

PART II



MALI

OVERVIEW

From 1990 to 1996 northern Mali faced an insurgency that stemmed from long-standing separatism among the nomadic Tuareg and Arabs as well as government marginalization and repression of the north of the country.¹ The Tamanrasset Accords (1991), the National Pact (1992), and several accords in 1995 finally led to the termination of conflict and to the demobilization of 12,000 ex-combatants.² The 1996 Flame of Peace ceremony in Timbuktu saw the symbolic incineration of 3,000 small arms. In 1999, the government initiated further decentralization and increased autonomy for northern Mali. In addition to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), the government of Mali, with support from Belgium, conducted a weapons-for-development programme from December 2000 to June 2003,³ which collected and destroyed 850 weapons, 12,548 rounds of ammunition, and 230 grenades.⁴

Despite Bamako's ground-breaking approach to disarmament and peace, northern Mali is still plagued

with gun trafficking and persistent insecurity. For example, the Algeria-based armed group known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat, GSPC) reportedly travelled to northern Mali in 2003–04 to obtain mortar launchers, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and surface-to-air missiles.⁵ Weapons are trafficked to the country from its Sahelian neighbours, Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger,⁶ originating from as far away as Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.⁷ Within Mali, sources include weapons stolen or sold from government armouries⁸ and craft production.⁹ Recent kidnappings,¹⁰ vehicle hijackings,¹¹ as well as outbreaks of inter-tribal conflicts¹² demonstrate that northern Mali still has a small arms problem.

OUTLOOK

While the state's treatment of the Tuareg has certainly improved since the days of President Traoré, when the central government marginalized the north, harsh environmental conditions (drought and competition for land in the worsening climate of the

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Sahel) are factors that still afflict Malian society.¹³ Community-based violence in the north of the country has not vanished. In September 2004, an outbreak of violence between the Arab and Kounta tribes resulted in 13 deaths; clashes between the two groups have been ongoing for the past five years.¹⁴ On the other side of the country, the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has had deleterious spillover effects, effectively stopping cross-border traffic and bringing the local economy and utility-dependent services (such as health care) to a halt.¹⁵ However, the refugee situation remained manageable. In 2004, Mali was host to 10,009 refugees,¹⁶ primarily from Mauritania (6,150), while the Ivorian conflict generated an influx of 1,504 refugees in March 2003.¹⁷

The 2003–04 GSPC incursions have drawn international attention to northern Mali. The US government has provided military training and support to the Malian armed forces, including desert-specific vehicles and equipment through the US Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), which also covers Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.¹⁸ Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Mauritania have also adopted regional measures such as the creation of a bureau for

intelligence gathering in Tamanrasset, Algeria, in addition to the establishment of bilateral initiatives that aim to improve border monitoring.¹⁹

These initiatives do little, however, to provide alternative livelihoods for the northern population, whose limited wealth comes primarily from international smuggling and transport, activities that will be threatened by enhanced border security.²⁰ The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) coordinated meetings in Timbuktu in April 2005 among officials from Mali, Mauritania, and Niger to devise an integrated approach to tackle the cross-border nature of security problems and the relationship between the lack of security and the lack of development in these areas.²¹ The case of Mali not only illustrates the regional context of the small arms problem but also demonstrates that effectively combating the scourge requires the active participation of neighbouring states and enhanced support from the international community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
GSPC	Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa

been sold' (ICG, 2005, p. 19).
 9 Kante (2004).
 10 Sylla (2005).
 11 IRIN (2004a).
 12 IRIN (2004a).
 13 Kivimäki (2003); Keita (2002); Poulton and ag Youssouf (1998).
 14 IRIN (2004a).
 15 IRIN (2004b). See also Chapter 2.
 16 UNOCHA (2004, p.9).
 17 UNHCR (2003, p. 226).
 18 Smith (2004); ICG (2005, p. 30).

ENDNOTES

- 1 See Chapter 2.
- 2 Humphreys and ag Mohamed (2003, p. 28).
- 3 Interview with Colonel Sirakoro Sangaré, President of the Malian National Commission on Small Arms, 22 March 2005, by telephone.
- 4 GoM (2003).
- 5 Smith (2004).
- 6 Small Arms Survey focus group discussions with Malian ex-combatants, Bamako, 2–3 September 2004.
- 7 Maliweb (2004).
- 8 Confidential written correspondence with international researchers with expertise on northern Mali, January and February 2005. A recent report by the International Crisis Group mentions that 'Several officers at the Malian army garrison were punished in 2003 when commanders from Bamako discovered that most of its armoury had

See also Chapter 2.

- 19 ICG (2005, p. 30).
- 20 ICG (2005, p. i)
- 21 Written correspondence with Andrew Gilmour, Political Advisor of the UN Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in West Africa, 8 April 2005.

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