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MEASURING ILLICIT ARMS FLOWS

Niger

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About the author

Savannah de Tessières is a consultant for the Small Arms Survey and the UN with over 10 years' experience of working in the international security and arms fields, including extensive field research across Africa and the MENA region. Between 2011 and 2016, she was an arms expert on the UN Panel of Experts on Libya and served as the Panel's Coordinator between 2015 and 2016. Between 2007 and 2011, she worked for the Small Arms Survey, where she designed and led large-scale research projects into conflict analysis and arms proliferation. She holds master degrees from La Sorbonne University in Paris and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. She has published numerous reports and articles on security sector reform, international sanctions, arms trafficking and armed actors, and is a regular speaker at conferences and seminars.

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Security Assessment in North Africa

Federal Foreign Office

Front cover photo

7.62x54R mm ammunition seized from armed bandits in Agadez region in 2016.

Source: Savannah de Tessières

Overview

This Briefing Paper examines the measurement of illicit arms flows in Niger in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 16. Under Target 16.4, the 2030 Development Agenda considers the flows of illicit arms as an impediment to sustainable development and calls states to reach a significant reduction in such flows. This paper unpacks the concept of 'illicit arms flows' and discusses its measurement challenges. It finds that in Niger, primary sources of arms flows within and through the country include cross-border trafficking and diversion from domestic stockpiles. It notes that Nigerien security agencies all seize arms and describes the current state of data collection about those arms seizures. The paper goes on to note that while data is currently not comprehensive enough to assess progress done in implementing Target 16.4, the government is working to improve the situation. It notes that data derived from other, non-government sources can be useful, especially in countries such as Niger. Finally, it suggests that additional sources—including tracking arms and ammunition prices and data on the use of firearms in acts of violence—can serve as further possible indicators.

Key findings

- Niger's security forces seize weapons and ammunition and keep useful records. The quality of data collection varies greatly between institutions, however, and a central, national database of seizure-related information is crucially lacking.
- Though Niger is primarily a transit route for weapons circulating in the region, measuring illicit arms flows in the country is key to understanding the evolution of trafficking trends in the wider region.
- In the absence of comprehensive data on arms seizures in Niger, other indicators should also be used, including the fluctuation in materiel pricing and reports on the use of firearms in acts of violence.

Introduction

Niger is located at the heart of the Sahel and the region's most violent conflicts. Crises in Libya, Mali, and Nigeria directly impact Niger's internal security and present significant socio-economic challenges. This sense of insecurity in the country is reflected in increased domestic demand for weapons, particularly for small arms for self-protection. At the same time, the difficulty of controlling the country's vast desert territory and the absence of state control in several neighbouring border areas make the fight against trans-border insecurity highly challenging for the Nigerien authorities.

In 2015 UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which identify violence and illicit arms flows as impediments to development. Under SDG Target 16.4 UN member states committed to 'significantly reduce illicit . . . arms flows' by 2030 (UNGA, 2015). The UN's proposed indicator for this target (Indicator 16.4.2)[1] is the:

> Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms, whose illicit origin/context has been traced/established by a competent authority in line with international instruments (UN Statistical Commission, 2016).

The identification of effective indicators is key to monitoring progress, identifying shortcomings, and informing policy-making in order to meet the SDGs. Unfortunately, however, UN member states do not have the same capacities to conduct, record, and trace arms seizures, and in this regard countries acutely affected by armed violence and underdevelopment face more difficulties than others. Given these potential discrepancies in the availability of data, the Small Arms Survey has previously argued that Indicator 16.4.2 can be complemented with a range of additional indicators (De Martino and Atwood, 2015). In Niger—a country that lacks the capacity to maintain comprehensive data on arms seizures—datasets are, however, usable, improvable, and (most importantly) available to support the monitoring of SDG Target 16.4 .

This Briefing Paper—the third in a series of four publications on measuring illicit arms flows in selected countries—examines both Niger's domestic sources of illicit arms and cross-border trafficking dynamics. Based on field research conducted in Niger, including meetings with government,

civil society, and others, the Briefing Paper maps the national and international bodies that collect data relevant to monitoring the evolution of illicit arms flows in and through Niger. It also discusses the relevance of Indicator 16.4.2 and suggests ways to improve the monitoring of progress towards the achievement of SDG Target 16.4 in Niger, and more widely in Africa.

Context

The intrinsic links between armed insecurity in Niger and that of its neighbours makes analysing and measuring arms trafficking in Niger key to understanding the evolution of the arms-trafficking dynamics in the wider region. This is particularly true in those conflict-affected areas surrounding Niger where the collection of data is much more challenging.

Niger continues to face an increased threat of terrorism from largely external non-state armed groups. The collapse of the Libyan state in 2011 and the conflicts in Mali and Nigeria have fostered these threats. Groups such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Al Murabitun in Mali, as well as the Nigeria-based Boko Haram, threaten Niger's internal security.

The threat posed by transnational criminal networks has also increased in Niger. The country is a primary transit route for the trafficking of migrants and commodities, including arms and ammunition. Chronic insecurity and the difficulties the state faces in its attempts to control certain areas have boosted the activities of transnational criminal networks. This is compounded by the threat of terrorism and armed banditry, particularly in the north of the country and on the border with Mali.

The country is relatively stable at the moment and the last presidential election (March 2016) passed quite peacefully. The ethnic tensions that have resulted in multiple armed rebellions over the past 30 years remain palpable beneath the surface, however. Intercommunal conflicts are also common and generally relate to access to natural resources.[2]

Sources of illicit small arms

Illicit small arms have been defined as 'weapons that are produced, transferred, held, or used in violation of national or international law' (Schroeder, 2013, p. 284).

Arms and ammunition seized in Niamey, 2016.
Source: Savannah de Tessières

This definition acknowledges the many different forms that illicit arms flows can take. In Niger, illicit small arms and ammunition come from both domestic and external sources.

Diversion from national stockpiles

Inadequate procedures and infrastructure have resulted in a number of diversions by officials who exploited their access to state arms supplies. In 2013, for example, a senior officer sold a number of the new Type 56-1 assault rifles after removing their serial numbers to make tracing more difficult. Nigerien security sources believe that the rifles were being transferred to Boko Haram.[3] In 2015 a network of members of the security forces (including an armourer) diverted ammunition—mainly 7.62 × 39 mm—that they sold on locally. Authorities believe that in this instance the trafficking supplied armed bandits.[4]

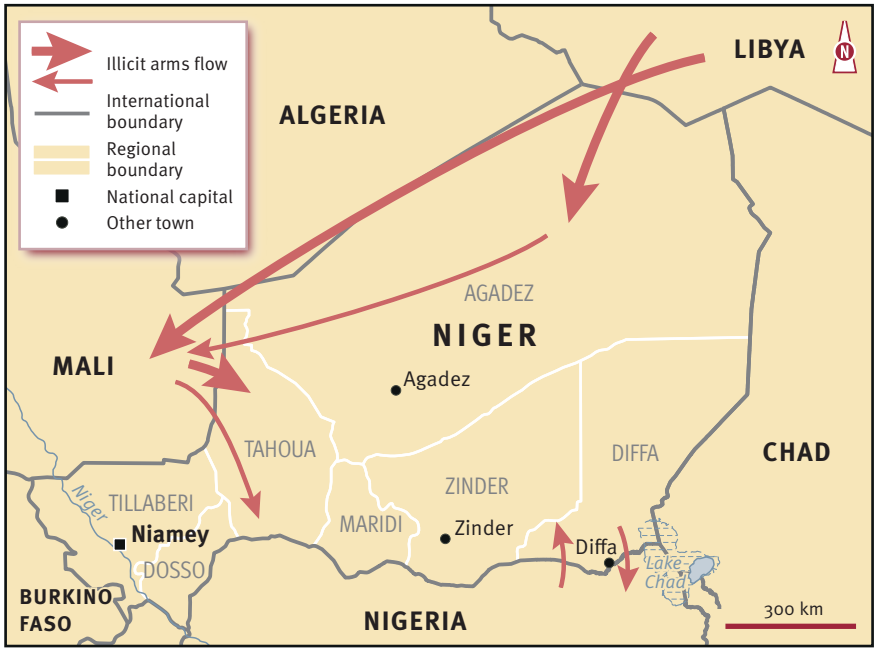
Recognizing these past challenges, Nigerien authorities are trying to improve the country's physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) measures. International technical partners support their efforts. The goal of these efforts is to meet current international PSSM standards and better protect its arms stockpiles.

Attacks on Nigerien security facilities have resulted in the theft of materiel by terrorist groups. For instance, in June 2016 Boko Haram attacked the southern town of Bosso and its military camp, killing 32 members of the security forces and seizing significant quantities of small arms and light weapons, as well as heavier weapons, ammunition, and vehicles.[5] In the north-west of the country several attacks on security facilities have resulted in Nigerien materiel being diverted to Mali. For instance, on 6 October 2016 an unidentified armed group of ten people from Mali attacked the Tassara refugee camp and killed 22 members of the security forces. The attackers took several vehicles, 5 handguns, 29 AK-type assault rifles, 2 general-purpose machine guns, and a 12.7 mm heavy machine gun.[6]

Cross-border trafficking

Over the past six years Niger has primarily served as a transit route for weapons circulating in the region. Weapons transiting Niger primarily come from Libya, Mali, and Nigeria (see below). In addition to those

Map 1 Main flows of illicit weapons to and through Niger



three nations, weapons seizures in Niger also indicate that other, more minor sources of illicit materiel exist, including Côte d'Ivoire.[7]

Libya

Since its 2011 revolution Libya has been a major source of illicit materiel across the region, and Niger was one of the first countries to be affected by arms proliferation from its northern neighbour. Libya is a significant source of illicit small arms and ammunition for individuals in Niger seeking to ensure their own protection. This is especially true in the north of the country, where the provision of security by the state is limited and armed robberies are frequent. Notably, among the primary weapons trafficked from Libya and used by Nigeriens are assault rifles and converted Turkish-made blank-firing handguns.[8] Blank-firing Turkish handguns are also being moved from Libya through Niger to other countries in the sub-region: in January 2017 the Nigerien police made two seizures from Ghanaian migrants who were returning from Libya after having been paid in weapons for petty work.[9]

Most of the weapons flowing from Libya to Niger are destined for other countries, however. In this regard, the UN Panel of Experts on Libya has noted that groups trafficking illicit weapons from Libya use Niger primarily as a transit route. Over the past five years the sources, routes, and modi operandi of Libyan arms traffickers have evolved. In 2011 and 2012 large convoys transporting arms from Libya crossed Niger mainly into northern Mali. These convoys often travelled together with combatants originally from Mali fleeing from Libya, and several such convoys were intercepted (UNSC, 2012; 2013). In subsequent years, although the seizures decreased in number and size, they nevertheless continued. The UN found that the seized weapons were destined for various armed groups, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, MUJAO, and Ansar Dine (UNSC, 2016, p. 43). The seized materiel included AK-type assault rifles, general-purpose machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers, mortar launchers, and related ammunition, as well as heavy-calibre ammunition, radio equipment, and vehicles (UNSC, 2016, pp. 166–67). The last two calendar years saw a notable reduction in arms seizures.[10] Trafficking from Libya dropped as a result of increased domestic demand for arms and ammunition, as well as the constraining effects of surveillance conducted by the Nigerien security forces and Operation Barkhane (see below). Weapons are still being illicitly transferred from Libya, but in smaller volumes: in 2016, for example, the UN documented materiel in Mali that had likely originated from Libya.[11]

The Nigerien authorities were quick to react to the fall of the Qaddafi regime, rapidly setting up Operation Malibero to contain security threats resulting from the collapse of the Libyan state. In addition, France's Operation Barkhane, begun in 2014 to combat terrorist groups in the region and disrupt arms flows to these groups (particularly in northern Niger), has had a positive impact. However, the Nigerien authorities believe that traffickers have likely changed routes to avoid being targeted by Operation Barkhane forces. They are thus more likely to use Algeria as a transit route to Mali or attempt to bypass military surveillance by using routes that go east and then south along the border with Chad.[12]

While most materiel from Libya passed through Niger, caches of Libyan-sourced materiel were discovered both in the north of the country and near the border with Mali, for onward transfer. In May 2013 MUJAO and Al Mouakaoune Biddam (led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar) used some materiel from Libya to carry out terrorist attacks in Agadez Region that targeted the French mining company Areva's uranium facility and a military base (UNSC, 2014, p. 87).

Mali

Illicit arms transfers move in both directions between Niger and Mali. Niger has been used as a corridor for transfers of Libyan materiel to Mali, while materiel likely diverted from Nigerien stockpiles has also been found in Mali.[13]

Diverted Malian stockpiles account for a significant part of the arsenals of armed and terrorist groups in Mali (Anders, 2015), and have also been leaking abroad. Niger's border area with Mali is prone to armed attacks and deadly conflicts between cattle herders. As a result, some Peulh cattle herders travel to Mali to purchase assault rifles and ammunition for their own protection. Several seizures made by the Nigerien authorities from cattle herders in the west of Niger included materiel coming from Mali.[14]

Nigeria

Although Boko Haram is mainly based in Nigeria, cross-border attacks by the group have brought weapons and ammunition from Nigeria into Niger. Nigerien security officials believe that Boko Haram fighters only enter Niger to source food, petrol, and drugs, and to target Nigerien security forces and seize materiel.[15] Ammunition seized from Boko Haram members in Niger includes materiel produced by the Nigerian Ordnance Factory; this materiel was likely stolen from Nigerian security forces.[16]

Nigerien sources do not believe that Libya is a significant source of materiel for Boko Haram, although there is some evidence that transfers of materiel from Libya and Mali have transited Niger en route to Nigeria.[17] Indeed, in the last three years the Nigeriens have seized several small batches of arms and ammunition on their way to Nigeria.

Measuring illicit arms flows and other potential indicators

This section discusses some of the data sources that may be used to monitor illicit arms flows in Niger. It looks at three indicators in particular: weapons and ammunition seizure data, prices of arms and ammunition, and the use of firearms in acts of violence.

Weapons and ammunition seizures

Seizures in Niger are made by the country's main security agencies: the Nigerien Armed Forces (FAN), police, gendarmerie, National Guard, and customs. All of these agencies seize weapons and ammunition and most maintain some data about this materiel. In addition to government seizures, a voluntary handover programme for illicit weapons has been under way for several years. The National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons (CNCCAI) oversees this programme,[18] and maintains records of the weapons and ammunition handed in to the government.

Based on the documentation observed by the author, the records compiled by Niger's security agencies include information on the type of firearm, the serial number or parts of the serial number, and the date of the seizure. However, weapons are often stored without any details regarding the seizure and are frequently misidentified. And while these various bodies record seizures and voluntary submissions, there is no national register of seized weapons[19] and no centralization of either the weapons or the data about such weapons. Even the individual agencies that seize the weapons do not always centralize the data or capture a uniform set of details beyond those noted above. All of this makes broader analysis difficult and reflects the lack of national coordination of actors involved in the fight against arms trafficking (Samna, 2016).

> "Domestically, Niger uses a rudimentary system of tracing: when seized weapons seem likely to be from diverted national stockpiles, security forces can send a radio message to the offices in charge."

All security forces hold seized weapons in their own facilities where they are neither destroyed nor stored according to accepted stockpile management standards. Due to their lack of equipment, many Nigerien security agencies integrate seized weapons of good quality into their own service arsenals. This is in breach of Article 17 of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (ECOWAS, 2006), of which Niger is a signatory. Some agencies record these transfers, while others do not. And seized weapons may change custody several times, resulting in the duplication of records. All of these shortcomings should be considered in future efforts to create a national database.

As previously mentioned, Niger currently has limited capacity and resources to assist with international tracing requests. Conflict Armament Research, a specialized consultancy, has provided training in weapons identification and tracing to Nigerien security agencies. Despite these ongoing efforts, however, to date the Nigerien authorities have not sent out any tracing requests to other national authorities. Domestically, Niger uses a rudimentary system of tracing: when seized weapons seem likely to be from diverted national stockpiles, security forces can send a radio message (called an '*avis de découverte d'armes*').[20] The messages go to the offices in charge of the materiel at each of the various security agencies to confirm whether a particular weapon matches any of theirs. The lack of a central registry of lost or stolen weapons makes domestic tracing difficult, however.

Nigerien Armed Forces

The FAN has a database containing quantitative (see Table 1) and contextual information on its weapons seizures.

Table 1 Arms seized by the FAN, September 2015–October 2016

Arms	Agadez Region[a]	Diffa Region[a]	Dirkou Region[a]	Total
RPG launchers	0	5	2	7
12.7 mm machine guns	0	3	0	3
General-purpose machine guns	8	3	0	11
AK-type rifles	35	38	51	124
FAL	4	0	4	8
M16	0	0	1	1
Sporting rifles	1	2	1	4
Handguns	0	0	29	29
Total	**48**	**51**	**88**	**187**

[a] These are the 'regions' as identified by the military, not the political sub-divisions used by the government.

Source: FAN (2016)

Table 2 Seizures of arms and ammunition by the gendarmerie, January 2014–October 2016

	Légion	Assault rifles[a]	Hunting and traditional rifles	Handguns[b]	Other arms[c]	Total arms	Rounds of ammunition[d]	Magazines
2014	Niamey	15	4	5	9	**33**	1,282	9
	Agadez	58	1	71	14	**144**	6,444	139
	Zinder	12	2	5	5	**24**	418	17
	Total	**85**	**7**	**81**	**28**	**201**	**8,144**	**165**
2015	Niamey	8	4	3	0	**15**	218	0
	Agadez	69	10	27	13	**119**	4,581	94
	Zinder	13	2	3	0	**18**	2,171	8
	Total	**90**	**16**	**33**	**13**	**152**	**6,970**	**102**
2016[e]	Niamey	4	1	1	2	**8**	216	4
	Agadez	59	2	7	10	**78**	4,961	104
	Zinder	20	0	1	2	**23**	343	23
	Total	**83**	**3**	**9**	**14**	**109**	**5,520**	**131**

[a] 95 per cent of assault rifles are AK-type rifles; the remainder are FAL and G3.
[b] The data also includes a large number of converted blank-firing handguns.
[c] This includes traditional firearms, MAS 36, light weapons (RPG launchers, general-purpose machines guns), and non-identified arms.
[d] Ammunition seized includes mainly 7.62 × 39 mm, as well as some 9 mm, blanks, 7.62 × 54R mm, 7.62 × 51 mm, 12.7 × 108 mm, and ammunition for hunting rifles.
[e] January–October 2016.

Source: Gendarmerie nationale (2015; 2016a; 2016b)

Police

While the police keep track of local firearms seizures and armed robberies,[21] the collation of data at the national level is limited. The police provided no data on weapons seizures for this study.

Gendarmerie

The gendarmerie collects data from its regional units (called *légions*), which it aggregates in a thorough annual report. The dataset is the most comprehensive in the country and allows for some analysis of trends over time. Data indicates that over the past three years the frequency of seizures has not changed dramatically, that the seizures mainly include assault rifles, and that most firearms seizures occur in Agadez Region (see Table 2).

CNCCAI

The CNCCAI relies mainly on statistics provided by the gendarmerie.[22] The CNCCAI data does not allow analysts to accurately determine the types of weapons found, or whether they either were sourced from recent illicit flows or had been in the subject's ownership for some time—from previous uprisings, for example (see Table 3).

Non-state data collection

State agencies are not the only sources of data to monitor the evolution of illicit arms flows in Niger. Other groups produce data that may be useful in analysing firearms-related dynamics and confirming the evolution of trends. In addition, state sources may not always be objective in assessing their own performances.

- **Foreign military operations**. Soldiers from Operation Barkhane and US forces based in the north of Niger have arrested convoys of traffickers and armed groups and seized illicit materiel. According to some Nigerien authorities, these foreign troops do not always share their findings with the national authorities.[23] Foreign units from the Multinational Joint Task Force tackling the spread of Boko Haram in the south of the country are also likely to have seized materiel, although this could not be confirmed.
- **UN embargo-monitoring groups**. While these teams report to the UN Security

Table 3 Data collated by the CNCCAI on materiel seized/handed over in Niger, 2011–March 2014

	Agadez Region	Tahoua Region	Tillaberi Region	Zinder Region	Total
Arms (all calibres)	749	482	184	391	1,806
Rounds of ammunition (all calibres)	1,579	4,316	156	233	6,284
Magazines	43	0	43	233	319
Rockets	9	0	0	0	9
Mines	66	0	0	0	66
Hand grenades	8	0	2	1	11

Source: CNCCAI (2014)

Council and advise its Sanctions Committee, their public reports constitute a source of detailed information on arms trafficking and seizures in countries under UN arms embargoes. In the case of the Sahel, the UN Panel of Experts on Libya has collected first-hand information on arms seizures and trafficking activity in and out of the country for the past five years (see above).

Monitoring groups can also request manufacturing or purchasing states to trace seized materiel in order to build knowledge of the chain of transfers and understand the stage at which the materiel entered the illicit market. Over the past five years UN monitoring groups sent over a hundred tracing requests to confirm cross-border diversions of Libyan national stockpiles. At least a dozen tracing requests were sent regarding materiel found in Niger, including cached weapons, weapons seized from armed groups, and weapons identified as having been used in terrorist attacks. These requests were sent to several manufacturing states, including Belgium, Poland, and the Russian Federation (UNSC, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015).

- **Peacekeeping missions**. Based on field research, MINUSMA has been monitoring the proliferation and flows of illicit materiel in Mali, identifying transfers to terrorist and other armed groups, and tracking the evolution of demand. Several of its investigations include potential transfers from or through Niger.
- **NGOs**. Research institutions such as the Small Arms Survey and Conflict Armament Research also collect field data on illicit arms trafficking and have considerable capacity to identify materiel when investigating chains of transfers.[24]

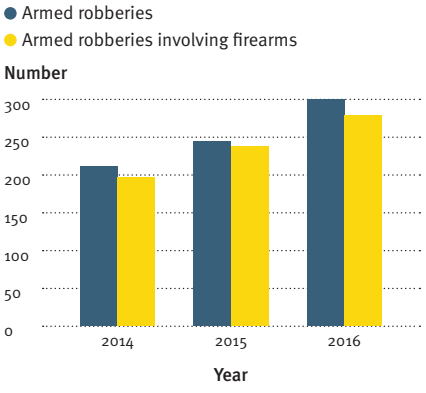
Prices of arms and ammunition[25]

As the Survey has noted elsewhere, where data on arms seizures is incomplete, it is essential to capture other indicators to monitor the evolution of illicit arms flows (De Martino and Atwood, 2015). Additional relevant indicators include the evolution of the prices of arms and ammunition, as well as the use of firearms in acts of violence.

> “. . . the evolution of arms seizures in Niger may not reflect the evolution of illicit trafficking, since security arrangements remain limited or very focused and are in constant evolution.”

Collecting data on weapons prices in Niger is challenging, and more work will need to be done in this area if such data is to be used as an indicator. Interviews with security force members in the north of the country, former rebel fighters, and gold miners indicate that in Agadez an AK-type rifle—the most widely available type of weapon on the country’s black market—can be bought for XOF 350,000–500,000 (USD 550–850). Prices could be as low as XOF 250,000 (USD 400) further north, including at the gold mining sites where security control is minimal and the risks associated with trafficking are lower. In terms of ammunition, one would expect to pay XOF 500–600 (USD 0.80–1.00) for one round of 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition in Agadez, while the same round generally costs XOF 250 (USD 0.40) further north.[26]

Figure 1 Evolution of armed robberies reported to the gendarmerie, 2014–16*



* Data collection ceased in early October 2016. In order to compare annual data, the author has extrapolated the data available from January to September to provide projections for the remaining three months (October–December 2016).

Source: Gendarmerie nationale (2015; 2016a; 2016c)

Use of firearms in acts of violence

Firearms are widely used in armed robberies, banditry, and terrorist attacks across the country. Some areas are more heavily affected, including northern Agadez Region, the border area with Mali, and south-eastern parts of the country where Boko Haram is active. Figure 1 shows armed robberies reported to the gendarmerie in 2014–16.

In addition to armed robberies, many casualties have resulted from terrorist attacks. For instance, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has kept track of the number of Boko Haram’s victims. Between February 2015 and December 2016 this terrorist group killed 305 civilians and injured 147 more in south-east Niger (OCHA, 2017). In addition, Boko Haram reportedly killed more than 60 members of the Nigerien security forces in 2016.[27]

Conclusion

Niger and its international partners have developed a range of initiatives to tackle armed violence and illicit arms flows. Monitoring the evolution of trafficking is and will continue to be key to assessing the impact of these initiatives.

Niger has many effective data sensors at its disposal at both the local and national levels. But the current absence of any standardization and centralization of information on arms seizures prevents the effective use of what data is available to monitor the implementation of SDG 16.4. Assisting the Nigerien authorities to create a central national database, and building on

Nigerien security officer examining ammunition seized on its way to Boko Haram, Niger, 2016. Source: Savannah de Tessières

existing methodologies and efforts already made by some security agencies to that end, such as the gendarmerie, are therefore both critical.

As the Survey has noted elsewhere, Indicator 16.4.2 has several weaknesses that make it insufficient to be the only way in which progress towards SDG 16.4 is monitored.[28] As for many countries in Africa, the challenge of achieving the tracing component of this indicator is beyond the reach of Niger's current capacities. Also, the evolution of seizures in Niger may not reflect the evolution of illicit trafficking, since security arrangements remain limited or very focused and are in constant evolution. For example, specific Nigerien or foreign military forces operations targeting arms flows or terrorism may result in an increase in seizures that does not necessarily indicate that trafficking is on the rise. In addition, these operations may merely disrupt flows and shift the problem elsewhere.

Additional indicators are needed in order to accurately capture the evolution of illicit arms trafficking. The evolution of weapons pricing in Niger and the use of firearms in acts of violence both offer useful supplementary data to measure illicit trafficking.

Finally, a solid framework for monitoring progress towards achieving SDG 16.4 in Africa should include qualitative analysis of the evolution of security threats and trafficking networks, data on which is already generated by a range of actors, to complement non-comprehensive quantitative data and confirm any identified trends.

Notes

1 The indicator is still under discussion; see UN Statistical Commission (2016).

2 Author interviews with local authorities, Agadez and Diffa, November 2016; see also Guichaoua (2016).

3 Author interviews with Nigerien security sources, Niamey, November 2016.

4 Author interviews with security officers involved in the investigation, Niamey, November 2016.

5 Author interview with a representative of the Nigerien Armed Forces, Diffa, November 2016.

6 Author interview with a security officer involved in the investigation, Niamey, November 2016.

7 For example, in 2012 a car coming from Côte d'Ivoire was stopped and found to be transporting a large quantity of assault rifles and ammunition in a false bottom. Author interview with customs officer, Niger, 2013. See also CAR (2016, p. 35).

8 Author interviews with security officers, traders, and a gold miner, Niamey and Agadez, November 2016. For further information on the conversion of blank-firing handguns, see King (2015). For more on the security situation in northern Niger, see Pellerin (forthcoming).

9 Email exchange with Nigerien police investigator, January 2017.

10 Author interviews with members of the Nigerien military and a French representative, Niamey, 2016.
11 Information provided to the author by the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), 2016.
12 Author interviews with high-ranking officers, Niamey and Agadez, November 2016.
13 Author interview with Nigerien security officers, Niamey, November 2016; information provided by JMAC, MINUSMA, 2016.
14 Author interview with police investigator, Niamey, November 2016.
15 Author interviews with members of the Nigerien military, anti-terrorist unit, and gendarmerie, Diffa, November 2016.
16 Author's inspection of some materiel seized from Boko Haram, Diffa, November 2016.
17 Author interviews with a counter-terrorist officer and a member of the Office of the Army Chief of Staff, Niamey, November 2016. Information about Libyan materiel in Nigeria remains anecdotal, however, and more investigation is needed.
18 The CNCCAI is responsible for assisting the President's Office to design strategies to combat illicit arms trafficking and armed violence.
19 Niger has no national small arms and light weapons register, despite Article 9 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which obliges member states to establish such a national computerized register, which should include seized materiel (art. 17) (ECOWAS, 2006).
20 These messages include the type of the weapon, the serial number, and the context of the seizure (author interview with a person responsible for National Guard materiel, Niamey, November, 2016).
21 Author interviews with a senior police representative, Niamey, November 2016.
22 Author interview with CNCCAI representative, November 2016.
23 Author interviews with senior security agency officers, Niamey and Agadez, November 2016.
24 For example, see Anders (2015); CAR (2016).
25 Author interviews with representatives of the Directorate General of Documentation and External Security, and the police, ex-combatants, and a gold miner, Niger, November 2016.
26 Author interviews with security force members, former rebel fighters, and gold miners, Agadez and Niamey, November 2016.
27 Analysis of media reports, January–December 2016. The estimate was confirmed by a security source in Niamey. It should be noted that the prevalence of firearms is not uniform: in some areas deadly conflicts often do not involve firearms. For example, in Bangui, Tahoua Region, 18 people were killed during a November 2016 clash between cattle herders and farmers in which no firearms were used (ActuNiger, 2016). And in Diffa Region, where Boko Haram regularly targets the population, vigilante groups largely do not possess firearms (author interviews with security officer, Niamey, November 2016, and with representatives of the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties and civilian authorities, Diffa, November 2016).
28 See, for example, the first two publications in this series: Carlson (2016) and Nowak (2016).

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For more information on illicit arms trafficking, please visit the Global Partnership on Small Arms website: www.smallarmssurvey.org/salw. The website hosts a library of resources on illicit small arms and light weapons flows and control measures.

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