknowledged leader of Icelander, and one of the group's founding members. He is Okrika-born, and had a history of working as a political thug prior to his emergence as group leader. He believes strongly in the potency of charms, talismans, and amulets, and has a reputation for being generous towards his followers and ruthless towards his enemies (Naagbantou, 2006).

The changing of the group's name to Niger Delta Vigilante Services represented an attempt in July 2003 to recreate the group in a new image following repeated involvement in violent killings in the Delta and the negative publicity that followed.¹³⁵

Support

The spiritual homeland of Icelander is Ochochiri on Okrika Island, Rivers state. Icelander cells also exist throughout Rivers and Bayelsa states. Although the leadership are all Ijaw, support for and membership of Icelander are not limited to any one ethnic group. Ikwerre, Ekpeye, and Ogoni are also prominent within the group.

Icelander draws its membership from the slum settlements of urban areas in Rivers and Bayelsa states. Many of the young men who join are already part of the slum subculture existing in such settlements, where unemployment and crime are the norm. Such conditions provide an easy environment for recruitment. Tom claims a membership of some 10,000 members in Rivers and Bayelsa states.¹³⁶ Other estimates put this number at closer to 6,000 personnel.¹³⁷ While the group regularly engages in bloody clashes with security forces, this has not yet affected its strength or cohesion.

Icelander has a number of funding sources. Much of the group's funding comes from the Rivers state government, allegedly from Governor Peter Odili

and Transport Minister Dr Abiye Sekibo.¹³⁸ Another source of significant funding is oil bunkering. The epicentre of oil bunkering is located near the Icelander headquarters in Okrika, which provides easy opportunity to engage in bunkering, although control of these access lanes is highly contested by other groups. In addition to engaging in oil bunkering activities, Icelander collects large security and rental fees for each oil barge loading oil and leaving the Okrika waterways. The group also provides 'security services' to chiefs, politicians, and others for a fee.

Activities

Icelander has bases across Rivers and Bayelsa states. Different cells have different numbers of combatants. Each cell has a senior officer, a 'German', who controls the combatants (or 'suicide squads') of that cell. The activities of the group as a whole are overseen and coordinated by leader Tom.¹³⁹

Icelander uses armed violence to create terror in its areas of operation so as to be able to control these areas. In most cases, rival cult groups are viewed as enemies and are therefore subject to particularly harsh levels of violence. Terror tactics used by Icelander include the beheading of enemies and the raping of women (Joab-Peterside, 2006). The group also carries out targeted assassinations of well-known figures within enemy groups. Members of the Outlaws who have become victims of such assassinations include Warrioko Ngeribara (also known as Yellowman) in November 2006 and Chinedu (also known as Chiboy) in March 2007 (CEHRD, 2006).¹⁴⁰ Many of these attacks have the result of victimizing members of local communities. Cult violence in populated areas regularly results in multiple civilians dead or wounded. The group has been involved in major skirmishes in Okrika and Buguma.

Upon initiation, the new member is taught the importance of spiritual fortification as a cult group member. In addition, new members are given training in the use of small arms and explosives, such as dynamite and grenades, as well as in physical combat without weapons.

Until recently, Deewell has been the primary and most consistent Icelander ally. Both groups are street wings of the SVC. The recent breakdown in relations between the two groups has resulted from Deewell's collaboration with an Icelander enemy, the Outlaws.

Icelander remains active, recently razing the police divisional headquarters at Okrika after the police had killed the group's second in command.¹⁴¹ Leader Tom had declared his intention to stay clear of the April 2007 elections after delivering the 2003 elections for Governor Peter Odili (Sahara Reporters, 2006). In mid-April 2007 Tom led his men on a raid of the police armouries at Elenwo and Mini-Okoro police stations in Rivers state, with the resulting loss of several police officers' lives and the burning of both stations (Small Arms Survey, 2007m; CEHRD, 2007).

Icelander is capable of negotiation with government authorities, and has engaged in negotiations in the past. However, such talks are generally undertaken to empower, fund, and arm the group rather than resolve any outstanding grievances or disband it. Politicians have attempted in the past to use financial means to reduce violence and restrict the activities of cults. For example, in October 2006 the Rivers state government released over NGN 15 million each to the Outlaws and Icelander as an incentive to the two groups to stop fighting during Governor Odili's attempts to gain the PDP presidential nomination.¹⁴²

Small arms and light weapons

Icelander purchases small arms from illegal arms dealers. Funds for such purchases are derived from the Rivers state government, oil bunkering, and rental and security fees. Nigerian military raids on Icelander camps provide some insight into the weapons at the disposal of the group. A June 2006 raid in Okochiri village yielded 12 AK-47s or their derivatives, 7 general purpose machine guns, 8 other machine guns, a locally made craft pistol, and both 7.62 mm and 5.56 mm ammunition (*Moonlight Newspaper*, 2007). Operations and recoveries have also evidenced the use of dynamite during group operations.

Contrary to the experience of many other Niger Delta groups, in the run-up to the 2007 elections, Icelander had only limited supplies of small arms and ammunition, partly as a result of several military raids on its camps. As a result, the group raided several police stations in Elenwo and Mini-Okoro in order to rebuild its stockpiles and planned further attacks to recover the weapons lost to the military raids.¹⁴³ During the Elenwo and Mini-Okoro attacks, Icelander seized 18 AMD 65s; 12 M59/M66s; and several Type 65-1s, Beretta BM59s, FN FALs, and AK-47s.¹⁴⁴

Annexe 5: The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

Overview

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta was formed in early 2006 as a loose assemblage of militant groups claiming to be fighting for justice, resource control, and self-determination for the people of the Niger Delta.¹⁴⁵ MEND operates across the Delta. Since its inception, it has been the most visible of the Delta's armed groups, demonstrating a capacity for coordinated attacks on oil and gas infrastructure, as well as the abduction of both foreign and Nigerian employees. Tensions within the group have reportedly led to a split, with two factions now operating. These tensions rose with Asari's release from prison in June 2007 and the struggle for leadership in the Delta. Although both Asari and MEND are trying to assert their leadership and control in the region, neither has proven capable of fully controlling the violence there.

Background

MEND rose from an element of Asari's NDPVF. Unhappiness within the NDPVF at Asari's distribution of monies from the 2004 disarmament campaign in Rivers state (and his subsequent arrest) caused the dispersal of many of the group's combatants. The group's first operation—the kidnapping of a Briton, a Bulgarian, a Honduran, and a US citizen from a Shell flow station in Bayelsa on 11 January 2006—marked its official inception. The February 2006 bombing by the Nigerian military's JTF of an Ijaw community in Okerenkoko further spurred the formation of MEND (Naagbantou, 2006), and aided in the enlisting of many former NDPVF members. The remaining Reformed NDPVF members subsequently joined MEND themselves and continue to form the core of the group (Naagbantou, 2006).

Militants created MEND to defend the rights of the Niger Delta's largest ethnic group, the Ijaw. This identity as an Ijaw ethnic militia remains strong, but has been diluted by the inclusion of non-Ijaw groups under the MEND name. The Ijaw Gbaramatu clan represents MEND's military and spiritual headquarters. MEND declares that it is committed to a fight for the liberation

of the Ijaw nation and other Niger Delta communities, and that it will achieve this by armed struggle: 'We hate injustice and we shall fight against it with the last drop of our precious blood.'¹⁴⁶ In addition to the core demands of self-determination, resource control, and justice, MEND requested the release of Asari and former Bayelsa governor, Ijaw chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. MEND has not demonstrated political ambition, nor has it released any sort of plan for addressing its grievances. Asari was released in June 2007. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on MEND or on the increasingly volatile dynamics in the Delta.

The leadership of MEND has been difficult to establish due to the secrecy with which the group operates, as well as the use of pseudonyms by those in contact with the public. General British Columbus Epibade and General Godswill Tamuno are pseudonyms most commonly known to refer to MEND's commanders. Each group existing within MEND has its own leaders, and individual groups will regularly carry out their own operations under the MEND banner, while still operating independently of one another (Okonta, 2006). It is also believed that a number of MEND leaders are also leaders of other groups active in the Delta. For example, Soboma George is both a MEND commander and the leader of the Outlaws; the FNDIC director of mobilization, Government Mbambolo Ekpemupolo, also acts as a MEND commander (Anonymous, 2006). Factionalization has seen the creation of three factions within MEND, led, respectively, by Henry Okah (also known as Jomo Gbomo), Akpos Nabena, and Asari.

Support

MEND's political base lies with the Ijaw populations in Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta states.¹⁴⁷ MEND members are considered freedom fighters by many in the Niger Delta. The group's calls for social justice have resonated with the population, who have been generally left out of the oil and gas windfalls generated from beneath their traditional lands. However, unlike Asari's NDPVF, MEND has received little assistance from the local population and has proven to be more self-sufficient.

MEND draws the majority of its combatants from ethnic Ijaw communities. Key groups that operate under the MEND banner or with MEND include

Martyr's Brigade, the Reformed NDPVF, and the NDSF. Many smaller and less-known groups, such as the Meinbutu Boys, have integrated into MEND. Attempts to bring cult groups such as Greenlander and the Outlaws under the MEND umbrella have so far failed. These groups continue to emphasize their cult identity, which continues to override any of the wider goals promoted by MEND. MEND itself belongs to a network of other armed groups, including the JRC, which serves as a clearing house for Niger Delta militant groups. Groups within the JRC share intelligence information and plan joint military actions.

Financially, MEND obtains funding through oil bunkering, allegedly large ransom payments for hostages, and allegedly from local politicians as well.

Activities

MEND has three main hubs: the eastern Delta of Rivers state, central Bayelsa state, and the western Delta hub in Delta state. In each location, it claims to have some 2,000 fighters.¹⁴⁸ It operates as a guerrilla band, using local knowledge to navigate easily the intricate creeks area. MEND fights in familiar territory when it can, utilizing its combatants' individual knowledge of the creeks to outwit and outmanoeuvre the Nigerian JTF.¹⁴⁹ It has proven itself capable of fighting both in the creeks and in the urban areas of the Delta, such as Port Harcourt. Its members have shown some technical capacity with explosives, with the detonation of several car bombs in Port Harcourt since the group's emergence. MEND has often changed its tactics (Naagbantou, 2006), making military responses particularly difficult. It has proven effective in reducing oil production by 20–40 per cent, mostly due to kidnappings of expatriate staff from oil operations (Marquardt, 2007, p. 4). The group has demonstrated an awareness of the impact of its activities on the oil industry, and their consequences for the Nigerian government and the international community.¹⁵⁰

MEND, often critical of cults, has collaborated with them in the past, in particular with Soboma George's Outlaws. A congress of Niger Delta armed groups held in March 2007 had the express purpose of developing the struggle in the Delta by consolidating the currently disparate armed groups. To date, this consolidation has yet to take place, and groups fighting under the MEND banner continue to operate independently. Communities retain the

ability to sanction their local groups' actions and attacks (Okonta, 2006, p. 13). MEND has not proven capable of controlling the actions of its allies; instead, the MEND name is used by a number of groups affiliated or not with MEND. This has led MEND to publicly distance itself from some kidnappings.

Small arms and light weapons

Reports of MEND's activities have included descriptions of the militants using AK-47s or their derivatives, RPGs, and UK 59 Rachot machine guns.¹⁵¹

Annexe 6: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF)

Overview

The NDPVF is an ethnic militia of Ijaw origin. It is led by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, who formerly led the IYC. Until the creation of MEND in early 2006, the NDPVF represented the most visible armed group calling for increased control of local resources by Niger Delta communities. MEND provides a new mouthpiece for these concerns, and the NDPVF constitutes MEND's most prominent member and the main driver behind the group's operations and communications.

Background

Asari left his position as the head of the IYC in July 2003 to establish the NDPVF. British Columbus Epibade and Asari are credited with being two of the organization's founding members.¹⁵² The NDPVF founders claim to have derived inspiration from Isaac Boro, an Ijaw revolutionary and nationalist who began his own guerrilla war against the federal government in 1965 with the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Service. A top-ranking NDPVF commander declared that 'Dokubo Asari had come to start from where Boro stopped' (*Midweek Telegraph*, 2006).

The NDPVF is steeped in the personality and goals of its leader, Asari. After engaging in several armed campaigns during 2003 and 2004, Asari was pardoned and granted amnesty by the federal government. However, he remained vocal on issues of self-determination, compensation for local communities, and resource control, and as a result was arrested in September 2005. Despite his arrest, Asari remained a touchstone for both the interests of the Ijaw nation and the neglected Niger Delta communities more generally. As a result, the NDPVF has not remained a solely Ijaw organization, but now draws support and members from various ethnic groups across the Delta.

The NDPVF pursues a number of goals: more equitable distribution of oil revenues and greater employment opportunities for Niger Delta youth (IISS, 2007, p. 431); the right to self-determination (DonPedro, 2006); the release of former Bayelsa state governor, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha and the release of Asari (both have since been released). These demands are often couched in

the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism, and the NDPVF has not shied away from using armed violence to achieve its goals.

Support

The political arm of the NDPVF is the unregistered political party known as the Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (Amaechi, 2006). This wing has in the past promoted Asari as a Rivers state gubernatorial candidate.¹⁵³ The NDPVF's primary political base remains the Kalabari clan of Ijaws.

The NDPVF draws its combatants from the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta, as well as the Kirimani, an Ijaw militant group (DonPedro, 2006). At the NDPVF's creation, many IYC members followed Asari to form the NDPVF, which also draws support from community activists in Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa states. The NDPVF has attracted many followers throughout the Niger Delta as a result of its consistent stance on issues of justice, compensation, and the distribution of oil revenues.

The NDPVF continues to grow in strength, despite police and military raids, arrests, and offensives from rival groups in the Delta.¹⁵⁴ However, this might be counterbalanced by growing fissures within the group. In 2007 there appear to be two factions: a more militant splinter 'Reformed' or 'Creeks' NDPVF, which broke from the larger NDPVF, and the NDPVF itself, which remains more urban and less militant.

The NDPVF finances its activities through proceeds from illegal oil bunkering, contributions from Deebam (Florquin and Berman, 2005, p. 338), and contributions from Ijaw supporters and residents of Port Harcourt.

Activities

The NDPVF has a loose command structure. NDPVF groups in Delta and Bayelsa states have their own command centres, with sector commanders for each.¹⁵⁵ The group is active mainly in three states of the Niger Delta (Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers), with the majority of its activities carried out in the riverine communities of Rivers state. This state remains the headquarters for the group, which claims some 5,000 members in the state alone.

The NDPVF has collaborated with a number of other armed groups in the Delta, including Deebam, Greenlander, and the Bush Boys. Currently, the

NDPVF operates under two umbrella organizations: the JRC and MEND. The group lost many members to MEND after Asari's arrest. The remaining members continue to exist as a group under the MEND umbrella name.

Although it takes a militant stand and uses armed violence to achieve its goals, the NDPVF is not opposed to negotiations with the government. It engaged in negotiations in 2004, which provided a respite from armed clashes, but ultimately failed to bring peace. The inability of the government to deliver on its promises generated distrust of the government and negotiations, making subsequent negotiation efforts more difficult. The release of Asari will have much to do with the willingness of the group to negotiate by opening up new channels of communication and improved dialogue between the group and the government.

Small arms and light weapons

The NDPVF uses funds accrued through the sale of bunkered oil to purchase small arms from illegal arms dealers. Some of these arms dealers are on ships anchored offshore in international waters, where they exchange arms for oil.¹⁵⁶ The NDPVF also receives assistance from the Ijaw people and others in the Niger Delta sympathetic to the group's cause.¹⁵⁷

Annexe 7: Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF)

Overview

The Niger Delta Strike Force is a small group that claims to be fighting for the basic rights of the people of the Niger Delta. It is a relatively new group, and until recently has acted largely independently of other Delta networks and groups. The group was founded by estranged members of the NDPVF who were displeased with the handling of funds accruing to the latter in the wake of the 2004 Rivers state disarmament campaign. The NDSF is now acting as part of the MEND network of armed groups.

Background

The NDSF is not an ethnic militia, because of its diverse ethnic composition. Instead, the uniting factor has been its members' resentment of Asari. The group believes that Asari failed to share large cash payments received during the November and December 2004 disarmament exercise. As such, it has insisted on receiving a percentage of the monies paid out by the Nigerian government to Asari, as head of the NDPVF, in 2004. The NDSF has declared that these funds would be used to rehabilitate other groups who fought with Asari in 2004, including the Bush Boys, Greenlander, and Deebam.

The group professes little in the way of new aims or goals, which has led to doubt as to whether it is truly fighting for the rights of those living in the Delta.¹⁵⁸ The NDSF's professed goals are similar to those of other militant groups active in the region. Leader Prince Farah declared that the group's primary aim is to fight for equity and justice in the management and distribution of resources and political power.¹⁵⁹ The primary motivating factor behind the group's activities is an interest in economic gain, and it appears to equate being armed in the Niger Delta with achieving the status and means to accrue wealth.

The NDSF is a nascent and active group learning new tactics and establishing its place in the order of militia groups in the Niger Delta. The group has grown without hindrance, and largely outside of government attention. The police and military have not targeted it. Recent disturbances perpetrated by the group in the guise of a mercenary group in Kula community, Akuku-Torlu LGA have now brought the group to the government's attention.¹⁶⁰ In the lead-

up to the April 2007 elections, the NDSF met to try to ensure the emergence of a governor of Ijaw extraction in Rivers state, issuing a threat to cause mayhem in the state should the Ijaw Kalabari people not receive the governor's seat in the elections (*Hard Truth*, 2006, p. 2).

The leader of the NDSF is founder and former NDPVF member Prince Ipallibo Farah. Farah is from the Ijaw cult group centre of Tombia, where he gained a reputation as a calm yet cruel militant.¹⁶¹ The only other identified commander is a 14-year-old boy known as the Last Don. He is known to have shown great skill in the use of weapons and headed the NDSF contingent during the January Port Harcourt raid.

Support

The NDSF garners financing from oil bunkering and from political figures. Prince Tonye Princewill was the Action Congress governorship candidate for Rivers state in the April 2007 elections and is alleged to have provided funding to the group in exchange for its backing for his campaign. Farah claims that there is also significant funding from individuals sympathetic to the group's cause of bringing justice to the Delta.¹⁶² The NDSF's political base lies in Kalabari land, which stretches across Degema, Asari-Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state. The group's lack of a cohesive political goal stunts its ability to draw political support at the community level. Initially, combatants were drawn from a splintered NDPVF; however, since the NDSF's establishment, others have been recruited from Kula, Buguma, and Tombia in Rivers state.

The NDSF is allegedly the smallest armed group in Rivers state, with just 60 members.¹⁶³ Strength, however, is drawn from collaboration with other local groups, including MEND, the Outlaws, and Deebam. Working with these groups, but carrying out operations under the NDSF banner, NDSF numbers can swell to 600.¹⁶⁴

Activities

The group is known to operate primarily in Kalabari land, comprising Degema, Asari-Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state, which are the areas in which the NDSF undertakes oil bunkering and derives support from the local population. With its complicity in criminal activities and kidnappings inde-

pendent of the wider MEND network, the NDSF has not demonstrated high levels of discipline within its ranks. For example, the group's violent attack on the Kula community in oil-rich Akuku-Torlu LGA resulted in the killing of 12 chiefs, along with other community members.

The NDSF is viewed by many as a 'mercenary' group and can be hired for a fee. The group has not developed any distinct tactics in its activities. It is believed to have a high level of tactical proficiency due to the NDPVF combatants in its ranks. Some in the group are also reportedly well versed in the use of explosives and firearms.

The NDSF has started talks with MEND, seeking MEND's help in joining the JRC's umbrella, of which MEND is a leading member. At present, the NDSF enjoys an amicable though informal relationship with the NDPVF, the Outlaws, and Deebam.¹⁶⁵

Small arms and light weapons

The NDSF claims that it possesses the weapons needed to engage in any battle. The group claims to have RPGs and dynamite at its disposal, as well as Russian-made AK-47s, or variants of the AK, and PK machine guns.¹⁶⁶ There have been reports of a number of deliveries of small arms to the group, including a 15 March 2007 delivery of around 200 weapons, including G3 rifles, AK-47s, and RPGs,¹⁶⁷ as well as a 26 March shipment of unspecified content.¹⁶⁸ The NDSF uses funds from political contributions, sympathetic individuals, and the sale of bunkered crude oil to purchase small arms from illegal arms dealers.

Annexe 8: The Outlaws

Overview

The Outlaws is a cult group that operates according to the basic principles of protection through numbers and fraternity invoked by most cult groups in Nigeria. The group lays claim to being the largest organization fighting for the rights of the youth in the Niger Delta region.¹⁶⁹ It emerged under acrimonious circumstances as an offshoot of Ateke Tom's Icelander cult group. The Outlaws have engaged in armed clashes with other cult groups, particularly in and around Port Harcourt.

Background

The group is largely the creation of Soboma George, formerly second in command of Icelander. The break between George and Icelander leader Tom came as a result of Tom handing George over to the authorities for the murder of a member of the NDPVF in late 2004. George escaped from a Port Harcourt prison and broke with Icelander to form the Outlaws (Naagbanton, 2007a). George's Icelander lieutenants who followed him to the Outlaws also wield some authority within the highly hierarchical cult group.

Like most cult groups, the Outlaws fight for little else beyond the well-being of the group. The group claims to be fighting for the rights of the Niger Delta youth,¹⁷⁰ but its activities suggest its focus remains limited to members and is insular in nature.

George has become one of the Delta's most notorious figures since the group's inception. He is a 27-year-old high school dropout from an ethnic Ijaw group in Kalabari kingdom. He is deeply Christian, though this is mixed with the animist beliefs endemic to cult groups. He is also a senior commander of MEND.¹⁷¹

The Outlaws do not take issue with the Nigerian or Rivers state governments. As former members of Icelander, who had fought on the side of the Rivers state government during previous electoral periods, the Outlaws have a history of amicable relations with government. However, the arrest of George has caused some tension with government, though this has not yet resulted in the group being targeted by security forces.

Support

The Outlaws reportedly have a large following across Rivers state. This membership extends well beyond a single ethnic group. Originally founded by Ijaws, the group also derives members from the Ibibio, Ogoni, and Ogba ethnicities. There are ongoing attempts to establish Outlaws 'cells' in the other core Niger Delta states of Delta and Bayelsa.

The Outlaws claim a membership of 4,000 throughout Rivers state, all of whom can be utilized as combatants.¹⁷² The group draws its members from armed cults, such as Icelander and Deewell, as well as from non-militarized youth groups, including the Awolowo Boys, the Getto, and Agaba from northern Port Harcourt. Many who join the Outlaws are simply jobless youths without livelihood opportunities. They are prone to drug use or small-scale trafficking of cocaine or marijuana, and are easily convinced to join. The January 2007 storming of Port Harcourt by the Outlaws and MEND served to enhance greatly the reputation of the cult group and led to an increase in members.¹⁷³

The Outlaws allegedly receive funding from political figures, small-scale oil bunkering, and the sale of illicit drugs. In addition, the group offered its support for a fee in the 2007 electoral period.

Activities

The group is known to operate primarily in Kalabari land, comprising Degema, Asari-Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state. These are the areas in which the NDSF undertakes oil bunkering and derives support from the local population. There is little overall control of the Outlaws. The group is characterized by criminal activity and political manipulation through violence. The group has reportedly provided services to the ruling PDP in Rivers state, and this provides some coordination to its activities and operations.

The Outlaws' main strategy is to expand the group's territorial presence and to protect its members from security forces and rival groups who seek to encroach on its territory and methods of funding. Attacks on oil and gas facilities are a new strategy for the Outlaws, and may be the result of a recent increase in dialogue with MEND. The group has yet to claim responsibility for any abductions in the Delta.

The Outlaws have collaborated with other armed groups in the Delta, including collaboration with the umbrella group COMA in mid-2006 (*Hard Truth*, 2006, p. 4), collaboration with MEND to rescue Outlaws' leader Soboma George from a Port Harcourt jail in January 2007, and sharing a training camp with Deewell at Marine Base, Port Harcourt.

The activities of the group have made maintaining relationships with other groups difficult. The attack on the Port Harcourt jail led COMA to denounce both MEND and George as opportunists looking to harness the Niger Delta crisis for their own ends.¹⁷⁴ The relationship with MEND appears increasingly contradictory as the cult group moves closer to the ruling PDP of Rivers state, while MEND retains its opposition to the government. There is little possibility of reconciliation between Icelander and the Outlaws, which broke away from Icelander.

The Outlaws continue to be very active in the vicinity of Port Harcourt. While security operations against other armed groups have reduced their size and influence, the Outlaws have not yet been targeted, and as such continue to grow in security-poor Rivers state. The group is currently negotiating with MEND over the former's reorganization and reorientation (Naagbantou, 2007a, p. 13).

Small arms and light weapons

Members of the Outlaws have openly displayed RPGs, sub-machine guns, and AK-47 derivatives.¹⁷⁵ The group has traded bunkered oil or cash with arms traffickers as a primary method of acquiring small arms and light weapons.

Endnotes

- 1 For a more detailed discussion of the electoral process, see CDD (2007).
- 2 'Nigeria ranked 151 (out of 177) in the Human Development Index in 2002 and dropped further to 158 in 2005. It is among the 20 poorest in the world in terms of per capita income. In 1985, 43% of the population lived below the poverty line. By 2004, that had risen to 70% living on less than one dollar per day' (UK, 2007). Additional information about the Human Development Index and UN Development Programme *Human Development Reports* can be found at <<http://www.undp.org>>.
- 3 See Taback and Coupland (2005) for a discussion of how this model is used.
- 4 See HRW (2004a) for a discussion of this.
- 5 Although there are at least 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, 5 groups comprise the majority of the population: Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, and Ijaw.
- 6 For a discussion of the problems encountered in the lead-up to elections, see ICG (2007a, pp. 13–15).
- 7 For a discussion of this, see ICG (2007b).
- 8 Estimates of the reduction in oil production vary; see Bernard (2007b); BBC (2006a; 2007c), and Tayo (2007, p. 8).
- 9 The Niger Delta officially consists of nine states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. However, much of the discussion of the Delta region tends to focus on Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states, the sites of the majority of oil production and activity by armed groups.
- 10 HRW (2007b, p. 4); Isaacs (2004); Unegbu (2003, p. 43); Wee (2006); World Bank Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (2003).
- 11 For a discussion of this change, see HRW (2004b, pp. 13–17).
- 12 For a more comprehensive list of events in 2004 and before, see Adebani (2004).
- 13 For additional information on episodes of ethnic, religious, and indigene-settler conflict, see Hudu (2004, p. 5).
- 14 For additional information about the 'paradox of plenty', see Karl (1997).
- 15 For a discussion of these estimates, see Bernard (2007b); Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz (2007, p. 7); and NNBS (2005).
- 16 Details of military weapons, vehicles, and aircraft can be found in IISS (2007, pp. 287–88).
- 17 Author interview with senior military official, Ministry of Defence, Abuja, 14 March 2007.
- 18 Author interview with senior military official, Ministry of Defence, Abuja, 14 March 2007.
- 19 Author interviews in Abuja, 19–20 March 2007.
- 20 For details, see Nigeria Police Force (2005).
- 21 Author interview with CLEEN, Abuja, 30 January 2007.
- 22 Author interview with CLEEN, Abuja, 14 March 2007.
- 23 Nigeria's northern border is 1,500 km long, its western border 1,000 km, its eastern border 1,700 km, and its southern coastal border 700 km (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 21).
- 24 Ginifer and Ismail (2005, p. 6); Hudu (2004, p. 3); Ikelegbe (2005, p. 228); Ojudu (2007).
- 25 Author interview with Nwankpo Akachukwu, Sullivan and Sullivan Consulting, Port Harcourt, 11 July 2006.
- 26 Author interview with cult group member, Abuja, 10 November 2006.
- 27 This was supported by an author interview with Nigerian arms dealer, Onitsha, 16 March 2007; and consultant interviews with Ekpeyong Edet, Sustainable Equity, Calabar, 19 December 2006 and Tony Akpabio, Nigeria Police Force, Calabar, 19 December 2006.
- 28 Based on author interview with small arms dealer, Onitsha, 16 March 2007.
- 29 Ginifer and Ismail (2005, p. 6); Hudu (2004, p. 4); Ikelegbe (2005, p. 228); Ojudu (2007).
- 30 For a discussion of amounts lost to oil bunkering, see Davis, Von Kemedi, and Drennan (2006, pp. 30–33).
- 31 This section is based on author interviews carried out by Jonas Horner with craft producers in Awka, 15 March 2007.
- 32 Author interview with cult group member, Abuja, 10 November 2006.
- 33 For a discussion of Ghana craft production, see Aning (2005).
- 34 Author interview with Commissioner of Police Aloysius Okorie, Abuja, 28 October 2006.
- 35 Author interview with national NGO, Abuja, 17 March 2007.
- 36 Author interview with Commissioner of Police Aloysius Okorie, Abuja, 28 October 2006.
- 37 Author interviews with craft producers, Awka, 15 March 2007.
- 38 Author interviews with craft producers, Awka, 15 March 2007.
- 39 Author interview with Nigerian NGO operating in the Delta region, Abuja, 17 March 2007.
- 40 Author interview with Nigerian arms dealer, Onitsha, 16 March 2007.
- 41 Consultant interview with NDPVF commander, Ogbakiri, February 2007.
- 42 Consultant interview with NDPVF member, Rivers state, February 2007.
- 43 Consultant interview with Deebam cult member, Rivers state, February 2007.
- 44 Consultant interview with NDPVF commander, Ogbakiri, Rivers state, February 2007.
- 45 The Small Arms Survey contracted two local NGOs in Nigeria to administer a household questionnaire in Kano and Rivers states. Due to logistical, training, and security challenges, the questionnaire could not be administered as originally planned. As such, the study resulted in 638 completed questionnaires in Kano, but only 459 in Rivers. This also led to problems of sampling, reliability, and comparability. While the results of the study suggest trends that are supported by interviews and other data collected for this report, the results of the questionnaire should *not* be interpreted as representative of either Kano or Rivers states, nor of Nigeria as a whole. These results are descriptive only and should *not* be interpreted or used as statistically significant results.
- 46 The CLEEN Foundation, a national NGO, conducted a national crime victimization survey in 2006 with 11,161 respondents (CLEEN, 2007). CLEEN generously included nine questions on small arms and security in this survey for the Small Arms Survey. These are the results from one of the included Small Arms Survey questions. These results were not published by CLEEN when it published the other results of the survey on its Web site.
- 47 Author interview with CLEEN, Abuja, 14 March 2007. It is also possible that the question was misunderstood, and that those responding that there were 'too few' were actually responding that there were 'few' weapons in circulation.

48 The Small Arms Survey study of press reports employs the Taback-Coupland model, which uses newspaper reports as data sources on armed violence in a given context or country. This data is systematically entered into a template, identifying the location of the incident, the actors involved, the weapons used, and the effects of the incident. Data analysis indicates patterns of violence in the given context or country. Importantly, the Taback-Coupland model describes the patterns that result from the selected news reports. As such, the data that results from the analysis is not a complete picture of violence, but rather an indication of observable trends. The reported incidents do *not* comprise a comprehensive list of all violent incidents. Consequently, neither the total number of incidents nor the other total counts, such as the number of casualties, should be read as indicating the definitive number of incidents or casualties in the context or country. Additional information on this model can be found at <http://www.utoronto.ca/ois/armed_violence/index.htm>.

49 The larger study will include data from international and national news reports for November 2006 through October 2007. In this present study, the results are preliminary and are taken from an analysis of news reports from both international and national newspapers. The international news reports on Nigeria were identified through the use of the Lexis-Nexis database. Searches were conducted containing the key words 'killed', 'shot', 'wounded', 'abducted', 'hostage', and 'kidnapped' for November 2006 to March 2007. It is important to note that Lexis-Nexis contains many reports from national Nigerian newspapers, but in this study are classified as 'international' reports due to their being reported by an international source. The national reports were collected from three national Nigerian newspapers: *Vanguard*, *Punch*, and *The Daily Sun*, for December 2006 and January–March 2007. The international and national news reports were checked for double reporting, and each event was entered into the database only once. A number of caveats should be mentioned. This method only captures data reported in the newspapers selected. Data is thus subject to the biases of the individual newspapers and the selection process of Lexis-Nexis. In addition, the data suggests that international and national reporting focus on different issue areas of concern, leading to differences in content reported. There is not always sufficient data reported in any one article to enable complete data capture for the Taback-Coupland template, leading to some gaps in data. Finally, this survey was not designed to capture reports of violence that occur within communities not normally covered by the media, for example rural populations, suggesting that violence in these areas would be under-reported in this model.

50 This figure combines the categories crime and battle-like confrontations between criminals, and between criminals and the police that appear in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. These categories are separated into distinct categories in Figures 4.6 and 4.7.

51 The number of incidents reported in the international newspapers during the observation period remained relatively steady each month at around 30, with 31 incidents in November, 32 in December, 31 in January, and 32 in February. This raises some concerns about whether restrictions exist on how many reports are included in the Lexis-Nexis database per month. However, the number of reports did increase significantly in March to 45, which might be explained by greater attention being given to the country due to the impending elections.

52 Incidents were categorized according to the type of violence as battle-like, interpersonal, crime, or other. These categories were defined as follows for data entry: *battle-like incidents*:

combat between two groups of armed actors; *interpersonal*: violence between two or more individuals that has not been planned by any social or political group; *crime*: an act that violates national laws, such as robbery, but is not considered interpersonal violence; *other*: any violent event that cannot be easily categorized into the following categories or on which reporting makes it difficult to categorize the event. Then, separately, incidents were categorized as being oil-related or not, and as politically related or not. An incident was categorized as oil-related or politically related only if there was direct reference to oil-related or politically related events in the news report. Incidents that were marked as oil-related or politically related are not double counted in these graphs. These incidents were classified as being oil-related or politically related, and were not categorized according to the type of violence.

53 Author interview with Rivers state government chief of staff, Fredrick Sunday Alasia, Port Harcourt, 22 November 2006.

54 The Small Arms Survey study of press reports will collect reports until 31 October 2007. This current analysis only covers the period November 2006–March 2007.

55 The number of incidents reported in the national and international press if added together would equal more than the total number of 234 incidents. This is the result of double reporting, i.e. reports of the same incident in both the national and international sources used in this study. Since the study only includes any incident once in the analysis of the data, the number of actual incidents, as opposed to reports of incidents, is lower than the overall number of reports.

56 This figure combines the categories crime and battle-like violence, e.g. confrontations between criminals, and between criminals and the police.

57 This Web site contains national crime statistics up to and including 2005.

58 See en. 45 for a discussion of the questionnaire.

59 For a discussion of the elections and electoral malpractice, see *Daily Trust* (2007); ICG (2007b); NDI (2007); Polgreen (2007); and *This Day* (2007).

60 In addition to administering a questionnaire (see en. 45), the national organizations also held four focus group discussions in both Kano and Rivers states. Two of the four groups in each location were all men, while the other two consisted of all women. The participants were randomly invited to participate, but consisted of only those willing to do so. Some people who were invited to participate declined to do so.

61 See en. 45 for a discussion of the questionnaire.

62 See en. 45 for a discussion of the questionnaire.

63 This particular analysis includes international press reports from November 2006 to March 2007 and national press reports from December 2006 to February 2007.

64 Author interviews in Abuja, March 2007.

65 One armed group member claimed that initial kidnappings were a response to a lack of employment, but that once the government began organizing large payments in exchange for hostages, it turned into a business; see *This Day* (2006).

66 For a discussion of ethnic militia groups, see Adejumbi (2003).

67 For a discussion of vigilante groups in Nigeria, see AI (2002).

68 This sentiment was also expressed by militants interviewed by the national press; see Ogbu (2007).

69 For a discussion of the period 2003–04, see Best and Von Kemedi (2005, pp. 19–23) and ICG (2006b, pp. 3–5).

70 For a discussion of the early history of armed groups, see Best and Von Kemedi (2005, pp. 17–19).

71 Written correspondence with Nigerian NGO, 28 February 2006.

72 Although founded in Port Harcourt, Icelander has moved to Okrika, which has remained its primary base, while also maintaining some cells in Port Harcourt (e-mail from Port Harcourt NGO, 14 July 2007).

73 See annexes for group profiles of MEND, Icelander, NDPVF, NDSF, Deewell, Deebam, Outlaws, and Bush Boys.

74 Author interview with Port Harcourt NGO, Port Harcourt, 20 November 2006.

75 Author telephone interview with NDPVF contact, 12 March 2007; author telephone interview with Niger Delta NGO representative, 30 March 2007.

76 This section is based on the AAPW (2006) survey. Additional details on the survey and its methodology can be obtained from AAPW, Nigeria.

77 These numbers were reported by group members, without independent verification.

78 In Nigeria, the term ‘youth’ encompasses a large age range, often up to 35 years of age or older.

79 At least 60 per cent of armed group members responding to the AAPW survey indicated that they used drugs, the vast majority of which use marijuana, with a small percentage using cocaine or other drugs.

80 Author interview with CLEEN, Abuja, 21 March 2007.

81 Consultant interviews with four community leaders, Rivers state, December 2006.

82 A programme to assist West African states in improving their capacity to understand the nature of small arms possession in their countries and to manage legal small arms and address illicit small arms.

83 An estimated 324 weapons were submitted during this disarmament programme, but no details are publicly available as to how much the programme cost or how much individuals received for their weapons (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 5).

84 For a discussion of this process, see Best and Von Kemedi (2005, pp. 27–29).

85 The numbers of weapons collected, and from which group they were collected, remains highly disputed. There are no official public numbers of what was turned in, by whom, and for what payment. The Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights, and Development (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 8) and Amnesty International (AI, 2005, p. 36) also reported that roughly 3,000 weapons were submitted during the process.

86 Author interview with Rivers state government chief of staff, Fredrick Sunday Alasia, Port Harcourt, 22 November 2006; see also NDPEHRD (2005, p. 7).

87 Data provided by SaferAfrica, which oversaw the arms destruction process in November 2004.

88 This split was later reconciled (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 8).

89 See NDPEHRD (2005, pp. 10–14) for more details.

90 Interviews in the Niger Delta supported this claim that military action had only contributed to small arms proliferation and violence (consultant interview with NDPVF member, Rivers state, February 2007).

91 Author interview with Haz Iwendi, force public relations officer, Nigeria Police Force, 20 March 2007.

92 At the 7 November 2007 exchange rate.

93 These statistics are for Kano state. Similar responses, in terms of the direction in which attitudes have moved, were found in Benue, Ondo, Enugu, Jigawa, and Ogun states (DFID, 2007).

94 For a discussion of vigilante groups, see AI (2002) and Harnischfeger (2003).

95 See HRW (2005b).

96 The UN released a report on extrajudicial, summary, and arbitrary executions in Nigeria in January 2006 (UN, 2006) that pointed out a number of concerns about police conduct. Similar concerns were more recently conveyed by Manfred Nowak, the UN rapporteur on torture, in a March 2007 press release (UNHCR, 2007).

97 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Sunny Opuembe, Bush Boys leader, Port Harcourt, 4 November 2004.

98 Author telephone conversation with Port Harcourt NGO, 13 April 2007.

99 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Marcus Orawari, former Bush Boys combatant, Port Harcourt, 6 April 2007.

100 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Marcus Orawari, former Bush Boys combatant, Port Harcourt, 6 April 2007.

101 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Sunny Opuembe, Bush Boys leader, 6 April 2007.

102 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Marcus Orawari, former Bush Boys combatant, Port Harcourt, 6 April 2007.

103 Correspondence with informed observer, 25 May 2007.

104 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Sunny Opuembe, Bush Boys leader, Port Harcourt, 4 November 2004.

105 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, NDPVF leader, Tombia, 10 November 2004.

106 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006; see also CEHRD (2006, p. 6).

107 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006.

108 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006.

109 According to police authorities in Port Harcourt, Igodo had sold weapons to a number of groups throughout the Delta. An NGN 5 million bounty had been placed on the Deebam leader (Port Harcourt NGO interview with police official, Port Harcourt, 19 March 2007; see also Onyedika, Agbala, and Ebiri, 2007).

110 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006.

111 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, NDPVF leader, Port Harcourt, 27 August 2006.

112 Port Harcourt interview with Michael Okoro, Deebam intelligence officer, Ogbakiri, 30 August 2006.

113 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006.

114 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Tombia, 14 July 2006.

115 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Jemina, Deebam leader in Bukuma, 14 July 2006.

116 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Stevyn Obodoekwe, journalist, Ogale-Nchia, April 2007.

- 117 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Stevyn Obodoekwe, journalist, Ogale-Nchia, April 2007.
- 118 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Stevyn Obodoekwe, journalist, Ogale-Nchia, April 2007.
- 119 Port Harcourt NGO interviews with Chilos Godsent and Stevyn Obodoekwe, Port Harcourt, 1 April 2007. Both have witnessed Deebam first hand during conflict.
- 120 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, 29 March 2007.
- 121 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Martins Uchenna, Deewell member, 4 April 2007.
- 122 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Christopher Nduka, Black Axe cult group public relations officer, Ogbunabali, 6 April 2007.
- 123 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Tonye Fibika, Deewell member, Rivers state, 3 April 2007.
- 124 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Martins Uchenna, Deewell member, 4 April 2007.
- 125 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Martins Uchenna, Deewell member, 4 April 2007.
- 126 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Reason Agala, Deewell member, 6 April 2007.
- 127 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Glad Igodo, Deebam leader, Port Harcourt, 5 April 2007.
- 128 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, 6 April 2007.
- 129 Author telephone interview with informed observer, 26 May 2007.
- 130 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Osaroo, 30 April 2005.
- 131 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Julius Oruitemeka, Port Harcourt, 20 January 2004.
- 132 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Julius Oruitemeka, Port Harcourt, 20 January 2004.
- 133 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Ateke Tom, Icelander leader, 10 April 2006.
- 134 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Ateke Tom, Icelander leader, Okochiri, 15 March 2006.
- 135 The term 'vigilante' often has a negative connotation in Europe and the United States. In Nigeria, 'vigilante' often connotes something positive, and refers to groups that operate to ensure the safety and security of a particular community.
- 136 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Ateke Tom, Icelander leader, 10 April 2006.
- 137 Correspondence with informed observer, 25 May 2007.
- 138 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, NDPVF leader, 10 June 2004.
- 139 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Ateke Tom, Icelander leader, Okochiri, 15 March 2006.
- 140 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, 4 March 2007.
- 141 Author telephone interview with Port Harcourt NGO, 13 April 2007.
- 142 Consultant interview with intelligence officer, SVC, Port Harcourt, 15 May 2006; Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Fineboy Daagogo, Icelander senior officer, 4 March 2007.
- 143 Consultant interview with Icelander member, Khana LGA, April 2007.
- 144 Consultant interview with police official, Mini-Okoro, April 2007.
- 145 For a discussion of the emergence of MEND, see Okonta (2006).
- 146 Port Harcourt NGO interview with MEND intelligence officer, Port Harcourt, 20 March 2007.
- 147 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Chief Bello Oboko, president of the FNDIC, Warri, 20 July 2006.
- 148 Consultant interview with MEND commander, Warri, 15 May 2007.
- 149 Consultant interview with MEND commander, Warri, 15 May 2007.
- 150 MEND's first press release (MEND, 2006).
- 151 This is based on a report from a consultant who visited the MEND camp in Warri in March 2006.
- 152 Consultant interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, NDPVF leader, Tombia, 10 November 2004.
- 153 Correspondence with Port Harcourt NGO, 22 April 2007.
- 154 Consultant phone interview with Onengiyi Erekosima, NDPVF spokesperson, 8 April 2007.
- 155 Consultant interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, leader of NDPVF, Tombari, 10 November 2004.
- 156 Author interview with Nwankpo Akachukwu, Sullivan and Sullivan Consulting, Port Harcourt, 11 July 2006.
- 157 Consultant interview with Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, NDPVF leader, Tombari, 10 November 2004.
- 158 Author interview with Port Harcourt NGO, 12 April 2007.
- 159 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Prince Ipallibo Farah, NDSF leader, Port Harcourt, 20 March 2007.
- 160 NDSF members were reportedly hired by a faction within Kula who felt aggrieved over the distribution of significant monetary payments by Shell Corporation. The resulting clash saw a number of people killed, including at least four community chiefs. For more details of this event, see Ekeinde (2007).
- 161 Author interview with Port Harcourt NGO, 12 April 2007.
- 162 Consultant interview with Prince Ipallibo Farah, NDSF leader, Port Harcourt, 10 March 2007.
- 163 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Solomon Harry, NDPVF combatant, 24 March 2007.
- 164 Consultant interview with Prince Ipallibo Farah, NDSF leader, Tombia, 10 March 2007.
- 165 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Onegiyi Erekosima, NDPVF spokesperson, Port Harcourt, 8 April 2007.
- 166 Observed by consultant during interview with Prince Ipallibo Farah, NDSF leader, Tombia, 10 March 2007.
- 167 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with NDSF member, 26 March 2007.
- 168 Consultant interview with Prince Ipallibo Farah, NDSF leader, Tombia, 10 March 2007.
- 169 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, Port Harcourt, March 2006.
- 170 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, Port Harcourt, 30 January 2007.
- 171 George's status as a MEND commander was made clear in a MEND statement issued by Jomo Gbomo on 28 January 2007.
- 172 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, Port Harcourt, 30 January 2007.
- 173 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Stevyn Obodoekwe, journalist, 29 January 2007.
- 174 Port Harcourt NGO telephone interview with Alaye Teme, COMA spokesperson, 30 January 2007.
- 175 Port Harcourt NGO interview with Soboma George, Outlaws leader, Port Harcourt, 30 January 2007.

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