

## THE PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALWs) AND THE CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*It is obvious that in the contemporary international system, there is an increase in the movement or flow of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into different countries. This trend involves two ways traffic between the suppliers and buyers of illegal weapons. For the suppliers or sellers of illegal weapons on one hand, the desire to make profits is their primary objective. On the other hand, the buyers of illegal SALWs make use of it in order to generate problems, such as armed conflicts, violence, kidnappings, armed robbery, insurgency, wars etc. In Nigeria, the proliferation and use of SALWs during ethno-religious conflicts and other criminal activities have been responsible for loss of lives and destruction of property. Therefore, the argument is that despite the cross border patrol by the various security agencies illegal SALWs still get into Nigeria's territory through the porous borders. In addition, the activities of local manufacturers are also responsible for the spread of SALWs. Based on this, it can be stated that the possession and use of SALWs by unauthorised individuals portend danger to the security of Nigeria. In addition, the use of illicit SALWs has become a destabilising force in Nigeria. This is because it accentuates different security problems in the country. It is against this background that this paper examined the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and the challenges to security in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Small Arms, Light Weapons, Security, Conflict, Challenges*