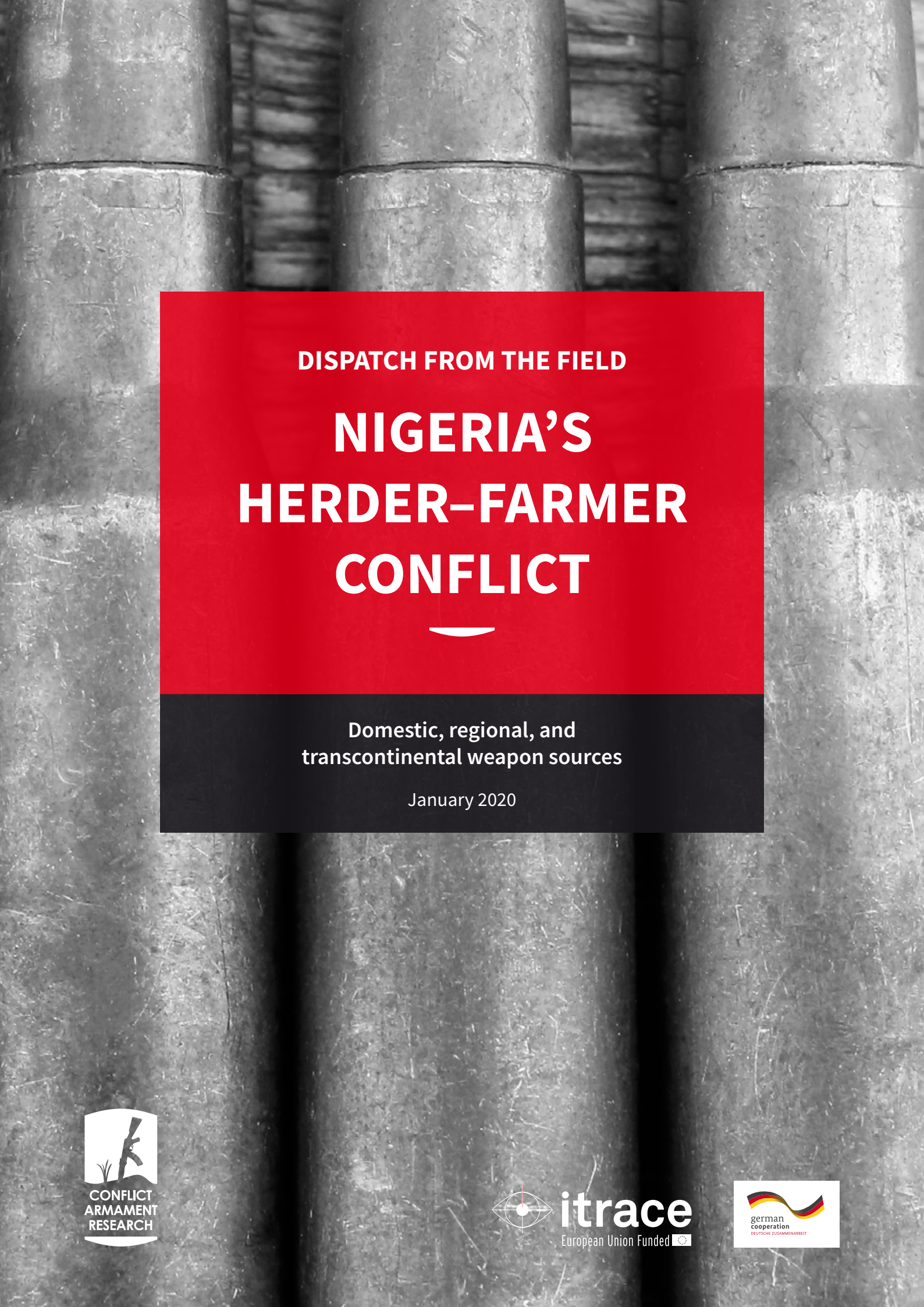

DISPATCH FROM THE FIELD

NIGERIA'S HERDER–FARMER CONFLICT

Domestic, regional, and transcontinental weapon sources

January 2020

CONFLICT ARMAMENT RESEARCH

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Front cover image: 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition rounds for AK-pattern weapons, collected in a state-wide weapons amnesty in Katsina State in early 2017. *© Conflict Armament Research*.

Inside cover image: Twenty naira banknote, found inside the foregrip of an AK-pattern weapon which the Nigerian Army recovered from a herder armed group in Zamfara State in early 2018. Rifles recovered from such groups often have small-denomination banknotes placed inside their foregrips, reportedly as a charm but also reducing rattle of the foregrip components.
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KEY FINDINGS

- Groups involved in inter-communal herder–farmer conflicts in northern and central Nigeria use some locally made artisanal weapons, which increasingly represent a target of interdiction and regulation. However, they also use factory-produced weapons manufactured in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East.

- Weapons that Conflict Armament Research (CAR) documented during field operations in three northern Nigerian states have commonalities with small arms previously in service with national defence forces in Côte d'Ivoire and with weapons that CAR has documented in Libya.

- CAR's data set of weapons from northern Nigeria also includes Iraqi assault rifles manufactured in 1987, whose markings have been obliterated in a distinctive manner. This weapon type is uncommon in the Sahel region. Terrorist groups have used weapons from the same batch, with markings rendered illegible in the same manner, in successive attacks on security forces in Mali and Niger since 2016. While there is no evidence of direct linkages between herder or farmer groups and Sahelian terrorist factions, this finding does indicate that these groups have obtained weapons from the same illicit source, which remains unidentified.

- Groups involved in communal armed violence in northern Nigeria also draw on two domestic sources of weapons and ammunition:

  → Predictably, given widespread weapon diversion from many governments in the region, CAR has traced four weapons in the data set to the stockpiles of Nigerian defence and security forces. Nigerian-manufactured small-calibre ammunition—including cartridges manufactured as recently as 2014—is the second-most prevalent type of ammunition in this data set.

  → Less predictably, these groups also use Turkish-manufactured semi-automatic and pump-action shotguns. Their types and brands match several thousand weapons that were shipped in containers from Istanbul to Lagos in 2017 and that were linked to a major organised trafficking network. Evidence presented here confirms that weapons of these types were already in circulation on Nigeria's illicit markets prior to the 2017 shipments.

▼ **Weapons which the Nigerian Army seized from the Buharin Daji armed group and also collected from pastoralist and agrarian communities in Zamfara State during early 2018, laid out for inspection at the headquarters of the 223 Light Tank Battalion in Gusau, 15 March 2018.**

METHODOLOGY

Co-located with armed actors on the ground, local security authorities, national governments, and international organisations, Conflict Armament Research (CAR) field investigation teams document illicit weapons, ammunition, and related materiel in conflict-affected locations and trace their supply sources.

Teams inspect weapons in a variety of situations—whether recovered by state security forces, surrendered at the cessation of hostilities, cached, or held by insurgent forces. CAR's field investigation teams document all items photographically, date and geo-reference the documentation sites, and incorporate contextual interview data gathered from the forces in control of the items at the time of documentation.

CAR occasionally uses information and photographs from social media, but investigations are not based on them, since the provenance of such data is often difficult to verify. Moreover, open-source information does not always provide the detailed physical elements—notably external and internal markings—required to trace weapons and ammunition.

CAR traces only a portion of the items it documents in the field. This traced materiel is usually of particular significance for CAR's investigations. If numerous individual items were to be traced, an excessive burden would need to be placed on the national governments and manufacturing companies concerned. Furthermore, some of the documented items are untraceable. For example, most loose small-calibre ammunition lacks the lot numbers required to identify it in production, sales, and export records. Similarly, records pertaining to the production, sale, and export of many older weapons are no longer available.

CAR supplements formal weapon tracing with analysis of physical evidence gathered from the weapons themselves and that of related materiel; obtaining government, commercial, transport, and other documents; and interviewing individuals with knowledge or experience of the equipment transfers under scrutiny. CAR retains all documents, interview notes, emails, recordings, photographs, and other data obtained from third parties in a secure, encrypted format. Wherever relevant, this report refers to these items as being 'on file'. To protect sources, CAR does not to publish the precise details of the sources or circumstances of acquisition of every evidential item it obtains. CAR's sources provide all such items willingly and with full knowledge of their use by CAR. CAR does not undertake undercover work or use other clandestine investigation methods. For privacy reasons, CAR's publications do not refer to private individuals by name, except in the case of well-known public officials.

▲ CAR supplements formal weapon tracing with analysis of physical evidence gathered from the weapons themselves and that of related materiel.
© CAR

CAR has contacted all governments and companies referenced in this dispatch. Unless specified, references to the names of countries of manufacture, manufacturing companies, intermediary parties, distributors, and intended end users do not imply any illegality or wrongdoing on the part of the named entity. CAR would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the governments, companies, and individuals whose responses to CAR's trace requests and provision of other information have been critical in its investigations.

INTRODUCTION

Although they receive little international attention, mass attacks on civilians by organised armed groups aligned with pastoralist and agrarian communities in Nigeria's north and central belt arguably constitute the western Sahel's deadliest armed conflict.

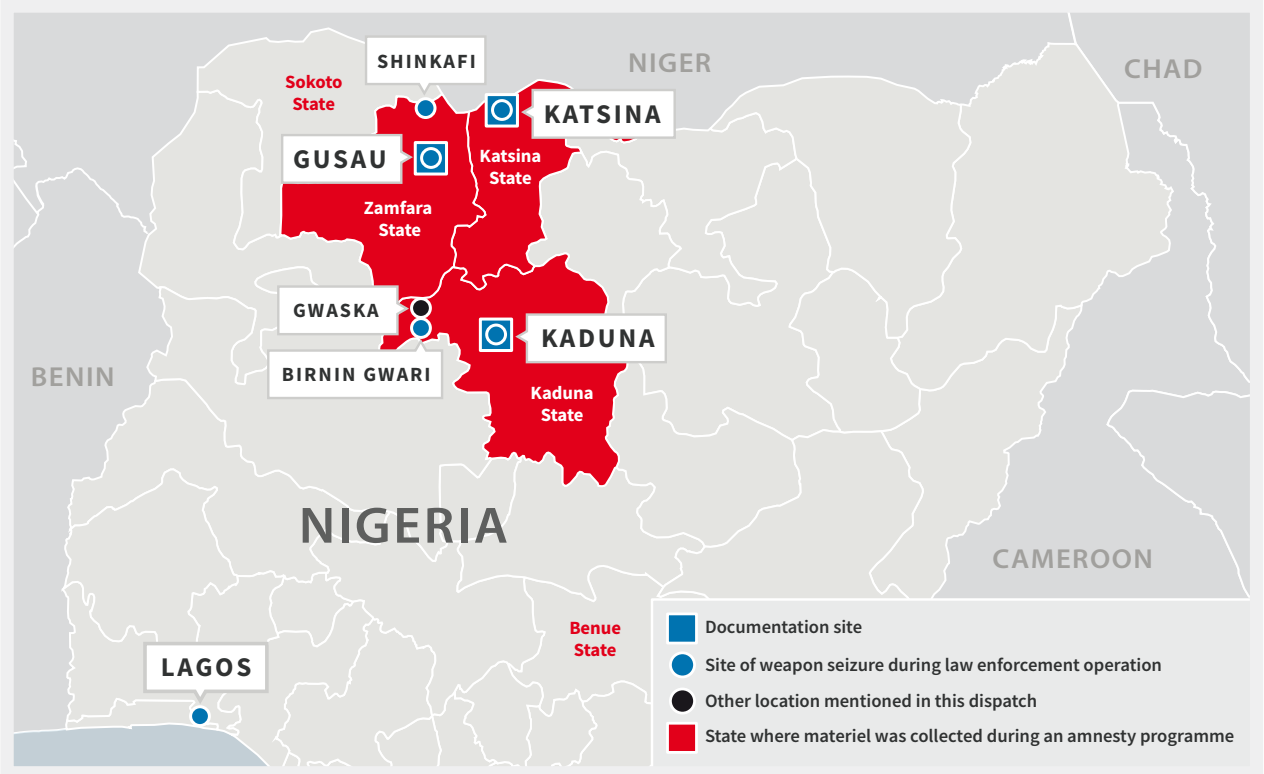
Inter-communal violence has killed more than 3,600 people and displaced an additional 300,000 since its resurgence in 2014 (ACLED, n.d.; Baloch, 2019). Armed groups on both sides perpetrate organised attacks against civilian villages using vehicles, motorbikes, assault rifles, and general-purpose machine guns.

Including reprisal attacks, Nigeria's herder–farmer conflict killed more people in 2018 than Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa. Indeed, the clashes claimed 40 per cent more lives than Islamist attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger combined (ACLED, n.d.). Violence in north and northwest Nigeria continued into 2019, displacing some 20,000 people from Sokoto and Zamfara states into neighbouring Niger's Maradi region between April and May (Baloch, 2019).

Unlike Boko Haram attacks, Nigerian herder–farmer violence is perpetrated almost exclusively with small arms and light weapons. Since 2016, a succession of state-level arms collection programmes, supported by the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) and the Mines Advisory Group, has sought to remove weapons from communities and armed groups involved in these attacks. They have collected large numbers of weapons

FIGURE 1

Locations referenced in this dispatch



in Nigeria's northern and central states, including 670 weapons in Katsina, nearly 6,000 in Zamfara, and almost 700 in Benue.[1] While the weapons collected during these initiatives are largely artisanal (or craft-produced), they also include factory-produced military weapons.

During 2017 and 2018, CAR field teams documented weapons and ammunition collected from agrarian and pastoralist communities, in addition to materiel seized during law enforcement operations against pastoralist-aligned armed groups. The documentation took place in three epicentres of the herder–farmer conflict:

- Katsina state, which is a major pastoralist migration route between Nigeria and Niger;
- southern Zamfara state and northern Kaduna state, where the documented sample included weapons reportedly taken from the powerful armed group under the control of Buharin Daji; and
- the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna state, where the Nigerian Army deployed alongside Nigerian Police Force personnel in May 2018, following a massacre of more than 50 people in Gwaska village (see Figure 1).

To CAR's knowledge, this is the only systematic effort to document and analyse the provenance of illicit weapons and ammunition that have been circulating among northern Nigerian communities and that have been used in herder–farmer violence.

This dispatch concentrates on 148 factory-manufactured small arms (mainly military assault rifles) and 729 rounds of ammunition in the data set. The focus on factory-manufactured materiel does not diminish the significance of artisanal weapons in the region. CAR field teams also viewed 4,895 artisanal weapons during the documentation (see Box 1). It is, however, far more difficult to establish the provenance of such weapons, as they display few consistent features and rarely bear identifying marks.

A limitation of the data presented in this dispatch relates to the circumstances of collection and seizure. CAR documented weapons collected in amnesty programmes that targeted both agrarian and pastoralist communities, but was only able to document seized weapons that were taken from groups aligned with pastoralists. CAR aims to rectify this shortcoming in the future.

TABLE 1

Locations and quantities of materiel that CAR has documented in northern and central Nigeria

Documentation date	Documentation location	Seizure/ recovery date	Seizure/ recovery location	Provenance	Factory-made arms	Rounds of ammunition
3–4 April 2017	Katsina, Katsina state	December 2016–April 2017	Katsina state	Pastoralist weapons collection/amnesty programme	41	590
14–15 March 2018	Gusau, Zamfara state	January–March 2018	Zamfara and Kaduna states	Pastoralist weapons collection/amnesty programme; weapons seized from members of Buharin Daji's armed group in Shinkafi local government area	73	120
30–31 May 2018	Kaduna, Kaduna state	14–18 May 2018	Birnin Gwari local government area	Seizures from suspected herder armed group members on 24 April, 8 May, and 28 May 2018	34	19

1. BREAKDOWN OF THE DATA SET

While the factory-manufactured weapons in the data set range from handguns to a general-purpose machine gun, assault rifles of 7.62 × 39 mm calibre and self-loading rifles of 7.62 × 51 mm calibre predominate (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Weapons in the data set (n=148)

Weapon type	Katsina	Zamfara	Kaduna
5.56 × 45 mm assault rifle			2
7.62 × 39 mm assault rifle	23	39	24
7.62 × 51 mm self-loading rifle	6	13	5
12-gauge pump-action shotgun		2	2
12-gauge semi-automatic shotgun	4	5	1
12-gauge break-action shotgun	2	1	
9 × 19 mm sub-machine gun	2	4	
Bolt-action rifle	1	1	
7.65 × 17SR mm pistol	2		
7.65 × 20 mm pistol		1	
9 × 19 mm pistol		2	
Unidentified-calibre pistol		1	
38 mm anti-riot grenade launcher	1	1	
1.5 inch anti-riot grenade launcher		1	
7.62 × 39 mm light machine gun		1	
7.62 × 54R mm general-purpose machine gun		1	

TABLE 3

Ammunition in the data set (n=729)

Calibre	Katsina	Zamfara	Kaduna
5.56 × 45 mm	37		8
7.62 × 39 mm	21	67	11
7.62 × 51 mm	15	33	
9 × 19 mm	517	20	

The data reveals two significant calibre mismatches between the recovered weapons and the ammunition:

Hidden weapons

While the weapon data set is dominated by rifles of 7.62 × 39 mm calibre, over one-fifth of the rifle-compatible ammunition is 5.56 x 45 mm calibre (see Table 3). In Katsina, 5.56 × 45 mm cartridges comprised more than 40 per cent of the documented rifle ammunition, yet CAR's team documented no 5.56 × 45 mm assault rifles capable of firing this ammunition. Overall, CAR documented only two 5.56 × 45 mm assault rifles across the entire sample (both in Kaduna). This discrepancy suggests that 5.56 × 45 mm weapons may be circulating illicitly, but that they have not been recovered in security force operations, nor given up in state-sponsored collections—perhaps because they are prestige weapons.

Missing ammunition

CAR documented 12-gauge pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns in all three locations, but security forces reported that they had not recovered any corresponding 12-gauge ammunition. Most of the documented artisanal weapons that can accommodate cased ammunition are useable with 12-gauge ammunition. Given that artisanal weapons outnumber factory-manufactured weapons turned in at regional collection sites by a ratio of around 35:1, the absence of 12-gauge ammunition is unusual. Its absence may be explained by the weapon collection programmes, which contributed the majority of the weapons to CAR's sample and which typically prioritised the recovery of weapons over ammunition. Nevertheless, it remains unclear why seized materiel included 12-gauge weapons but no corresponding 12-gauge ammunition.

On the whole, ammunition in the data set was produced much more recently than the weapons (see Figures 2 and 3). Nine per cent of the ammunition was manufactured after 2000, while only one weapon can be identified as having been produced after this date: a shotgun manufactured in 2014 and connected to recent long-range maritime trafficking from Europe to Nigeria, as discussed below.

▼ Type 56 rifle originally manufactured by the Qinghua Machine Tool Factory in China, seized from Buharin Daji armed group in Shinkafi Local Government Area, Zamfara State, documented by CAR in Gusau on 15 March 2018. The rifle has been decorated with coloured plastic sheets.

FIGURE 2

Manufacture dates of weapons in the data set (where known)

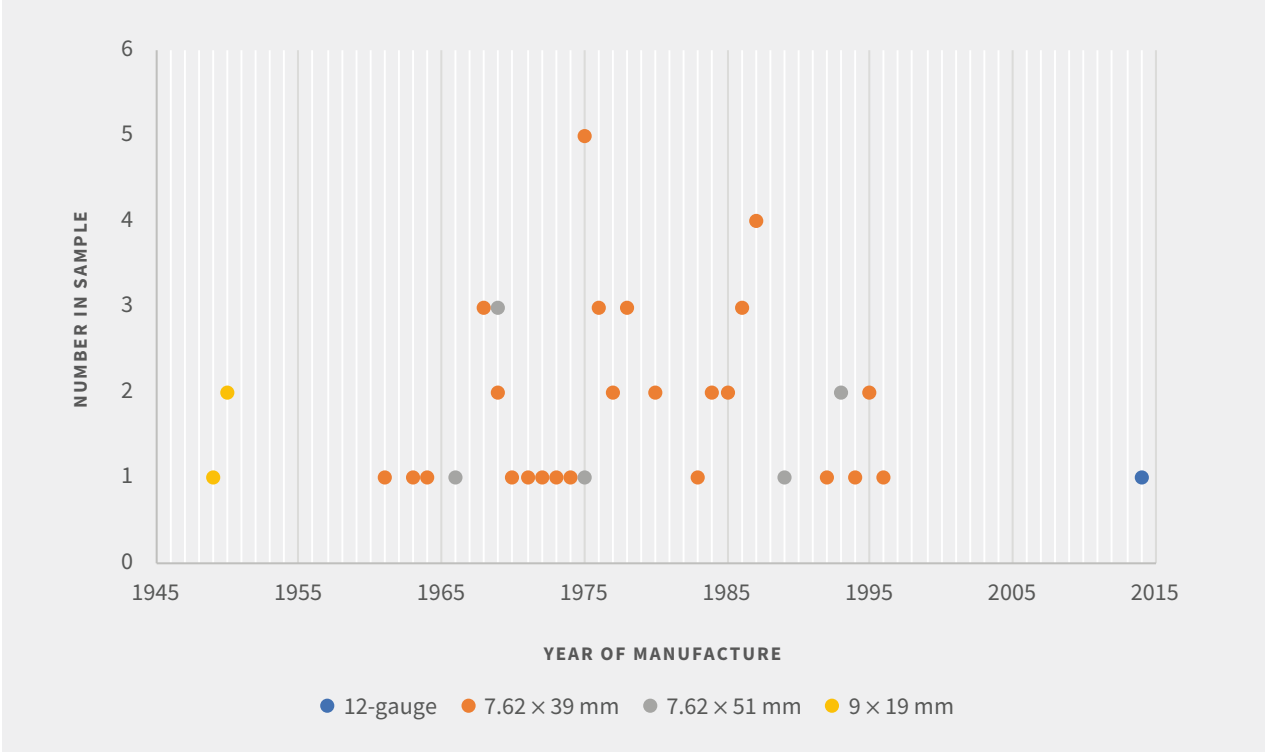
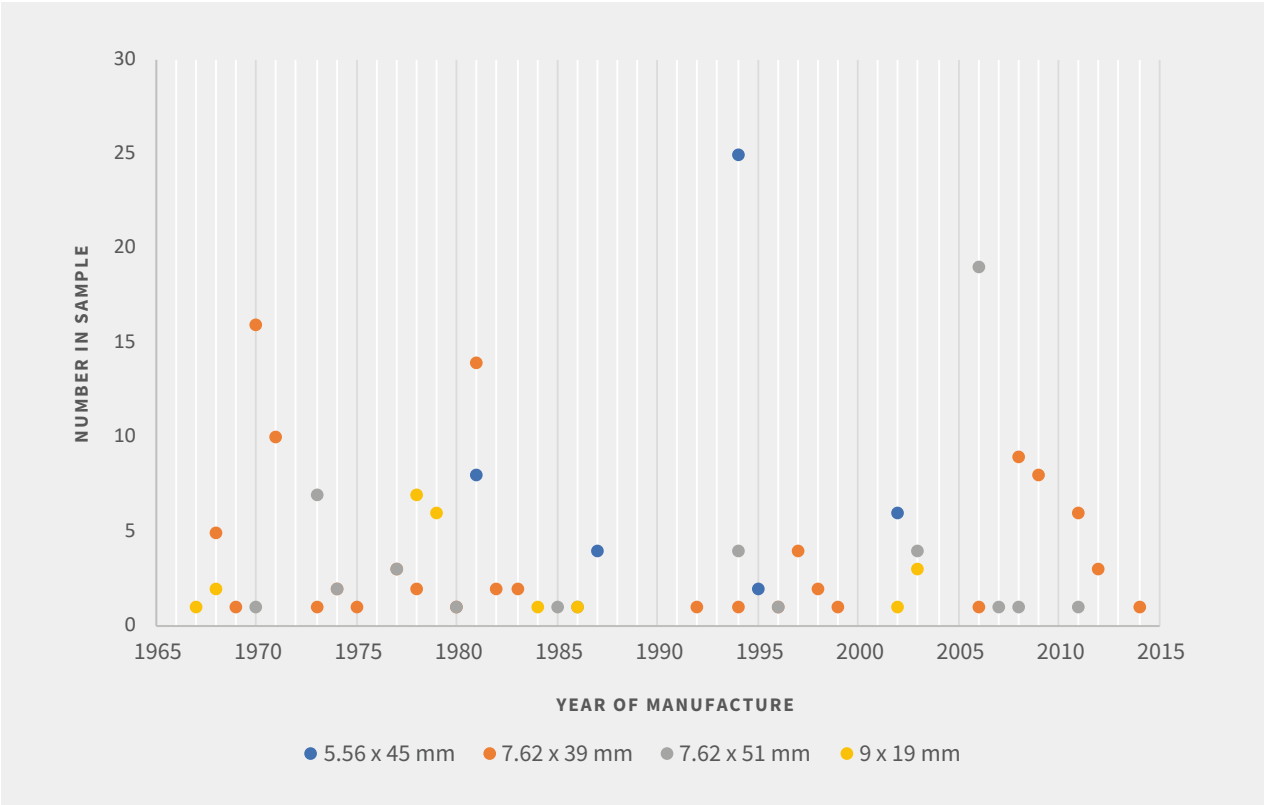


FIGURE 3

Manufacture dates of ammunition in the data set (where known)



BOX 1 — **CRAFT-PRODUCED WEAPONS**

While this dispatch focuses on the provenance of factory-manufactured weapons and ammunition, the artisanal weapons which account for the majority of seizures and collections also deserve attention (Nowak and Gsell, 2018).

CAR observed seven common types of artisanal weapon in the three documentation locations: long-barrelled muzzle-loaders (locally known as 'Dane guns'), break-action shotguns, slam-fire shotguns, semi-automatic pistols, semi-automatic revolvers, shot pistols, and shot revolvers. Less commonly encountered—but demonstrating considerable ambition on the part of their creators—are artisanal sub-machine guns and one artisanal AK-pattern assault rifle, whose parts, down to the bolt, were produced in a workshop. Only the rifle's barrel and handguard appear to have been taken from a factory-manufactured weapon (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

A craft-produced AK-pattern rifle documented in Gusau, 15 March 2018. From top to bottom: right-hand profile, forward trunnion, recoil spring guide, trigger assembly, bolt.

BOX 1 — CRAFT-PRODUCED WEAPONS (CONTINUED)

FIGURE 4 (continued)

2. WEAPONS ATTRIBUTABLE TO NATIONAL STOCKPILES IN THE REGION

WEAPONS FROM IVORIAN STATE STOCKPILES

Type 56-2 7.62 × 39 mm assault rifles with serial numbers in the range 3700000–3730000, produced by the Jianshe Machine Tool Factory in China, are prevalent among armed groups and communities in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic (as far east as Obo, which lies close to the South Sudanese border), Ghana, Mali, and Niger (CAR, 2016, pp. 35–37).

In Nigeria, CAR documented weapons of this type, with serial numbers in this range, in Zamfara and Katsina. Since Type 56-2 weapons produced by the Jianshe Machine Tool Factory are typically exported in batches with sequential serial numbers, it is likely that these weapons derive from the same source.[2] The Chinese government has confirmed to the United Nations that it lawfully exported rifles within this range to Côte d'Ivoire prior to 2004 (see the grey rows in Table 4).[3] It is therefore likely that other rifles within this range also originated in Ivorian state stockpiles.[4]

TABLE 4

Jianshe Machine Tool Factory Type 56-2 rifles with serial numbers in the range 3700000–3730000 observed in illicit circulation, 2011–18

Serial number	Documentation date	Location	Country	Armed group?	Notes
3712789	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	Forces Nouvelles (FN)	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3715199	April 2017	Katsina	Nigeria		State amnesty
3716750	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3717000	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3717316	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3717862	April 2015	Mbaiki	Central African Republic (CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Seizure by United Nations peacekeeping force

TABLE 4 (continued)

Serial number	Documentation date	Location	Country	Armed group?	Notes
3718199	May 2015	Gao–Gossi road	Mali		Smuggled in motorbike
3718854	April 2015	Bangui	CAR		Voluntary collection point
3718902	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3719964	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3722222	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3725797	April 2015	Obo	CAR		Anti-'janjaweed'/LRA operation
3726886	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3728538	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3728564	March 2018	Gusau	Nigeria		State amnesty/joint operations
3728577	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3728589	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004
3728850	April 2015	Bangui	CAR		Voluntary collection point
3729769	April 2015	Bria	CAR	Ex-Séléka (Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement)	Opération Big Boumou (United Nations peacekeeping force)
3731808	2011		Côte d'Ivoire	FN	FN disarmament; supplied legally prior to 2004

- Legally supplied from China to Côte d'Ivoire
- Documented elsewhere in West/Central Africa" and move below the "Documented in Nigeria
- Documented in Nigeria

WEAPONS POSSIBLY FROM LIBYAN STATE STOCKPILES

Three weapons in the data set are of a distinctive type of Polish-made KbK-AKMS assault rifle, manufactured between 1975 and 1978 with Arabic rear-sight markings. Although detailed records no longer exist, the Polish government has stated that it supplied weapons of this specification to only four countries—Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen—all during the 1970s (UNSC, 2013, para. 62).[5] CAR has documented weapons of the same specification in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger, as well as in Libya itself.[6] Given these observations, CAR judges it to be plausible that the three weapons in the Nigeria data set originated in Gaddafi-era Libyan stockpiles, although extant Polish records cannot absolutely confirm their original export to Libya.

The data set also includes a Belgian-made FN FAL assault rifle. The weapon's primary and secondary serial numbers indicate that it was originally produced around 1975 and that it formed part of the same order (for the same customer) as FN FAL rifles previously documented by CAR in Mali and Niger (see the blue rows in Table 5). CAR has been unable to confirm the original export destination of these rifles. Belgian government records indicate that Libya made several large orders for FN FAL rifles, which were delivered between 1969 and 1975 (Spleeters, 2013). Separately, CAR documented a sequence of FN FAL rifles originally exported to Libya in 1975 (see the grey rows in Table 5). These weapons were seized in Lebanon in 2012, while they were en route to Syria as part of a clandestine maritime cargo.[7] However, the serial numbers of these Libyan-imported FN FALs do not overlap with those from the batch documented in Mali, Niger, or Nigeria. In the absence of a trace response, therefore, the original export destination of these rifles remains unconfirmed.[8]

CAR JUDGES IT TO BE PLAUSIBLE THAT THE THREE WEAPONS IN THE NIGERIA DATA SET ORIGINATED IN GADDAFI-ERA LIBYAN STOCKPILES.

▼ 9 × 19 mm ammunition which the Nigerian Army collected from agrarian and pastoralist communities in Zamfara State in early 2018.
© CAR

TABLE 5

FN FAL rifles manufactured in 1973–75, included in CAR's iTrace data set

Documentation location (country, site)		Context	Primary serial number	Secondary serial number	Estimated production year[9]	Confirmed provenance
Niger	Dirkou	Seized near Bilma from an alleged trafficker	1142129	104564	1973	
Lebanon	Kfarshima	Clandestine maritime cargo seized on the *Letfallah II* en route from Libya to Syria in 2012	1225111	112210	1974	Part of order from Government of Libya (August 1975)
			1232064	119163		
			1240363	127462		
			1243069	130168		
Mali	Gao	Seized from armed groups by the Malian army	1347775	194647	1975	
Nigeria	Gusau	Seized from the Buharin Daji armed group	1357984	204856		
Niger	Dirkou	Seized near Bilma from an alleged trafficker	1359102	205974		
			1361340	208212		

Batch of rifles exported to Libya in 1975

Batch of rifles exported to an identified end user around 1975–76

Note: *During the manufacturing period under review, FN Herstal marked FN FAL rifles with a primary serial number, which was a cumulative running total of all FALs that FN Herstal had produced, and a secondary serial number, which indicated the rifle's position in a running total for a particular customer. Thus, if the difference between the primary serial numbers of two rifles equals the difference between their secondary serial numbers, they must have been produced for the same customer. Rifles for which this is the case are shaded in the same colour in the table. If the difference between their secondary serial numbers is less than the difference between their primary serial numbers they may still have been produced for the same customer, but with some production for other customers in between.*

3. COMMONALITIES WITH TERRORIST AND ARMED-GROUP ATTACKS ELSEWHERE IN THE SAHEL

Four of the weapons—documented in Gusau and in Katsina—are Iraqi-manufactured Tabuk assault rifles. All four are M70-pattern weapons with folding buttstocks, were manufactured in 1987, and have had their external markings erased in a highly distinctive way, possibly with the same tool (CAR recovered the serial numbers from internal components). Three of them had recoverable serial numbers, which lie within a narrow range between 2047900 and 2048600.

UN staff in Mali first identified Tabuk rifles of this specification, with markings erased in exactly the same manner. These weapons had been used in an attack against a Malian gendarmerie patrol in Dialloubé, central Mali, on 19 January 2016. The Macina Liberation Front (Front de Libération du Macina, FLM), an Al-Mourabitoune-aligned terrorist group, claimed the attack. Neither CAR nor other weapon researchers had documented this weapon type elsewhere in Africa prior to this date. Malian security forces subsequently recovered another weapon of this specification in a cache in Timbuktu in April 2016. During 2016–17 CAR documented three other Tabuk assault rifles, which security forces had seized from unknown individuals in Agadez and Dirkou in northern Niger (see Table 6). The commonalities in the way that marks have been obliterated from all these weapons—in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria—strongly indicate that they come from the same illicit source (see Figure 5).

CAR has not yet been able to identify the original state end-user of these weapons.[10] There is no suggestion that herder-linked armed groups in Nigeria have ties to the FLM or other terrorist groups. They do, however, evidently obtain weapons originating from the same illicit source.

▼ **Weapons collected in state-wide amnesty programme, Katsina State, during early 2017.**
© CAR

TABLE 6

Tabuk rifles produced in 1987 and observed in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria

Documentation location (country, site)		Documentation date	Serial number	Context
Mali	Bilé village, Dialloubé cercle, Mopti region	19 January 2016	2050386	Seized during an engagement with a gendarmerie patrol
	Timbuktu	12 April 2016	Unrecoverable	Recovered from a cache of 14 AK-pattern weapons
Niger	Agadez	18 April 2016	Unrecoverable	Seizure in northern Niger
	Dirkou	2 March 2017	Unrecoverable	Seizure in northern Niger
		2 March 2017	Unrecoverable	
Nigeria	Katsina	4 April 2017	Unrecoverable	Collection, Katsina/Kaduna states
	Gusau	14 March 2018	2048559	Collection, Zamfara state
		15 March 2018	2047907	
		15 March 2018	2048173	

FIGURE 5

Tabuk assault rifle with distinctively erased markings. Top: Collected from herder communities in Zamfara state, Nigeria, documented 14 March 2018. Bottom: Seized in northern Niger, documented in Dirkou on 2 March 2017.

Note the identical direction, placement, and coverage of the obliteration; the serial number has been removed but the manufacture date left intact, as well as the Arabic calibre marking on the rear sight block.

4. DOMESTIC SOURCES: STATE STOCKPILES AND LONG-RANGE TRAFFICKING

WEAPONS FROM NIGERIAN STATE STOCKPILES

Four of the weapons in the data set were previously in service with Nigerian national defence and security forces. CAR has established this through formal tracing and the analysis of secondary marks applied to the weapons, which identify their users. Most weapons held by Nigerian state agencies do not bear secondary user markings, which means that other weapons in the sample may also derive from Nigerian forces (CAR, PRESCOM, and UNIDIR, 2016).

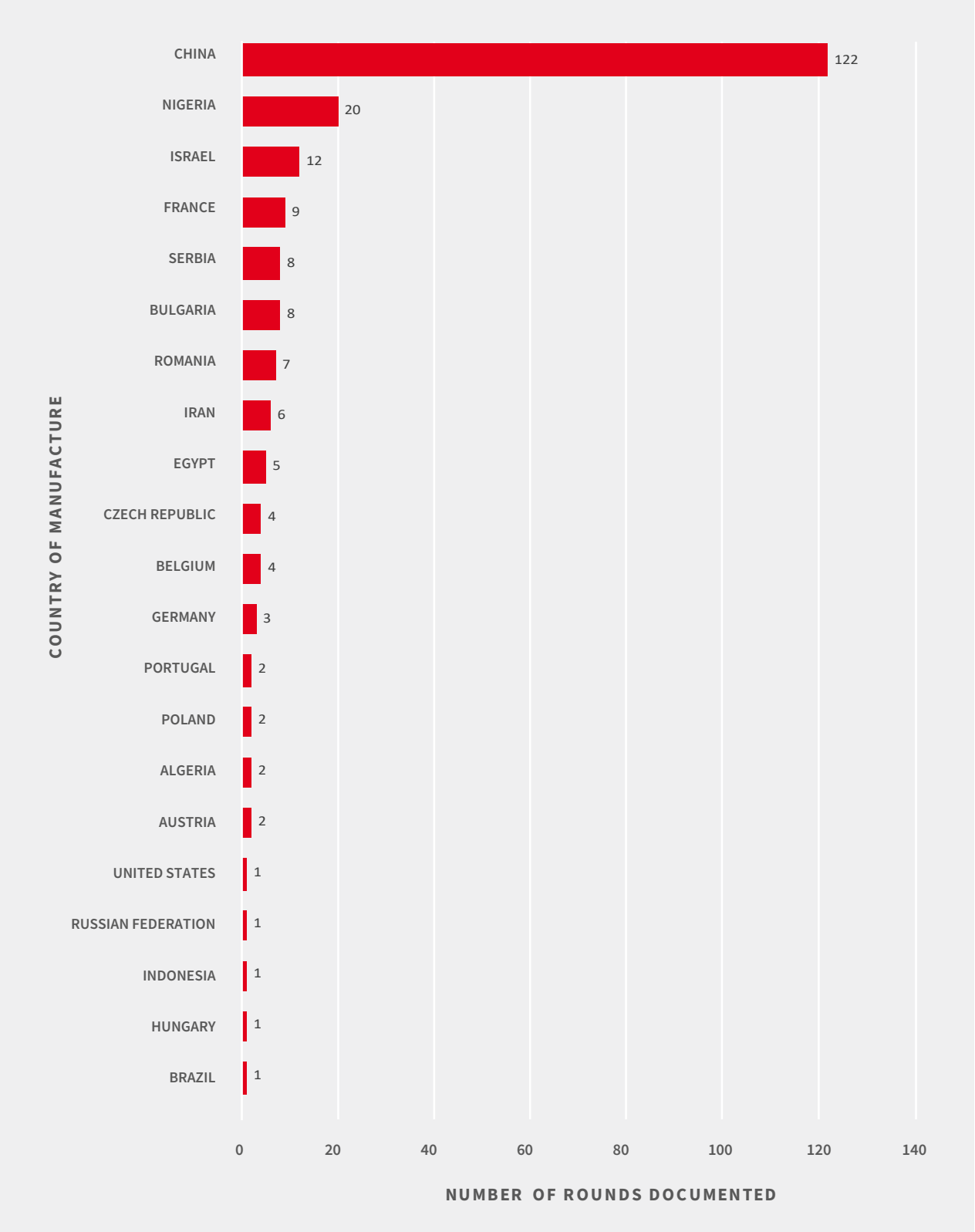
The prevalence of Nigerian-manufactured ammunition in the sample supports this observation. Cartridges produced by Nigeria's state factories are the second-most numerous in the data set (see Figure 6); they are also the most recently manufactured, with some produced as late as 2014 (see Figure 3, 7.62 × 39 mm calibre).

Countries that are experiencing conflict or widespread armed violence tend to lose control of ammunition in their national stockpiles, be it through theft, loss, or battlefield capture.

▼ CAR field investigator in Gusau on 15 March 2018 inventories craft-produced weapons collected in Zamfara State's weapons amnesty.

FIGURE 6

Ammunition in the data set, by country of manufacture



Note: A single observation of a box of 500 Israeli-manufactured 9 × 19 mm rounds, listed in Table 3, has been excluded from this figure as it substantially skews the distribution by country. The figure also excludes 8 rounds in the data set whose country of origin CAR was unable to determine

NEW WEAPONS TRAFFICKED INTO NIGERIA BY CRIMINAL NETWORKS

Bulk trafficking by sea from Turkey is an unexpected source of illicit weapons in Nigeria.

Ten of the 148 weapons in the data set are Turkish-manufactured pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns; eight of them are marked with JOJEFF and BABALE brands (see Figure 7).[11] One BABALE-branded shotgun bears markings that suggest it was manufactured in 2014. This is the most recently produced weapon in the data set.[12] Nigeria's firearms laws prohibit civilian possession of pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns, except with a police-issued licence (Nigeria, 1959, schedules I–II).

During 2017, Nigerian customs authorities seized four illicit shipments of more than 2,000 pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns manufactured in Turkey (see Figure 8). The seizures included several hundred JOJEFF-branded weapons, with 2017 manufacture dates. The weapons had been concealed within four containers shipped by sea to the port of Lagos. Subsequent investigations by Nigerian and Turkish law enforcement agencies have indicated that the shippers falsely declared the contents as consumer goods, ranging from washbasins to medical items.[13] CAR's own investigations show that this is a major organised trafficking route involving actors who are based in both Nigeria and Turkey. Major European shipping companies have unwittingly transferred large-scale weapon shipments orchestrated by these traffickers. A separate CAR publication on this trafficking operation is forthcoming.

FIGURE 7

Assembled and field-stripped JOJEFF-branded semi-automatic shotgun documented in Gusau, 15 March 2018

FIGURE 8

Smuggled shotgun shipment seized at Lagos port, 2 June 2017

© Nigerian Customs Service

CAR's documentation of JOJEFF-branded shotguns in northern and central Nigeria is the first concrete indication that closely matching weapons arrived in illicit circulation in Nigeria prior to the 2017 Lagos seizures. There is no indication that the Lagos shipments, or any that preceded them, were specifically destined for herder armed groups. Indeed, CAR has also documented JOJEFF-branded shotguns that were seized from a cult group in the Niger Delta. Nonetheless, CAR's data set of materiel documented in northern Nigeria contains ten weapons that match the models and manufacturers of those smuggled through the port of Lagos, suggesting that armed actors in the herder–farmer conflicts have obtained weapons that were similarly trafficked along major international smuggling routes.

CONCLUSION

Communities and armed groups engaged in Nigeria's herder–farmer conflicts use weapons derived from national, regional, and transcontinental sources.

Some of these weapons, and a substantial proportion of ammunition, were originally lost, stolen, or captured from Nigerian national stockpiles. This is far from a Nigerian problem, however. An equally significant number of weapons were diverted from state stockpiles as far afield as Côte d'Ivoire, and possibly Libya, before being trafficked to Nigeria. Other materiel shares a specific—as yet unidentified—illicit source with weapons used by armed terrorist groups in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

Commonalities among the weapons circulating on regional illicit markets may reflect the long-range movements of pastoralists in the subregion. Alternatively, local groups and communities may be acquiring weapons that criminal networks are smuggling into Nigeria via regional trafficking routes. The arrest in July 2019 of an individual from southern Nigeria who was transporting 19 assault rifles, automatic pistols, and light machine guns in a bus crossing from Gao in Mali to Niger certainly suggests that Nigerian arms traffickers source weapons from beyond their country's immediate neighbours (AFP, 2019).[14]

The herder–farmer conflict also involves weapons that match newly manufactured firearms from Turkey, which international criminal networks have smuggled in bulk to West Africa. In some cases, therefore, combatants are accessing relatively new weapons, which arrive in Nigeria thanks to the efforts of sophisticated, transcontinental weapon traffickers.

Nigeria's state-level arms collection programmes, together with law enforcement operations, have gathered significant numbers of illicit weapons. Preventing the rapid replacement of these weapons, however, will require law enforcement and border control initiatives in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and beyond to stop small arms from moving across the region's borders. Meanwhile, targeted law enforcement and interdiction efforts in Europe and Western Asia are required to prevent new illicit arms manufactured outside Africa from being trafficked into Nigeria.

LOCAL GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES MAY BE ACQUIRING WEAPONS THAT CRIMINAL NETWORKS ARE SMUGGLING INTO NIGERIA VIA REGIONAL TRAFFICKING ROUTES.

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CAR is equally grateful to the national authorities and security forces of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. This dispatch draws on weapon documentation that CAR field investigation teams have undertaken in these three countries, which would have been impossible without their ongoing support. CAR extends special thanks the Haute Autorité de Contrôle des Importations d'Armes et de leur Utilization of Burkina Faso, the Commission Nationale de Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères of Mali, and the Commission Nationale pour la Collecte et le Contrôle des Armes Illicites of Niger.

ENDNOTES

1 Author interviews with PRESCOM officials, Abuja, various dates, 2018; observation of Benue, Katsina, and Zamfara arms collections; review of inventory of Benue state collected weapons.

2 Author observations of crates of Chinese Type 56-2 assault rifles in state stockpiles of an undisclosed East African country, October 2015.

3 Author correspondence with a UN staff member, 21 September 2015.

4 On 23 September 2019 CAR issued formal trace requests to the Government of China for the Type 56-2 assault rifles documented in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Nigeria (see Table 4). At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer/s in question. The weapons supplied legally to Côte d'Ivoire (shaded in grey in Table 4) were not subject to a CAR trace request, since China had already responded to a trace request from the United Nations regarding these weapons (author correspondence with a UN staff member, 21 September 2015). CAR has also documented Type 56-2 assault rifles from the same factory, falling within the same serial number range, in Burkina Faso and Niger. These weapons were at the time of writing under judicial seal and therefore their details could not be published.

5 On 9 October 2019, CAR issued formal trace requests to the Government of Poland for the KbK-AKMS assault rifles. At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a trace response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer/s in question.

6 As this dispatch went to press, weapons documented in Burkina Faso and Niger were under judicial seal and therefore their details could not be published. Malian armed forces personnel recovered the KbK-AKMS rifle from non-state forces in Kidal, northern Mali, on 21 June 2014. On 29 December 2015, the Government of Poland responded to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 14 May 2015. This response confirmed that the rifle was manufactured by metal plant Zakłady Metalowe 'Łucznik' in Radom, Poland, in 1976, and was delivered to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Trade (the only entity in Poland authorised to export arms at that time). The Polish government has been unable to determine the country of destination of the rifle, since it does not retain any data on arms exports from this period.

7 On 9 October 2015, the Government of Belgium responded to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 5 August 2015. This response confirms that the FN Herstal-manufactured rifle with serial number 1225111, subject to CAR's trace request, was part of order number 23-2-6255 of 29 August 1975, which was delivered to Libya on an unspecified date.

On 9 October 2015, the Government of Belgium responded to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 5 August 2015. This response confirms that the FN Herstal-manufactured rifle with serial number 1232064, subject to CAR's trace request, was part of order number 23-2-6255 of 29 August 1975, which was delivered to Libya on an unspecified date.

On 9 October 2015, the Government of Belgium responded to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 5 August 2015. This response confirms that the FN Herstal-manufactured rifle with serial number 1240363, subject to CAR's trace request, was part of order number 23-2-6255 of 29 August 1975, which was delivered to Libya on an unspecified date.

On 9 October 2015, the Government of Belgium responded to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 5 August 2015. This response confirms that the FN Herstal-manufactured rifle with serial number 1243069, subject to CAR's trace request, was part of order number 23-2-6255 of 29 August 1975, which was delivered to Libya on an unspecified date.

8 On 17 October 2017, CAR issued trace requests for the FN FAL rifles with serial numbers 1142129/104564 and 1359102/205974. At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer/s in question.

On 5 April 2016, CAR issued a trace request for the FN FAL rifle with serial number 1347775/194647. At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer in question.

On 28 October 2019, the Government of Belgium responded promptly to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 23 September 2019. This response confirms that: 1) the Government of Belgium forwarded CAR's request to trace the FN FAL rifle with serial number 1357984/204856 to the manufacturer, FN Herstal; 2) FN Herstal provided the information requested to the Government of Belgium; and 3) the Government of Belgium stated that it is unable to share any information regarding the export of the item with CAR.

On 28 October 2019, the Government of Belgium responded promptly to a formal trace request issued by CAR on 23 September 2019. This response confirms that: 1) the Government of Belgium forwarded CAR's request to trace the FN FAL rifle with serial number 1361340/208212 to the manufacturer, FN Herstal; 2) FN Herstal provided the information requested to the Government of Belgium; and 3) the Government of Belgium stated that it is unable to share any information regarding the export of the item with CAR.

9 The production year can be estimated from the primary serial number, which is a cumulative numbering of all FN FALs produced, coupled with annual production totals presented in Stevens and Rutten (1981).

10 On 9 October 2019, CAR issued formal trace requests to the Government of Iraq regarding the weapons with serial numbers intact. At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer/s in question.

11 It is possible that these brands are specific to particular customers or markets: in Niger and Syria, CAR has documented Turkish-manufactured shotguns of very similar construction, marked with different brand names and external decoration.

12 CAR has issued formal trace requests for all those Turkish-manufactured shotguns in the Nigerian data set with serial numbers. At the time of writing, CAR had not yet received a response. Given the absence of a response, CAR cannot pronounce on the legality of the transfer/s in question.

13 Author interview with Nigerian Customs Agency personnel, Abuja, February 2018.

14 CAR communication with a Nigerien security agency source, July 2019.

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