

PART II



NIGER

OVERVIEW

In 1992, the nomadic Tuareg in the north and Toubou in the east engaged in an armed rebellion against the Nigerien state. Their aim was greater political representation and a more equitable distribution of national resources. A fragmented guerrilla war ensued in the Aïr, Azawak, Kawar, and Manga regions, which prompted local Arab and Peulh communities to establish self-defence militias to prevent both Tuareg and Toubou rebels from stealing cattle and property in order to fund their war effort. Three peace accords, in Ouagadougou (1995), Algiers (1997), and N'Djamena (1998), followed by the adoption of a new constitution in 1999 and elections in 2000, restored peace in what remains one of the world's poorest countries.

Presidential elections in December 2004 resulted in the re-election of Mamadou Tandja, the first Nigerien leader to finish his tenure without being ousted in a military coup.¹ Even though drought and underdevelopment are the most serious challenges facing the country today,² peace in

Niger should not be taken for granted. A ten-day army mutiny in August 2002³ and reports in late 2003 of sporadic fighting between Toubous and Tuaregs in the Tesker area underscore the fragility of Niger's peace process.⁴ Furthermore, in March 2004 the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat, GSPC) clashed with Nigerien forces in the north of the country.⁵ Nigerien authorities reported that the GSPC had been collaborating with Nigerien armed bandits and was 'using hideouts and caches left over from the Tuareg rebellion'.⁶

ARMED GROUPS

Tuareg and Toubou rebel groups

Origins/composition:

Soon after the resolution of the 1992 guerrilla war, the formerly united Aïr and Azawak Liberation Front (Front de libération de l'Aïr et de l'Azawak, FLAA) dissolved into as many as 13 Tuareg and Toubou rebel groups that wound up splitting along tribal lines in order to contest adherence to the successive peace agreements.⁷ The

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Union of Armed Resistance Forces (Union des forces de la résistance armée, UFRA, a coalition of three groups), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara (Forces armées révolutionnaires du Sahara, FARS), and the Democratic Front for Renewal (Front Démocratique du Renouveau, FDR) were among the last groups to agree to peace in 1997 and 1998 respectively.⁸ More than 7,000 ex-combatants registered to take part in the country's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme.⁹

Leadership:

The FLAA was led by Rhissa Ag Boula,¹⁰ the UFRA by Mohamed Anacko, the FARS by Chahai Barkay, and the FDR by Issa Lamine.¹¹

Areas of control/activity:

The rebellion was active in the regions of Aïr, Azawak, Kawar, and Manga. The Tuareg and Toubou live in the desert areas bordering Algeria, Chad, Libya, and Mali. The FDR was mostly active in the Kawar region, which is home to Niger's largest oilfield, much of which extends into Libya.¹²

Sources of financing/support:

As their own resources decreased, Toubou and Tuareg rebels stole cattle and goods from other communities to purchase arms and finance their war effort.¹³

Status:

Reintegration is ongoing. None of the rebellion's armed groups remain active today.¹⁴

Arab and Peulh self-defence militias**Origins/composition:**

Arab and Peulh communities organized self-defence militias to protect property and cattle from insurgents seeking to finance their war effort. The Vigilance Committee of Tassara (Comité de vigilance de Tassara, CVT), the Self-Defence Committee (Comité d'Autodéfense, CAD), and the Peulh and Arab militias were the principal self-defence groups.¹⁵

Leadership:

The CVT was led by Najim Boujima, the CAD by Boubacar Ahmed, the Peulh Militia by Maazou Boukar, and the Arab Militia by Hamid Ahmed.¹⁶

Areas of control/activity:

The CVT and the CAD were based in Azawak, and the Peulh and Arab militias operated in the Manga region.¹⁷

Sources of financing/support:

Arab and Peulh communities.

Status:

None of the self-defence militias remain active today.¹⁸

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

Small arms collected during the N'Guigmi 'Arms for Development' pilot project included old mousqueton rifles, MAS 36, SIG, AK-47s, and FN FAL automatic weapons.¹⁹

Light weapons:

Rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), grenades.²⁰

Sources

Domestic:

Very rudimentary craft small arms can be found in N'Guigmi.²¹

Foreign:

Armed Chadian rebels who entered Niger in the early 1990s sold weapons to Nigerien rebels.²² Weapons were also smuggled in from other neighbouring countries, including Nigeria, Libya, and Algeria.²³ During the rebellion, assault rifles reportedly cost between two and four camels.²⁴

Recovered

DDR:

The 1,243 weapons surrendered as part of the peace agreements²⁵ were subsequently destroyed at a Flame of Peace ceremony on 25 September 2000 in Agadez. As of March 2004, however,²⁶ 3,160 of the 7,014 ex-combatants registered remained to be demobilized and reintegrated due to a lack of funding.²⁷

Other:

Personnel with the pilot UNDP 'Arms for Development' project collected 160 weapons between January 2002 and December 2003 in N'Guigmi, 103 of which were destroyed in March 2003.²⁸ As of September 2003, a total of 1,188 weapons had either been surrendered voluntarily to the National Commission on Small Arms or seized by the authorities.²⁹ Five additional mini-Flames of Peace resulted in the destruction of 100 weapons each (500 total) in Diffa (21 July 2001), Agadez (27 July 2001 and 9 October 2002), and N'Guigmi (5 March and 24 August 2004).³⁰

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HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES

CAFF

Extent of recruitment:

Contrary to their Malian counterparts, Tuareg rebels in Niger reportedly had child soldiers among their ranks.³¹ The extent of recruitment is unclear, however.

Displacement

Refugees abroad:

About 200,000 refugees reportedly fled from Niger and Mali in the early 1990s.³² By 2000, most Nigerien refugees had repatriated.

Refugees hosted:

Niger hosted 328 refugees in 2004,³³ most of whom were from Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).³⁴

Other violations or abuses

Other:

With the exception of cattle rustling and robbing, there is very little information regarding abuses or violations perpetrated during the rebellion.

OUTLOOK

In late 2004, an outbreak of fighting revealed that Niger continues to face threats to its security. In October, government forces clashed with fighters they identified as bandits, resulting in five deaths. Mohamed Ag Boula claimed responsibility for the attack, adding that he was now heading a 200-strong rebel force dedicated to defending the rights of northern nomadic groups including the Tuareg, Toubou, and Semoir.³⁵ The attacks may also be linked to his brother, Rhissa Ag Boula, a former FLAA leader who later became minister of tourism. Rhissa Ag Boula had been detained on a charge of complicity to murder since December 2003.³⁶ He was released in March 2005, one month after his brother Mohamed set free four government soldiers he had captured during the October 2004 attacks.³⁷ In November 2004, in south-western Niger, another conflict erupted between landowners and cattle herders over land rights. This resulted in several casualties, the destruction of 80 granaries, and the death of dozens of cattle.³⁸

In response to GSPC incursions, the United States-led Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) trained approximately

130 Nigerien soldiers to combat the trafficking of arms, merchandise, and persons across the desert.³⁹ While increasing security through military assistance is positive, it does little to provide sustainable livelihoods to the 60 per cent of the Nigerien population living below the poverty line. Civil war in Côte d'Ivoire aggravated the situation as imports and exports can no longer go through Abidjan and have to be rerouted with additional expense.⁴⁰ So far, international aid (an annual USD 125 million) remains negligible and privation endemic.⁴¹ Indeed, Niger's fragile democratic process could well founder if the international community fails to provide the means to sustain it.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAD	Comité d'Autodéfense
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CVT	Comité de vigilance de Tassara
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARS	Forces armées révolutionnaires du Sahara
FDR	Front Démocratique du Renouveau
FLAA	Front de libération de l'Aïr et de l'Azawak
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la prédication et le combat
IDP	Internally displaced person
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade launcher
UFRA	Union des forces de la résistance armée
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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ENDNOTES

- 1 AP (2004).
- 2 Refugees International (2004).
- 3 IRIN (2004a); CSC (2004).
- 4 PACD (2003b).
- 5 IRIN (2004b).
- 6 IRIN (2004b).
- 7 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359).
- 8 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 9 Demetriou, Seido, and Lafrenière (2002).
- 10 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359).
- 11 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 12 Szajkowski (2004, p. 359)
- 13 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 14 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 15 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 16 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 17 Republic of Niger (2004).
- 18 Confidential interview with Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 19 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 20 PACD (2003b).
- 21 PACD (2003a).
- 22 IRIN (2003); Confidential interview with senior Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 23 IRIN (2003); Confidential interview with senior Nigerien military official, N'Guigmi, January 2004.
- 24 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 25 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 26 Demetriou, Seido, and Lafrenière (2002).
- 27 Confidential interview with Nigerien officials, Niamey, March 2004.
- 28 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 29 Florquin and Ali (2004).
- 30 CNCCAI (2005b).
- 31 Based on a video showing two Tuareg child soldiers seen by Baz Lecocq. Written correspondence with Baz Lecocq, Zentrum Morderner Orient, Berlin, April 2005. The use of child soldiers is not recognized by the government, however (CNCCAI, 2005a, para. 10.2).
- 32 Refugees International (2004).
- 33 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 34 UNHCR (2003, p. 226).
- 35 IRIN (2004c). These incidents appear to be unrelated to the September 2004 fighting in Northern Mali (see Chapter 2 and 'Mali' in Part II). Written correspondence with Albert Chaibou, member of the West African network of journalists dealing with peace and security issues, Niamey, Niger, 11 April. 2005.
- 36 ICG (2005, pp. 21–22).
- 37 IRIN (2005).
- 38 IRIN (2004d).
- 39 IRIN (2004c).
- 40 Refugees International (2004).
- 41 ICG (2005, pp. 21–22).

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- 2004d. 'Niger: At Least Eleven Herdsmen Killed in Harvest-Time Clashes.' 23 November. Accessed December 2004.
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