

# Firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa

May 2024

ANALYTICAL REPORT



This project is funded  
by the European Union

*This analytical report was compiled in the framework of the European Union (EU) funded Project ENACT (Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organized crime) and was produced with funding from the EU. The contents of this report are the responsibility of the author(s) and can no way be taken to reflect the views or position of the European Union or the ENACT partnership. Authors contribute to ENACT publications in their personal capacity.*

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ENACT is implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in association with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



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***\*\* There are two versions of this report on Firearms Trafficking in Central and Western Africa. A full version for law enforcement in INTERPOL member countries and a sanitised public version. This report is the public version. \*\****

## Executive Summary

Firearms trafficking is a major enabler for transnational organized crime. It fuels violence, exacerbates conflict, and enables terrorist and armed groups' activities. Illicit circulation of firearms strengthens an array of illicit markets, including violent robberies, kidnapping, human and drug trafficking.

Based on the analysis of information collected from INTERPOL Operation Trigger VIII, this analytical report assesses the scope of firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa. This Operation took place from 13 to 19 June 2022 in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Guinea, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Central and Western Africa sub-regions, firearms trafficking is a substantial threat along with other persistent criminal markets. The ongoing conflicts taking place in these sub-regions are a major enabler for criminal networks operations and fuel the illicit flow of firearms. In addition, the porosity of borders, corruption and limited access to resources facilitate firearms trafficking throughout Central and Western Africa sub-regions, overlapping with other illicit markets in complex ways. In this context, firearms trafficking generates profits for criminal, terrorist and armed groups undermining peace and stability. They threaten the humanitarian situation, including by targeting humanitarian workers, national stockpiles and resorting to violence to recruit and control populations.

Firearms trafficking often goes underreported. Nonetheless, various data sources reveal the following major dynamics of groups and networks active in both sub-regions, which need to be addressed strategically. This report aims to bring additional insights that can be useful to enhance the fight against organized crime in their region and contribute to a safer globalized and interconnected world.

## Key findings

- Firearms trafficking is a lucrative activity that accompanies all forms of contraband. It fuels an array of illicit activities in Central and Western Africa, from urban gang violence to transnational organized crime, terrorism, and drug trafficking.
- Porosity of borders is a common enabler for the illicit circulation of firearms, among other goods, in Central and Western African countries.
- Most illicit firearms are only found after their use in other crimes and often they are not the main focus of the investigation.
- The routes used by criminal networks associated with weapons trafficking are also used to traffic other goods and products in Central and Western Africa.
- Conflicts in both sub-regions increased civilian demand for weapons and have contributed to an increase of illegal firearms on the market.
- The illicit weapons most used in the assessed sub-regions are long firearms, namely AK-pattern rifles and Kalashnikov-made weapons.
- Most of the weapons seized in Operation Trigger VIII were not identified, as they were either unmarked, the markings had been altered, or the accurate identification was not possible due to operational constraints.
- To transport weapons internally and across borders, criminals use traditional modus operandi such as concealment. Firearms are transported by individuals themselves on motorcycles or in carefully arranged hiding places on vehicles of all types. Transport is organized on land (by roads) or via river routes.
- The movement of fleeing civilian populations between countries, favors the concealment of weapons or ammunition in bags and suitcases containing food and/or domestic belongings.

## List of Acronyms

AQIM – Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb  
CAPCCO – Central African Police Chiefs' Committee  
CAR – Central African Republic  
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo  
iARMS – INTERPOL illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System  
IED – Improvised explosive device  
IFRT – INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table  
IMD – INTERPOL Mobile Device  
NCB – INTERPOL National Central Bureau  
NSAG – Non-State Armed Group  
OCG – Organized Crime Group  
POC – Point of Contact  
PRC – People's Republic of China  
RSO – Regional Specialized Officers  
SALW – Small Arms and Light Weapons  
UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
UPC – *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*  
WAPCCO – Western African Police Chiefs Coordination Organization  
WCO – World Customs Organization

## Introduction

Illicit firearms trafficking represents a major threat phenomenon to society, especially in countries facing conflicts or instability. Several reports<sup>1</sup> have shown that conflict and crime have a symbiotic relationship. In addition, information suggests that criminality is a potential enabling factor in the eruption of conflicts<sup>2</sup>. Firearms trafficking is often connected with other illicit activities, being a link among criminal structures, for instance, organized crime, terrorism, and armed conflict, as all of them need to be somehow connected to firearms market to subsist<sup>3</sup>. To combat it, a two-pronged approach is needed: directly targeting firearms trafficking networks and addressing the underlying criminal networks that rely on firearms. This requires coordinated efforts at the national, regional, and international levels, including strengthening legal frameworks, improving information sharing, and addressing root causes of crime and conflict.

This report provides an assessment on firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa based mainly on data collected during Operation Trigger VIII, which took place in June 2022 in Central and Western Africa. The geographical scope of this assessment covers the countries that participated in the operation: the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), Guinea, Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Figure 1).

This operation targeted 35 hotspots regarding the movement of illicit firearms and led to several arrests and the seizure of firearms, illicitly mined gold, explosives, drugs, fake medication, wildlife products, and cash. With regard to the seized firearms, successfully traced, INTERPOL, in partnership with member countries, was able to reconstruct the history of most of their movements (points of manufacture, importation, diversion, and recovery).

Firearms trafficking is often difficult to detect and investigate, as most of the illicitly trafficked firearms just come to the surface after causing casualties in criminal or terrorist activities. Later, these arms are seized, treated, and analyzed as evidence in the context of other offences. The investigation rarely focuses on the networks involved in the trafficking of arms, which were used to perpetrate the crime. The operations coordinated by INTERPOL's Firearms



**FIGURE 1 – COUNTRIES PART OF OPERATION TRIGGER VIII.**

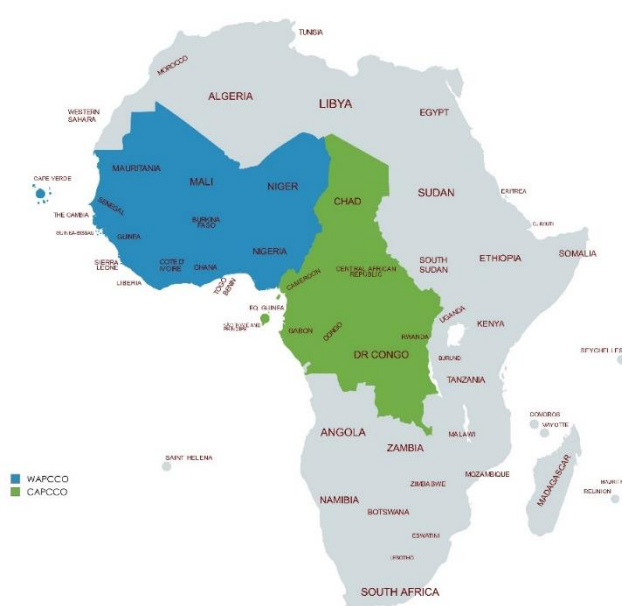
Programme intend to overcome this gap, by implementing intelligence-led operations aiming at combating the proliferation of illicit firearms and targeting the supply of firearms to criminal and terrorist organizations.

This report is structured in two parts. The first part presents the outcomes of the operation, whilst the second part is dedicated to the analytical findings, under Operation Trigger VIII.

INTERPOL African sub-regions are defined based on the countries' participation in regional chiefs of police organizations. Therefore, in this report, when it is mentioned Central and Western Africa, it refers to member countries of Western African Police Chiefs Coordination Organization (WAPCCO)<sup>4</sup> and Central African Police Chiefs' Committee (CAPCCO)<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2).

Based on available information, the specific objectives of this assessment are to:

- Assess the scope of the main criminal groups specialized in firearms trafficking in the elected countries;
- Establish the modus operandi of organized crime groups identified;
- Identify firearms illicit flows and main destination and origin countries.



**FIGURE 2 – WAPCCO AND CAPCCO MEMBER COUNTRIES.**

This assessment follows an all-source intelligence analysis methodology. It results from integrating multiple data sources, including information available to INTERPOL and open sources. Open sources used in the framework of this report include news articles and reports from various private entities, international organisations, and think tanks. Whenever identified, official statistics and data were used and given preference over other sources. Information from the aforementioned sources was aggregated to identify consistencies across all data, convergences, patterns and trends. A regional approach was retained when drafting this report. Therefore, when national examples are quoted, it is done for illustrative purposes to emphasise regional dynamics.



## 1. OPERATION TRIGGER VIII OUTCOMES

### 1.1. Defining and distinguishing illicit firearms trafficking from other related offences

Firearms are the weapon of choice for criminal organizations. Illicit firearms trafficking is a threat that enables and intensifies organized crime, armed conflicts, and terrorism, in addition to being a criminal phenomenon by itself, which needs to be investigated and disrupted. This is a crime often hidden, of a complex nature, and frequently mixed with other sorts of networks, which makes illicit firearms trafficking difficult to detect and investigate for Law Enforcement Agencies.

In this report, the term “firearm” is understood as “any portable barreled weapon that expels, is designed to expel or may be readily converted to expel a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique firearms or their replicas”, in consonance with the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime<sup>6</sup>. This Protocol was the first legally binding instrument on small arms to be adopted at the global level.

With regards to firearms trafficking, it is important to distinguish between the concept of illicit firearms trafficking, illicit manufacturing, and diversion. Illicit firearms trafficking is defined as: “the import, export, acquisition, sale, delivery, movement or transfer of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition from or across the territory of one State Party to that of another State Party if any one of the States Parties concerned does not authorize it in accordance with the terms of this Protocol or if the firearms are not marked in accordance with article 8 of this Protocol”<sup>7</sup>.

The modalities in which a weapon can penetrate the illicit market are different, but they can be divided in two sectors, illicit manufacturing, and diversion. Within these groups, it is possible to differentiate between types of sources.

Illicit manufacturing refers to: “the manufacturing or assembly of firearms, their parts and components or ammunition: i) From parts and components illicitly trafficked; ii) Without a license or authorization from a competent authority of the State Party where the manufacture or assembly takes place; or iii) Without marking the firearms at the time of manufacture, in accordance with article 8 of this Protocol”<sup>8</sup>. It includes “unauthorized production, including artisanal and craft production; manufacturing of firearms without the proper marking; Assembling of firearms from illicitly trafficked parts and components; Conversion of non-lethal firearms (blank-firing pistols); Illicit reactivation of deactivated firearms”<sup>9</sup>.

Diversion can be “leakage (theft and fraud) from points of production, military stockpiles or police sources; Fake export arrangement; Un-authorized re-export to third countries; Loss of state control / pilfering from state stocks; Captured in conflict zones (battle-field recoveries); Recycling of surplus weapons; Theft or loss from legal dealers or private citizens; Fraud by private owners; Simulated weapons destructions”<sup>10</sup>.

Most illicit firearms are only found after their use in other crimes. Analysis of operations conducted by INTERPOL Firearms Unit in the same region, such as Operation Trigger III, in 2017, indicates that once seizures are made, weapons are almost immediately destroyed, and weapons inventory or tracking do not occur. The illicit trafficking and procurement behind these isolated crimes often remain unknown. Although INTERPOL Firearms Unit considers that tracing the history and ownership of a recovered firearm can provide valuable investigative leads. In addition, every firearm is unique and can be identified by its serial number, make, model and caliber as well as by its ballistic ‘fingerprint’<sup>11</sup>.

The typologies of crimes in which firearms are most connected are: terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, illegal oil bunkering/smuggling and cattle rustling, theft of motor vehicles, and homicide<sup>12</sup>. There is a connection between the firearms markets and the increase in levels of violence, conflict, and insecurity. That means that firearms trafficking is threatening the growth and prosperity of countries where their presence is significant, with an impact on regional security dynamics. But also, the perceived levels of insecurity across the population have increased the demand for firearms. The distinction between criminal actors and conflict actors is often blurred. Organized Crime Groups (OCG) might source Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) with weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other illicit equipment and goods for use in conflicts and attacks, or may purchase conflict goods from NSAGs, such as precious metals or diamonds extracted illicitly, to introduce them into legal markets<sup>13</sup>.

## 1.2. Situation in Central and Western Africa

Sahel region has long faced security and humanitarian crises, exacerbated by the activity of terrorist groups and a convergence of issues affecting governance, economic decline, and the worsening effects of climate change<sup>14</sup>. Existing and past conflicts have led to an excess of illicit firearms that has, in turn, undermined the wellbeing of populations, resulting in a fragile socio-economic condition. This has provided fertile ground for criminal groups to expand their activities.

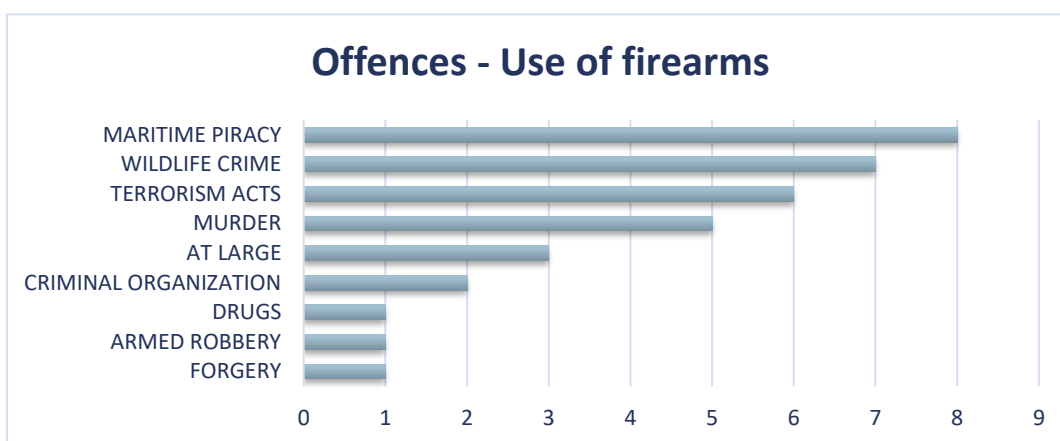


FIGURE 3 – OFFENCES RELATED WITH THE USE OF FIREARMS IN INTERPOL NOTICES.

Through the analysis of Notices and Diffusions introduced in INTERPOL data bases since 2014, it was possible to understand that the majority of offences related to the use of firearms are connected with maritime piracy, followed by wildlife crime and terrorism acts (Figure 3).

The majority of offenders identified on these Notices were male with ages between 36 and 55 (Figure 4).

Terrorist groups have claimed responsibility for murderous attacks over the years in Western Africa and Sahel, such as Boko Haram and Al Mourabitoun, among others. Information indicates that their access to small arms and light weapons (SALW) has been increasing. Moreover, corruption is fueling firearms trafficking in the region facilitating the diversion of firearms within countries and beyond national borders<sup>15</sup>.

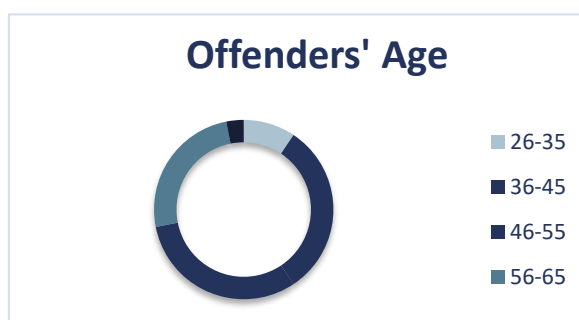


FIGURE 4 – OFFENDERS' AGES IDENTIFIED IN INTERPOL NOTICES.

Porosity of borders is a common enabler for illicit circulation of firearms, among other goods, in countries from Central and Western Africa. It was one of the most recurrent fragilities mentioned by member countries during the assessment completed before Operation Trigger VIII. It represents a challenge for Law Enforcement Agencies in African countries.

Open-source information indicate the existence of supplier-client relationships between extremist groups and criminal syndicates active in the Liptako-Gourma region, which borders Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad Basin regions (Figure 5) are considered to be areas dominated by violence and humanitarian crisis, with a strong presence of armed groups that resort to violence to generate economic profits, providing in some instances livelihoods and strengthening their local roots through recruitment<sup>16</sup>. Arms trafficking in the Sahel then is an

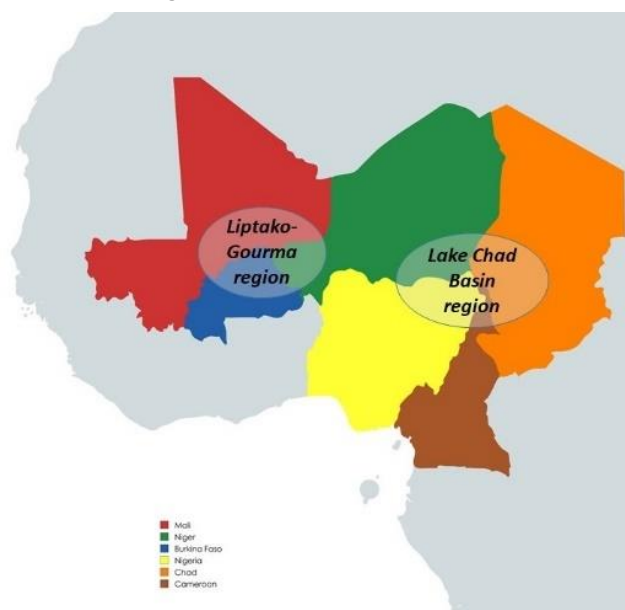


FIGURE 5 – LOCATION OF LIPTAKO-GOURMA REGION AND LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION.

important source of revenue for groups to continue their insurgency, sometimes even

becoming arms suppliers themselves<sup>17</sup>. During Operation Kafo II, in 2019, the results point in the same direction, with 40,260 sticks of dynamite seized from a removal van in Tahoua, and a further 333 sticks of dynamite, concealed in a military convoy, were seized in Dosso, southern Niger. The explosives were seemingly destined for small-time gold mining, a new source of financing - and even a recruiting ground - for armed terrorist groups in the Sahel.

As previously noted in this report, there is an upsurge in demand for weapons from the civilian population mostly related to increasing levels of insecurity. Within this context, some countries in the analysed sub-regions have seen a growing presence of groups of self-defence, also called vigilante groups<sup>18</sup>, like the *Amotekun* in Nigeria and the *Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie* in Burkina Faso<sup>19</sup>. This fuels the illicit circulation of weapons across borders. This civilian demand for weapons has been also impacting the production of craft weapons mainly due to their affordability and accessibility. In Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, for instance, craft firearms show sophistication and are equipped with automatic and semi-automatic mechanisms<sup>20</sup>.

The scope of threat from firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa is substantial and evidence of the importance for international actors to keep collaborating with countries from these sub-regions in the fight against organized crime, through intelligence or joint operations.

### 1.3. INTERPOL Firearms Programme

INTERPOL member countries have raised concerns regarding the growth of armed violence cases and firearms trafficking involving many organized crime groups. Therefore, the Firearms Programme implemented intelligence-led operations aiming at combating the proliferation of illicit firearms and targeting the supply of firearms to criminal and terrorist organizations<sup>21</sup>.

The Firearms Programme aims to revisit the preconceived idea of investigations into firearms trafficking, so each recovered firearm is, until proven otherwise, considered part of a broader firearms trafficking system. The recovery of a firearm should be considered as the starting point of an investigation.

With this framework in mind, the Firearms Programme established a Firearms Recovering Protocol<sup>22</sup> to help investigators to develop investigative leads to combat firearms trafficking. The Protocol recommends the use of policing capabilities from INTERPOL Firearms Programme, in particular the INTERPOL illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS)<sup>23</sup>, which allows investigators to determine the international status of the recovered firearm (stolen, lost or trafficked/smuggled), as well as its history. The Firearms Recovery Protocol also encourages the use of the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT), another interactive online tool which gathers firearms identifiers, references and images for the accurate identification of each recovered firearm.

Following the success of previous operations, the Firearms Programme attempted to improve collaboration by selecting countries in Western and Central Africa that have in general limited knowledge and resources to effectively combat firearms trafficking. The desire to work more

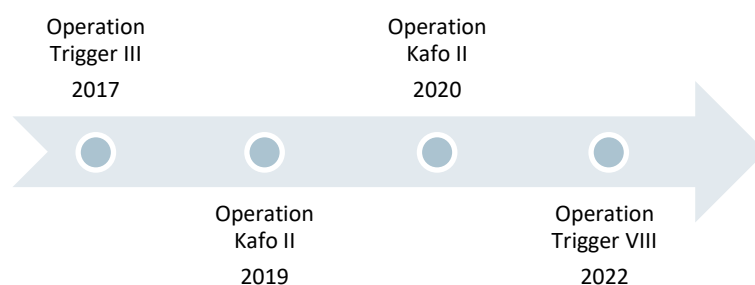
closely in the area rise to the Disrupt and Target Projects, enabling the financing of Operation Trigger VIII.

TRIGGER is an operation model developed by the INTERPOL Firearms Programme, which brings together Law Enforcement Agencies and the Armed Forces from different countries into a series of coordinated and simultaneous actions directly targeted at trafficking hotspots to intercept illicit firearms, ammunition, explosives, and potential suspects.

In addition, national awareness campaigns carried out for several months by the INTERPOL Firearms Programme in the participating countries contributed to ensure a strong mobilization of armed forces and internal security institutions from these countries. These campaigns have enabled the establishment of focal points on firearms among all these partners, therefore, facilitating an efficient sharing of intelligence for better targeting of firearms trafficking hotspots.

#### 1.4. Operations under the INTERPOL Firearms Programme in Central and Western Africa sub-regions

This section assesses the operations that have taken place in Africa within the Firearms Programme since 2017, specifically Operation Trigger III, in 2017, Operation Kafo I in 2019, Operation Kafo II in 2020, and Trigger VIII in 2022 (Figure 6).



**FIGURE 6 – OPERATIONS CONDUCTED BY FIREARMS PROGRAMME SINCE 2017.**

An analysis of the previous operations targeting firearms trafficking in these sub-regions provides a better framework and allows to understand trends regarding this phenomenon in Central and Western Africa. Moreover, it contributes to a better understanding of what can further be done in terms of cooperation or new policies.



#### 1.4.1. Operation Trigger III

The joint Operation TRIGGER III took place in November 2017. It was organized by INTERPOL, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the World Customs Organization (WCO) in eight (8) African states, namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria.

In this operation, the officers involved were able to make 50 arrests and seize 152 firearms. The follow-up work enabled the firearms points of contact to query the iARMS database and send trace requests to other countries of manufacture or legal import for all seized firearms.

#### 1.4.2. Operation Kafo I

Operation Kafo I took place in November 2019, in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali. It was coordinated by INTERPOL in partnership with UNODC. This cross-border operation targeted the people and networks behind firearms trafficking in the region.

In addition to arrests, results included the identification of a trafficking network operating regionally from Côte d'Ivoire, the seizure in Burkina Faso of illicit goods linked to serious organized crime, and the confiscation in Mali of tampered visas smuggled from Burkina Faso by bus, suggesting an organized crime connection.

By collecting investigative crime intelligence ahead of the operation, countries were able to target firearms trafficking hotspots such as land border points where cars, buses, trucks, and cargo transporters were searched. Several firearms recovered in Burkina Faso and Mali were traced back to the countries of manufacture or last known legal import to track their history of ownership.

#### 1.4.3. Operation Kafo II

The INTERPOL Firearms Programme ran Operation Kafo II early December 2020 in partnership with UNODC. The purpose of the Operation was to develop and analyse all available intelligence to coordinate police action targeting firearms traffickers and organized crime groups involved in trafficking firearms and/or in possession of illicit firearms. The Operation took place in four countries, namely Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger.

As results for the Operation, 64 firearms (44 handguns, 19 long guns and 1 heavy machine), 40,593 sticks of dynamite, 28 detonator cords, 8,894 rounds of ammunition, 1,263 kilos of drugs (cannabis and khat), 2,263 boxes of smuggled medicines, and 66,975 liters of smuggled fuel were seized.

#### 1.4.4. Operation Trigger VIII

Operation Trigger VIII was organized by INTERPOL, with partnership UNODC, between 13 and 19 June 2022, supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Project Target<sup>24</sup>,

and the European Union through joint Project Disrupt<sup>25</sup>. This Operation attempted to identify and disrupt not only firearms trafficking but also a range of associated criminal activities, such as human and drug trafficking or terrorism, by targeting 35 hotspots.

Many investigative leads could be generated by analysing intelligence obtained from the inside and outside of the recovered firearm, as well as by questioning all those linked to the history of the firearm. To this end, the Firearms Programme has been essential regarding the Firearms Recovery Protocol, which recommends using iARMS, which enables investigators to trace all recovered firearms to countries of manufacture or last known legal import in order to reconstruct the history of successive owners and movements.

This operation has shown that reinforced border controls and surveillance allow fighting organized crime groups to benefit from a convergence of crimes and use the same routes for several illicit activities.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

Operation Trigger VIII resulted in the seizure of a wide variety of products resulting in criminal activities. Apart from the firearms and ammunition, it was possible to seize explosives, counterfeit medicines, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, fuel, fins from endangered shark species, and African elephant ivory. Illegal mining sites were closed, leading to the seizure of more than 170 kg of explosive materials, 26 kg of gold, EUR 110,000 in foreign currency and 10,304 liters of contraband petrol.

Concerning firearms, 626 illicit firearms and 5,919 ammunition were seized. As a result, 45 investigations were opened for illegal possession and arms trafficking and 2 firearms trafficking networks were dismantled, in CAR and the DRC. Additionally, one ammunition trafficking network was dismantled in CAR. Moreover, 40 additional investigations were opened for drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, fencing of stolen vehicles, wildlife trafficking, poaching, organized crime thefts and assassination, criminal conspiracy, and the financing of terrorism. 8 organized crime robberies were also foiled during the operation, through increased police surveillance and patrols.

The principal targets for the operation were road cutters, illegal gold miners, poachers, artisanal firearms manufacturers, vehicle importers, airports, and border hotspots. Those locations were decided by Member Countries part of the operation, considering the assessment made in the pre-operation phase.

The following chart (Figure 7) shows the total amount of firearms seized in Operation Trigger VIII, distributed per country where they were recuperated.

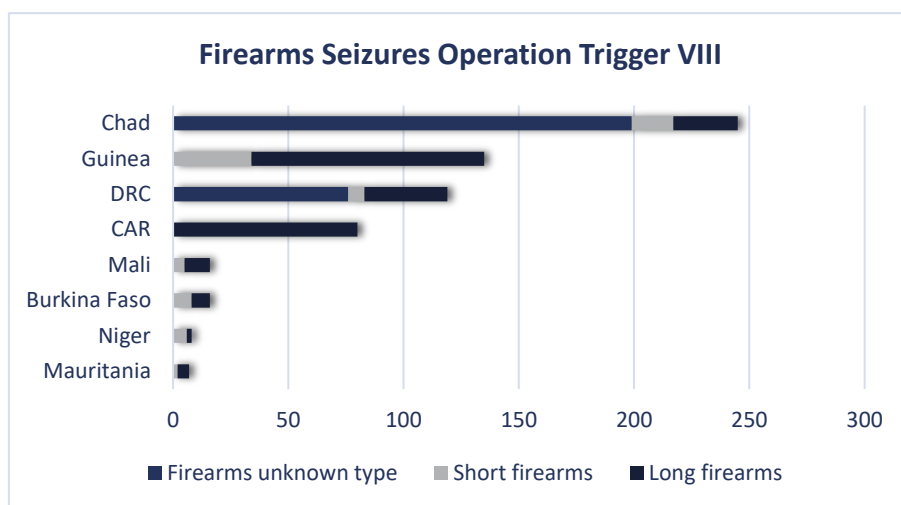


FIGURE 7 – FIREARMS SEIZURES IN OPERATION TRIGGER VIII<sup>26</sup>.

The largest number of seizures were registered in Chad, where almost 250 firearms were recovered, followed by Guinea, DRC, and CAR which registered the recovery of 80 long firearms. There is no direct connection between the number of firearms seized and the number of firearms existing in the country, since there are several factors that can contribute to the success of an operation, such as the material and human means deployed, the socio-political situation of the country, among others. It is important to emphasize that certain areas, can be extremely dangerous, due to numerous terrorist groups operating, where military support is necessary but not always available and where risks can be quite high. Therefore, sometimes leading the operation in certain areas was not so successful in terms of results like in others.

It is relevant to observe that long firearms are more represented when compared with short firearms (Figure 8).

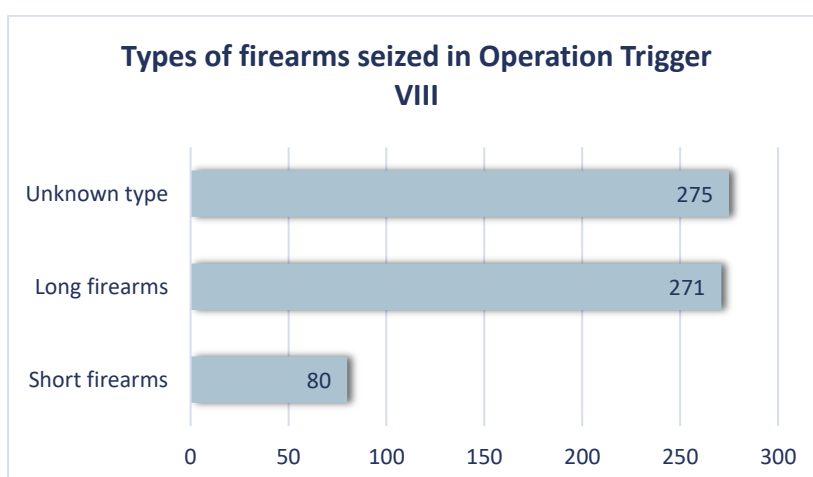


FIGURE 8 – TYPES OF FIREARMS SEIZED IN OPERATION TRIGGER VIII.

Another important fact to note is that 275 of the weapons were unknown type. This is because most of these weapons were either unmarked, or the markings had been altered, or the photos of the weapons taken in the field did not allow proper identification, evidencing limited skilled resources to investigate these crimes.

Firearms manufactured in PRC are the most prominent in the seizures, followed by Russia<sup>1</sup> and Romania (Figure 9). However, the number of weapons that were possible to trace successfully was limited which constitutes an intelligence gap for this analysis.

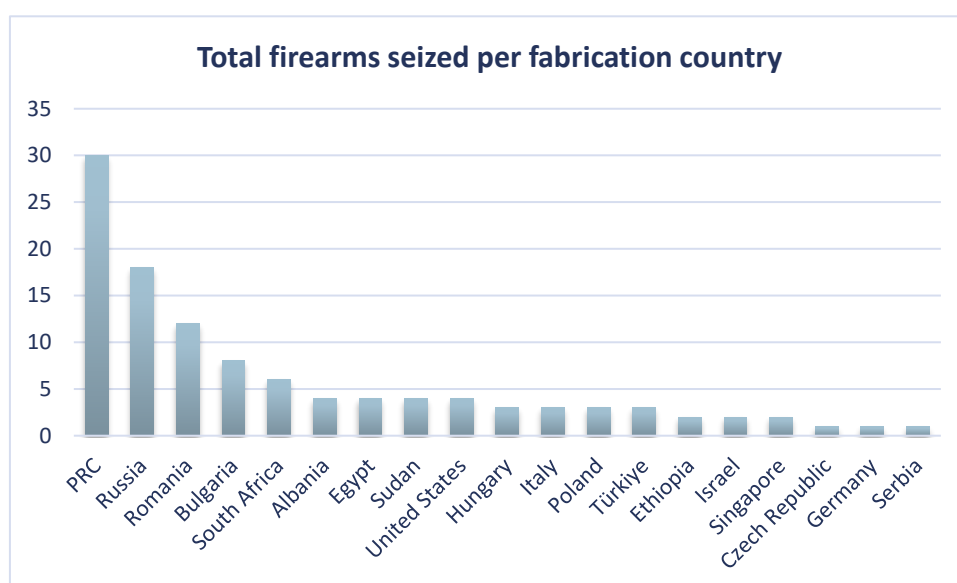


FIGURE 9 – TOTAL FIREARMS SEIZED PER FABRICATION COUNTRY.

Some of these countries are considered hubs for weapons trafficking, particularly weapons and materials stolen from security services and Law Enforcement Agencies. According to open sources, criminal networks and various government entities are involved in different kinds of criminality that enable firearms diversion, which makes the situation even more complex<sup>27</sup>.

### **Burkina Faso**

During the Operation Trigger VIII, Burkina Faso conducted around 14,000 verifications on INTERPOL databases. A seizure of 4 (four) long



FIGURE 10 – SOME OF THE FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION SEIZED BY BURKINA FASO.

<sup>1</sup> When we refer to Russia, this should also be understood as "former Soviet Union", since a large part of the weapons of Russian origin referred to in this report were very likely manufactured during the period 1922-1991.

firearms (AK-pattern) took place and their possession was attributed to a syndicate in Ouagadougou.

Information collected on the group's modus operandi to procure weapons was limited. Burkina Faso also seized 4 (four) Shotguns to Dozos, in Orodara, including 3 Baikal, model MP-18M-M, coming fabricated in Russia, as well as 808 ammunitions, 360 kg amphetamines, and 12 kg Cannabis (Figure 10).

Regarding firearms seizures in Burkina Faso, three of the firearms seized by Burkina Faso were Turkish manufactured, a pattern already identified in 2020, during Operation Kafo II. During Trigger VIII, the Turkish-made firearms seized were 1 Sarsilmaz, model B6C-M, and 2 (two) Tisas, model Fatih 13. In addition to these weapons, 1 Taurus, model TH9, fabricated in Brazil, was also traced (Figure 11).



FIGURE 11 – TISAS, MODEL FATIH 13; TAURUS, MODEL TH9.

### **CAR – Central African Republic**

In CAR, despite the UN embargo that has been in place since 2013, firearms continue to flow into the country<sup>28</sup>. Despite efforts to carry out rigorous controls in the borders, the presence of numerous armed groups and foreign army contingents during years have brought weapons, worsening the illicit firearms trade within the country. One example is the existence of Russian arms importation into the country<sup>29</sup>.

During Operation Trigger VIII, CAR seized 80 firearms, 3 of which were AK47 successfully traced back to Russia. Regarding the seized firearms, a suspect in possession of 8 Kalashnikov AK47 and AKM and 21 7.62 mm caliber ammunition was also arrested.

An ammunition trafficking network was also dismantled in CAR, following 1 arrest with 3 cardboards containing a total of 1500 rounds of hunting caliber ammunition 12 Gauge in a vehicle coming from Congo-Brazzaville. The network was supplying wildlife poachers operating between Congo-Brazzaville, CAR and DRC.



### **Chad**

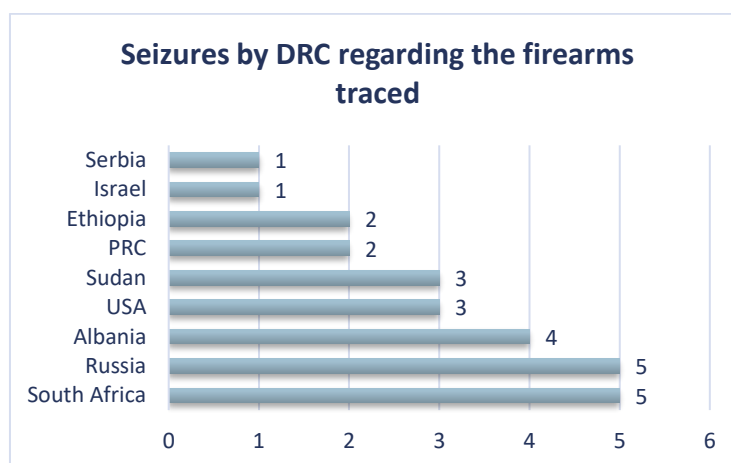
A vast number of corridors used for arms trafficking span across Central and Western Africa. Open sources indicate the presence of several armed groups and rebels in Chad, specifically in the North and East parts of the country. These groups are allegedly interconnected and linked with foreign actors<sup>30</sup>.

From a total of 245 firearms seized in Chad, it was possible to trace successfully only one, a Maverick Arms, model 88. Chad reported two cases, in one case, individuals were found in possession of a Turkish-made weapon without a number (deliberately erased) and another situation with a Chadian citizen, holding a Turkish-made weapon, type Falcon.

### **DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo**

It was possible to perceive that OCGs are responsible for arms trafficking in DRC, or in charge of facilitating the transport and illicit cross-border movements of weapons: Mai-Mai<sup>31</sup> and extensions, M23<sup>32</sup>, CODECO<sup>33</sup>, FDLR<sup>34</sup>, Nyatura, Apa Na Pale, Mazembe, Rzia Mutomboki, FDDH, among others.

DRC was the country with one of the highest figures for firearms seizures – 119 –, with 26 firearms positively traced (Figure 12).



**FIGURE 12 – FIREARMS SEIZED AND TRACED IN DRC, PER FABRICATION COUNTRY.**

Regarding the DRC seizures that were traced, 5 (five) of them came from South Africa, namely VEKTOR, model R4; 5 (five) Kalashnikov, model AKM from Russia; 4 (four) Uzina Mekanike Gramsh, model ASH-78 (manufactured in 1987) from Albania and that were diverted during the 1997 Albanian civil unrest; 3 (three) Colt Industries, Model M16A1, from the USA Department of Defense (Figure 13).



**FIGURE 13 – COLT INDUSTRIES, MODEL M16A1, FROM THE US ARMY.**

### **Guinea**

In Guinea, 135 firearms were seized, but only two were positively traced from the point of manufacture to the point of diversion, namely a Colt, model M1911A1 US Army from the United States Department of Defense and a CZ, model VZOR 50, from the Czech Republic (Figure 14).



**FIGURE 14 – CZ, MODEL VZOR 50.**

### **Mali**

According to the information, 17 firearms were seized, including submachine guns, hunting rifles, revolvers, pistols, privately made pistols, and magazine boxes. 1 (one) box containing 700 Arsenal FMJ/SC 7.62x39 mm caliber ammunition traced back to Bulgaria, as well as 265 other ammunitions collected in several batches, mainly 7.62 mm caliber, were also recovered.

4 firearms out of 17 were successfully traced: a Manurhin, model Walther PP (manufactured in 1958), two Chinese State Arsenals, model Type 56-1 AK (Figure 15) and a Norinco, model MAK-90 from PRC, a Kalashnikov, model AK-103 from Russia and another firearm from Russia, a Baikal, model MP-18EM-M.



FIGURE 15 – CHINESE STATE ARSENALS, MODEL TYPE 56-1 AK.

### **Mauritania**

In Mauritania, from 7 weapons seized, none was successfully traced. Nevertheless, authorities checked 968 vehicles, 2,548 documents, and searched 24 containers (Figure 16).



FIGURE 16 – INSPECTION OPERATIONS IN MAURITANIA.

## Niger

Arms trafficking in Niger is closely linked to other illicit activities and poses a significant threat to Niger's stability and security<sup>35</sup>. Before the operation, the Niger authorities seized a large quantity of weapons and ammunition in two vehicles coming from Libya. The Defense and Security Forces seized several types of firearms and accessories, M2 machine guns, and motorcycles.

During the operation, 102 migrants were rescued, along with 3 firearms, including 2 AK47 and a Makarov handgun loaded with a single ammunition, and five magazines of AK47 stocked with 115 ammunitions that were seized (Figure 17). These weapons and ammunition were seized from migrant smugglers of Niger nationality (Figure 18), against whom a judicial investigation was opened for smuggling of migrants as part of an organized criminal group involving numerous migrants, including children. The continuation of the investigations led to the arrest of one of the major traffickers and smugglers of migrants and the dismantling of related network between Nigeria and Niger in July 2022.



**FIGURE 17 – SEIZURE OF TWO AK47 AND A HANDGUN, FIVE LOADED MAGAZINES, AND AMMUNITION BY**



**FIGURE 18 – IMAGES SHARED BY NIGER REGARDING THE DISMANTLING OF MIGRANT SMUGGLING AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING NETWORKS.**

An individual responsible for an armed attack at a money transfer agency was also arrested and convicted in Niger. As a result, 3 AK47 and magazines loaded with ammunition were recovered.

In addition, it was also possible to trace effectively one seized Tokarev, model TT (Figure 19) and one seized Kalashnikov, model PMK from Niger. In total, 8 seized firearms were the subject of profiling and tracing via the INTERPOL iARMS database.



**FIGURE 19 - TOKAREV, MODEL TT.**

Globally, Operation Trigger VIII allowed to dismantle several criminal networks involved in multiple types of crimes, to enrich the gathering of intelligence concerning firearms trafficking in the region and had a direct impact on strengthening peace and security by removing illicit firearms from circulation in West and Central Africa.

## 2.1. Firearms Trafficked

During the operation under analysis, it was possible to analyse the makes of the weapons that are being illicitly traded in Central and Western Africa. These statistics provide awareness regarding the typology of firearms that are part of trafficking networks and the routes that were targeted in the operation. Documenting manufacturing countries also makes it possible to trace the flow and diversion of firearms in the targeted sub-regions. The following graph (Figure 20) shows the most representatives makes of weapons traded in the illicit market, that were seized during the operation.

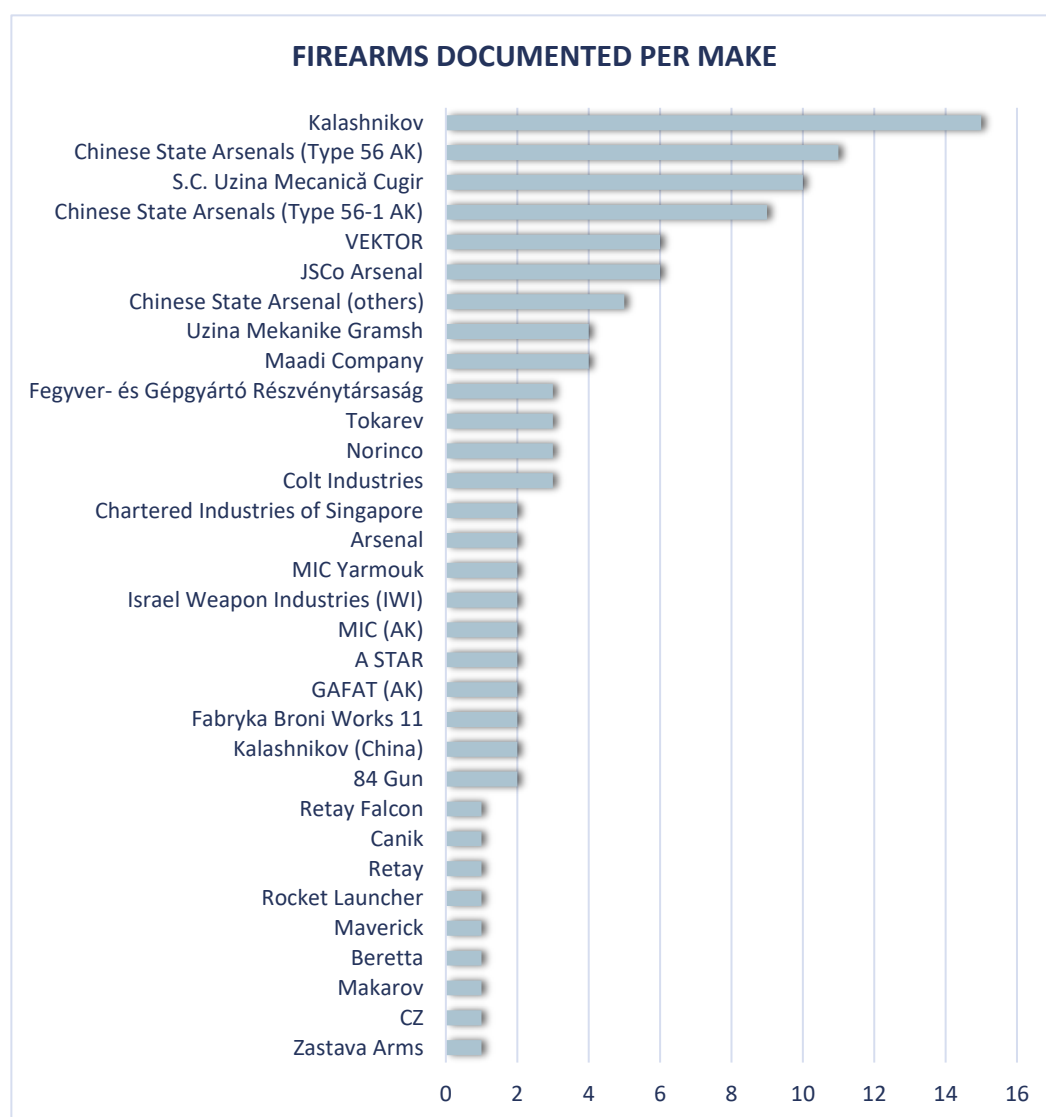


FIGURE 20 – TOTAL NUMBER OF FIREARMS DOCUMENTED PER MAKE.



AK-pattern weapons continue to be the most trafficked in both sub-regions, keeping the trend verified during the previous operations<sup>36</sup>. Followed by the Kalashnikov-made weapons. The AK-type models that make up a large share of assault rifles in the Sahel are durable and often still effective in combat decades after their manufacture<sup>37</sup>. In the following graph, it is possible to observe the country of manufacture of these weapons seized during the operation (Figure 21-22).

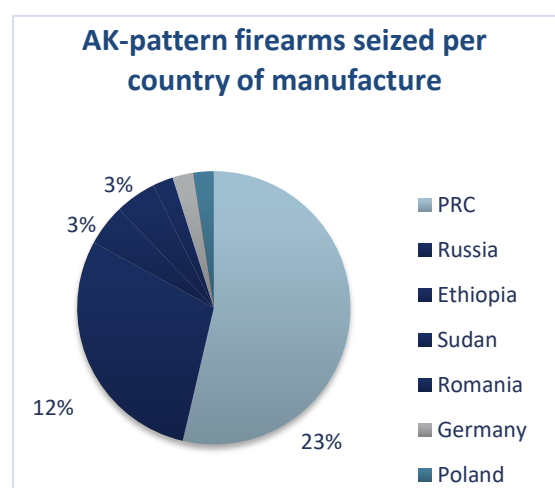


FIGURE 21 – AK-PATTERN FIREARMS SEIZED BY COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE.



FIGURE 22 – KALASHNIKOV FIREARMS SEIZED BY COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE.

The main country identified as country of manufacture regarding the AK-pattern rifles<sup>2</sup>, recovered from the operation, was PRC, followed by Russia, Ethiopia and Sudan (Figure 21).

Kalashnikov<sup>3</sup> seized were mostly manufactured in Russia (69 per cent), followed by PRC, Germany, Poland and Romania (Figure 22).

<sup>2</sup> AK-pattern rifles are firearms that are based on the design of the original AK-47, developed by Mikhail Kalashnikov. These rifles follow the general design, mechanics, and aesthetics of the original AK-47 but are not necessarily manufactured by Kalashnikov. These rifles can be produced by a variety of manufacturers around the world. Countries like PRC, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and the United States produce their own versions of AK-pattern rifles.

<sup>3</sup> Kalashnikov-made weapons are firearms produced by Kalashnikov, the Russian (and Soviet Union) manufacturer originally responsible for creating the AK-47. These weapons include the original AK-47, AKM, and modern variants like the AK-74, AK-12, and AK-103.

## 2.2. Modus Operandi

In order to transport/move weapons internally and across borders, criminals resort to traditional modus operandi such as concealment and erasure of firearms' serial numbers. Further information suggest that high levels of corruption contribute to facilitate the trafficking in certain routes, with officials being involved.

Firearms are often transported in small quantities, by a large number of individuals, over often very large areas, on motorcycles, or transported in carefully arranged hiding places on vehicles of all types. Transport of weapons using two-wheeled vehicles, backpacks, grain bags, and in the walls of vehicles (Figure 23). It is made both by roadways and river routes.



**FIGURE 23 – VEHICLE INSPECTION IN CHAD DURING OPERATION TRIGGER VIII.**

## 2.3. Main Routes

Before the beginning of the armed conflict in Libya in 2011, most firearms were supplied illegally to the Central Africa and Sahel region from Somalia, Sudan, and Egypt via Chad. In Western Africa, non-state actors were supplied with firearms and ammunition from ex-combatants of the wars in Liberia (1989-2003), Sierra Leone (1991-2002), and Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2007).

After 2011, Libya became another main source of illicit firearms in the region. Based on the assessment carried out in preparation for Operation Trigger III, it was found that the firearms were smuggled through Erg Merzoug passage, on the border between Libya and Niger. In 2014, firearms outflows from Libya have reduced with rising domestic demand in the country itself. With the beginning of the second Libyan Civil War, armed groups started to get firearms looted or transferred from the stockpiles of other African states, namely Mali and Côte d'Ivoire.

In 2017, with the fall of the regime in Libya, the Okawan region, in the desert of Mali, has become one of the new centers of supply of firearms. Many thefts from the Malian army stockpiles were registered. The proliferation of locally crafted firearms through the region has increased. The illicit trade in firearms between Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo is fueled by a growing demand considering the increasing need for self-protection, as a result of the insecurity throughout the region. Benin is considered as a transit country for arms coming from Ghana and Togo to Nigeria. Burkina Faso also produces many craft firearms<sup>38</sup>.

Although they do not represent the main manufacturing countries, some firearms manufactured by European Union<sup>39</sup> member countries also end up on the illicit market in Africa.

Based on the information collected during Operation Trigger VIII, it was also possible to identify the following routes (Figure 24):



FIGURE 24 - ROUTES ESTABLISHED DURING OPERATION TRIGGER VIII.

## 2.4. Criminal Actors

There are various criminal actors involved in firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa, including criminal networks, terrorist groups and armed groups, which are often interconnected. These actors rely on firearms to carry out their illicit activities, making firearms trafficking a critical issue in the region. They are involved in multiple steps of the firearm's illicit supply chain, some of them being the providers and others final users.

It was possible to identify some of the main terrorist and armed groups involved with firearms crimes in last years:

- Ansar-ul Islam jihadist group<sup>40</sup> present in Northern Burkina Faso and Mali<sup>41</sup>;
- Boko Haram is mainly based in Northeastern Nigeria, but is also active in Chad, Niger, Northern Cameroon, and Mali.
- Al-Mourabitoun<sup>42</sup> and Ansar Dine mostly present in the North and the Center of Mali;
- National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (formerly the National Movement of Azawad), the Tuareg Imghad and Allied Self-Defense Group (GATIA), the Arab Movement of Azawad (active in Azawad/northern Mali) and the High Council for the Azawad Unit (HCUA) are active in Mali;

- AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) as well as rebel groups like the Nigerien's Movement for Justice are present in Niger, Mali, and Mauritania.



**FIGURE 25 – NETWORK DISMANTLED IN CAR, RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPLYING POACHERS.**

Foreign actors are involved in various criminal networks, including human and arms trafficking, illicit gold, diamond and timber industries, and fauna crimes. In CAR, for example, foreign actors are key vectors of illicit trade in the flora and non-renewable resource crimes sectors, especially in the western and eastern part of the country<sup>43</sup>. During Operation Trigger VIII, a network was dismantled in CAR, responsible for supplying poachers (Figure 25).

#### ***Case Study: Network dismantled in DRC***

3 (three) members of the *Sankara* network were arrested during Trigger VIII Operation following the assassination of an economic operator in Goma. A total of 12 firearms and 5 rockets were seized. Interviews led to the dismantling of the network and the arrest of the head of the network. There was an INTERPOL RED Notice against this individual issued in February 2022 for committing the mentioned murder and escape. It is believed that the criminal was connected with M23.



Operation Trigger VIII results have reinforced the link between firearms trafficking and multiple forms of organized crime and terrorism. The operations organized in all the participating countries have made it possible to fight against crime in all its forms, and not only against the cross-border circulation of small arms and light weapons.

## Conclusions

This analytical report provided an overview of firearms trafficking in Western and Central Africa, based on the concrete outcomes of Operation Trigger VIII. This operation was successful as it was possible to intercept firearms, ammunition, and other types of illicit goods to disrupt trafficking networks, as well as other associated criminal activities. Furthermore, it helped to identify and track ammunition and firearms using INTERPOL Firearms Programme policing capabilities.

Analysis of previous operations have shown similarities between all the operations conducted under the Firearms Programme in the two sub regions, although different countries have participated. Border regions are the most critical points for firearms trafficking.

Firearms trafficking is a lucrative activity that fuels and finances serious crime and terrorism. These networks take advantage of the rule of law dissonances to reinforce their influence among the communities and increase their profits.

Illicit firearms are a common enabler for many crimes, from urban gang violence to transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and NSAG. The presence of these criminal networks in Central and Western Africa makes illicit weapons highly demanded.

Firearms trafficking represents a significant security threat in Central and Western Africa, being a serious crime by itself, but it is also deeply linked to other types of criminality. Criminal networks, terrorists, and armed groups are interconnected and have a dependent relationship with each other. Analysis of Operation Trigger VIII and the previous operations corroborates this statement, since the seizures included not only weapons and ammunition, but also drugs, medicines, alcohol, and fuel, among other products.

Locally crafted firearms represent a significant proportion of the total firearms seized in both sub-regions. The civilian request for weapons stimulates the growth of illegal firearms in illicit markets. In addition, informal armed groups have been emerging to protect populations and their property.

The threat of firearms trafficking in Central and Western Africa is substantial and underscores the importance of continued international collaboration with African countries in the fight against organized crime. Intelligence sharing and joint operations are critical components of this collaboration, as they can help disrupt trafficking networks, identify key actors, and prevent the flow of illicit firearms.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Shaw, D. (2019). The Crime-Conflict Nexus: Connecting Cause and Effect. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/06/27/the-crime-conflict-nexus-connecting-cause-and-effect/>; Locke, R. (2012). Organized Crime, Conflict, and Fragility: A New Approach. Retrieved from [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/epub\\_organized\\_crime\\_conflict\\_fragility.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/epub_organized_crime_conflict_fragility.pdf) (Accessed on 16th January 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> INTERPOL. Firearms trafficking. Retrieved from <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking> (Accessed on 16th January 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Retrieved from <https://ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/WAPCCO-CONSTITUTION-1.pdf> (accessed on 12th March 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Cameroon, CAR, Chad, the Republic of Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe. Retrieved from [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37290-treaty-0061\\_-\\_statute\\_of\\_the\\_african\\_union\\_mechanism\\_for\\_police\\_cooperation\\_afripol\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37290-treaty-0061_-_statute_of_the_african_union_mechanism_for_police_cooperation_afripol_e.pdf) (accessed on 12th March 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. United Nations General Assembly resolution 55/255 (2001) and entering into force on 3 July 2005. Retrieved from [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/a\\_res\\_55/255e.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/a_res_55/255e.pdf) (accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> UNODC. (2019). Framing the issue of firearms and the consequences of their illicit trafficking and use. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/firearms/module-1/key-issues/framing-the-issue-of-firearms.html> (accessed on 19th February 2024).

<sup>10</sup> UNODC. (2019). Framing the issue of firearms and the consequences of their illicit trafficking and use. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/firearms/module-1/key-issues/framing-the-issue-of-firearms.html> (accessed on 19th February 2024).

<sup>11</sup> INTERPOL. Firearms, what we do?. Retrieved from <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking/Firearms-what-we-do> (accessed on 10th March 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Information collected on Operation Trigger III in 2017.

<sup>13</sup> UNODC (2022). Addressing the linkages between illicit arms, organized crime and armed conflict. Retrieved from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/firearms-protocol/2022/UNIDIR-UNODC\\_Adressing\\_the\\_linkages\\_between\\_illicit\\_arms\\_organized\\_crime\\_and\\_armed\\_conflict.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/firearms-protocol/2022/UNIDIR-UNODC_Adressing_the_linkages_between_illicit_arms_organized_crime_and_armed_conflict.pdf) (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Africa Organized Crime Index (2023). Retrieved from <https://africa.ocindex.net/country/chad> (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>16</sup> Global Conflict Tracker (2024). Violent Extremism in the Sahel. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel> (Accessed on 18th January 2024); ISS (2019). Is organized crime fueling terror groups in Liptako-Gourma? Retrieved from <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/is-organised-crime-fuelling-terror-groups-in-liptako-gourma> (Accessed on 19th January 2024).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP (2023). Understanding and Managing Vigilante Groups in the Lake Chad Basin Region. Retrived from <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/understanding-and-managing-vigilante-groups-lake-chad-basin-region> (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>19</sup> GI-TOC (2023) Self-defence groups as a response to crime and conflict in West Africa. Retrieved from <https://enactafrica.org/research/ocwar-t/self-defence-groups-as-a-response-to-crime-and-conflict-in-west-africa> (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>20</sup> Small Arms Survey (2023). Between Tradition and the Law. Artisanal Firearm Production in West Africa. Retrieved from [https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/Craft%20Production\\_BP\\_Web.pdf](https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/Craft%20Production_BP_Web.pdf) (Accessed in 10th March 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Operational Plan of Operation Trigger VIII (June 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Firearms Recovery Protocol. Retrieved from <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking/Firearms-what-we-do> (accessed on 10th March 2024).

<sup>23</sup> In 2013, INTERPOL, with financial support from the European Union (EU), launched the iARMS Project to combat the proliferation of illicit arms flows. The access to iARMS can be granted to police services, customs agencies, border protection agencies and regulatory authorities. Users outside a National Central Bureau need prior formal approval from the NCB.

<sup>24</sup> The overall goal of the TARGET initiative is to strengthen global safety and security within West Africa and the Sahel region.

<sup>25</sup> The overall objective of Project DISRUPT is to fight illicit firearms trafficking by linking law enforcement efforts with broader criminal justice responses in Central and South America as well as in West and Central Africa.

<sup>26</sup> This data includes all the firearms seized during the operation, which means a total of 626 firearms. 275 firearms, from DRC and Chad were not characterized, but according with the available information they were mostly long firearms.

<sup>27</sup> Africa Organized Crime Index (2023). Retrieved from [https://africa.ocindex.net/country/burkina\\_faso](https://africa.ocindex.net/country/burkina_faso) (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Africa Organized Crime Index (2023). Retrieved from [https://africa.ocindex.net/country/central\\_african\\_republic](https://africa.ocindex.net/country/central_african_republic) (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The term Mai-Mai or Mayi-Mayi refers to any kind of community-based militia group active in the DRC that is formed to defend local communities and territory against other armed groups.

<sup>32</sup> The March 23 Movement, often abbreviated as M23 and known as the Congolese Revolutionary Army is a Congolese rebel military group that is for the most part formed of ethnic Tutsi. Based in eastern areas of the DRC, it operates mainly in the province of North Kivu.

<sup>33</sup> CODECO is a group of Lendu militia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The name is an abbreviation of the group's lesser-known full name, the Cooperative for Development of the Congo.

<sup>34</sup> The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwandais, an armed rebel group active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>35</sup> Africa Organized Crime Index (2023). Retrieved from <https://africa.ocindex.net/country/niger> (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Already in 2017, the Firearms Programme concluded that the most used weapons by criminals in the region were assault rifles (a variety of AK47) and machine guns like the M80/PK 7.62x54 and the 14.5x114mm, as well as small-scale handguns and rifles locally crafted.

<sup>37</sup> UNODC (2022). Firearms Trafficking in the Sahel. Retrieved from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta\\_sahel/TOCTA\\_Sahel\\_firearms\\_2023.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_firearms_2023.pdf) (accessed on 5th February 2024).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Illicit firearms trafficking is one of the EU's priorities in the fight against serious and organised crime as part of EMPACT 2022-2025.

<sup>40</sup> Ansarul Islam is a militant Islamist group active in Burkina Faso and in Mali. It was founded by Boureima Dicko, also known as Ibrahim Malam Dicko, and it is the first native Jihadi group in Burkina Faso. The group cooperates closely with Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM).

<sup>41</sup> BBC (2019). Burkina Faso militant attack: Twelve soldiers killed. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38345220> (Accessed on 16th January 2024).

<sup>42</sup> This was an African militant jihadist organization. The group seeks to implement Sharia law in Mali, Algeria, southwestern Libya, and Niger.

<sup>43</sup> Africa Organized Crime Index (2023). Retrieved from [https://africa.ocindex.net/country/central\\_african\\_republic](https://africa.ocindex.net/country/central_african_republic) (Accessed on 18th January 2024).

## ► **ABOUT INTERPOL**

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