

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*

Introduction

Indeed, in contemporary world the issue surrounding the influx of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into territorial areas of different states is generating concerns. It is one of the daunting security challenges facing a number of countries around the world. This is essentially because the transaction or smuggling of illegal SALWs by unauthorised individuals across international boundaries poses a lot of security problems. These include domestic arms conflicts, terrorism, insurgencies, armed robberies, kidnappings, genocides, wars etc. One of the objectives of government in any given political set up is to provide security. As such, no government administrative structure can function effectively in the absence of security. Therefore, it is the enduring desire of responsible governments as well as international institutions to put in place some mechanisms to control the transactions or smuggling of illegal SALWs so as to promote peace and security at all times. It is perhaps on this basis that Alli (2008:1) argues that:

Concern for international peace and security looms large as a critical issue for the global community. It is now generally agreed that security or lack of it, at individual,

national, regional and global levels, lie at the root of all global problems.

There is no doubt that the proliferation of illegal SALWs is posing security challenges in Nigeria. Statistically, there are varying figures given by scholars and experts on illegal SALWs that are in circulation in Nigeria. For example, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) it is estimated that out of eight million SALWs in circulation in West Africa one million of these are in Nigeria (Dokubo, 2010:144). However, in another instance, the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament (UNREC), Olatokunbo Ige maintains that “while reliable data on the numbers of these weapons circulating freely in the country is unavailable, analysts have in recent times estimated that of the about 500 million weapons that may be circulating in West Africa in 2010, some 70 per cent of these could be found in Nigeria” (Vanguard, 2016:3). Whatever the case may be, there is a general consensus among writers and experts that illegal SALWs usually find their ways into Nigeria in large quantity. This is quite disturbing. The proliferation of illicit arms in a country like Nigeria, especially in the hands of criminals or militias would not assist in bringing about peaceful co-existence among the people.

Thus, the protracted nature of some of the domestic conflicts in Nigeria could be attributed to the availability and deployment of SALWs by individuals or groups that engage in violent confrontations. In recent times, the hotbeds of conflicts in Nigeria are the Niger Delta, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-east as well as other communal and religious clashes in parts of the country. In most cases, the deployment of SALWs during some of the conflicts has been leading to the maiming, killings of individuals and destruction of both public and private property. For instance, Okeke and Oji (2014:418) maintain that “the proliferation and use of SALW in ethno-religious clashes and armed robbery have killed more than 10,000 Nigerians, an average of 1000 people per year since 1999.” Therefore, it can be said that the ugly trends of killings of individuals through the use of illegal arms in Nigeria can be reversed if the country is adequately secured. Basically, security is concerned with the issues of safety, freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, poverty, being protected as well as preservation of core values and the absence of threats to these values both from within and without (Alli, 2010). In addition, security involves the promotion of wellbeing of citizens and overall national interests (Adetula, 2010). Thus, the security of a nation enables the government to mobilize both human and material resources for meaningful development. The paper is therefore divided into five sections. The first section deals with the introduction. The second section focuses on conceptual discourse on small arms and light weapons. The third section deals with the factors that promote the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. The fourth section discusses the challenges of illegal small arms and light weapons in Nigeria and the fifth section concludes the work.

Conceptual Discourse on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Basically, the conceptualisation on small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has been profoundly pursued by scholars and experts on security matters around the world. Some writers conveniently offer explanation to the two interrelated concepts by lumping them together. In some cases, some individual writers try to separate and offer different meanings to them based on their distinctive features. Thus, it is important to dissect and disaggregate the various scholarly postulations on SALWs so as to situate issues in their proper context. In the first place, Michael Renner as cited in Dokubo (2010:137) describes SALWs as “weapons that can be carried by an individual. This includes everything from revolvers and pistols to machine guns, light anti-tank weapons and shoulder fired surface-to-air missiles.” This shows that apart from being lethal instruments, small and light weapons are easy to operate and highly portable. In another instance,

the United Nations (UN) panel of government experts as cited in Dokubo (2010: 136) perceives SALWs as:

Those weapons ranging from knives, clubs and machetes to weapons particularly below the caliber of 100 millimeter, small arms are those weapons manufactured to military specification and designed for use by one person, whereas light weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew.

The above clearly indicates that SALWs are relatively cheap. Also, they are of different categories – some are simple and others are complex. Thus, it can be stated that the possession and application of weapons are purely human activities. However, in every political setting, there are distinction between weapons that are acceptable and those that are not acceptable for use by individuals or groups (Smith, 2010). In Nigeria for instance, there is 1959 Firearms Act that prohibits the possession and use of military weapons like guns by unlicensed civilians (Vanguard, 2016: 5). This is the crux of the matter because in most of the communal and religious conflicts in Nigeria, there are evidences of disturbing trends in the use of dangerous weapons to cause bodily and physical harms to the opponents.

Essentially, small arms are conceived as smaller infantry weapons such as the fire arms that an individual soldier can carry (Okeke and Oji, 2014). This implies that small arms can be easily handled by an individual at any time and in any place. In addition, the weapons can easily be concealable. However, in terms of manufacturing or production some of them can be categorized as sophisticated military equipment. It is for this reason that they are considered as being lethal in nature because if they are used against opponents they can kill or cause severe injuries. In another postulation, the Article 1 of ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials (2006) provides that:

Small Arms are destined for personal use and which include: firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or a mine. 1) Revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; 2) rifles and carbines; 3) machine guns; 4) assault rifles; 5) light machine guns (cited in Gwaza and Okafor, 2018: 132).

Significantly, the above definition enlarges the scope and meaning of SALWs to encompass a wide variety of weapons. It covers the new dimension of the rampant manufacturing and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in conflict situations in some countries in West Africa in particular and around the world in general. Due to the increase in knowledge and awareness, the technology that is required to manufacture improvised explosive bomb is said to be simple and available for those who care to adopt it. It is for this reason that a single individual can engage in manufacturing and detonating it at will. In same vein, the Article 1 of ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials (2006) describes the distinguishing characters of light weapons thus:

Light weapons are the following portable arms designed to be used by several people working together in a team: 1) heavy machine guns; 2) portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted; 3) portable and anti-aircraft cannons;

4) portable antitank cannons, non-recoil guns; 5) portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; 6) portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; 7) mortars with a caliber of less than 100 millimetres (cited in Gwaza and Okafor, 2018: 132).

Given the nature and characters of light weapons, it can be said that they are designed to be used by two or more individuals working together as a crew. It involves the process of division of labour, whereby one person would be assisting another person (s) in using the weapons. Therefore, the availability of these weapons in the hands of rebels and criminal groups is dangerous because they can be used to cause destabilisation in a country. For example, in one of the attacks carried out by members of Boko Haram in Mubi local government area of Adamawa state, one of the eye witnesses describes the type of weapon used thus:

The insurgents penetrated the town around 2012 and began their campaign of terror by picking and gunning down individuals, perhaps to make a statement or to show that they meant business. Some were killed as they went for prayers in the mosque early in the morning, others in their business premises in broad daylight. Motorbikes with two or three people carrying assault rifles were used to accomplished these killings and victims included Muslims and Christians, Northerners, Southerners, security personnel, students and ordinary workers (Shalangwa, 2017: 110).

The above shows that the members of Boko Haram sect in Nigeria are carrying out their attacks on people indiscriminately. Also, they are using a variety of ammunitions, including small arms and light weapons against their target victims with the intention of killings, maiming or causing bodily harms to individuals. In addition to this, as a terrorist organisation, the Boko Haram members normally carry out their attacks in order to instill fears or cause panic in the minds of the generality of members of the society.

Factors that influence the Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

It is obvious that today's international system is facing the threat of insecurity as a result of proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons. In explaining the sources of the proliferation of illegal SALWs some scholars pay attention to the supply side, such as willing sellers, porous border etc (push factors), while others look at the demand side like conflicts, crimes etc (pull factors) (Okeke and Oji, 2014). In this regard, nation-states have been devising different strategies to secure their international boundaries so as to curtail the influx of illegal SALWs from getting into wrong hands or end-users. For all intent and purposes, Nigeria plays three different roles in the proliferation and/or trafficking of illegal SALWs. First, it is the origin of small arms and light weapons through the activities of local manufacturers. Second, it is the transit point of weapons through the process of exports to other countries. Third and finally, the country is the destination of SALWs through the process of imports. For example, some countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Siberia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, and Cameroon have been identified as facilitating the flow of illegal SALWs into Nigeria (Hazen and Horner, 2007:33).

There have been different ways through which illegal SALWs get into the hands of unauthorised persons in Nigeria. Basically, the entry points of illegal arms into Nigeria are through the air, sea and land borders. Accordingly, Adetula (2008:79) maintains that “the three most notorious entry points for illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) are the South West (Idi-Iroko and Same in Ogun State), the port city of Warri in Delta, and the North-Eastern border with Niger and Cameroon (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States).” In spite of the concerted efforts of officials of Nigeria Customs Services to check illegal smuggling of SALWs, the porous nature of the country’s borders is discouraging. Thus, the source of supplies of SALWs could be traced to the activities of national and international arms dealers or smugglers, theft or seizure from security personnel, oil-for-arms exchange in the Niger Delta etc (Small Arms Survey, 2007).

Basically, given the rise and resurgence of armed conflicts in different places around the world, it is not however, surprising that small and light weapons are susceptible to illicit trafficking. Trafficking of illicit weapons is a complex business. The sale of illicit arms usually involves an array of brokers, banks, transportation companies and shipment points. Above all, the traffickers normally adopt dubious process of obtaining false end-user certificates so as to enable the weapons to get to the desired destinations. Thus, the clandestine trafficking of illegal SALWs has been contributing to the escalation and exacerbation of conflicts and political instability in a number of countries in Africa.

However, the Nigerian security agencies have been making efforts to control the influx of illegal SALWs from foreign countries. Joint borders patrol by the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Customs Service and Nigeria Immigration Service has been put in place so as to effectively check the activities of traffickers of weapons. Through their efforts, some sizeable illegal weapons have been seized from the traffickers. Based on this, Adetula (2008: 79-80) states that:

The officials of Nigeria Customs Services also reported that on January 22, a DAF truck with purported Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS) goods was found to be carrying four irons drums with a total of 60 cartons (150,000 pieces) of live cartridges. The ammunitions were concealed in drums and mixed up with other sundry goods such as baby wears, peanuts, burger, hack sweet, plastic jugs, hangers, cups, used fridges, and used photocopying machines.

Apart from the above, the Nigeria Customs Service has been actively involved in the seizure of several thousand of illegal arms and cartridges in different parts of the country (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Similarly, between 2000 and 2003, it was reported that the Nigeria Police seized about 8,542 illegal small arms from different individuals and groups across the country (Okeke and Oji, 2014: 426). The regular and constant seizure of illegal weapons by the various security agencies from individuals and groups is an indication that large quantity of illicit weapons are in circulation in Nigeria. The partial closure of Nigeria’s borders in August 2019 was in response to the activities of some neighbouring West African countries in circumventing the ECOWAS Protocol of free movement of persons and goods. Based on this, the Nigeria’s Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed (Punch, 26/11/2019: 2) maintains that:

It is important to note that 95 per cent of illicit drugs and weapons that are being used for acts of terrorism and kidnapping in Nigeria today come in through our porous borders. However since this partial closure, the acts have been drastically reduced. Our conclusion is that, the arms and

ammunition these terrorists and criminal elements were using no longer gain access into the country.

In addition, in recent years, the spill-over effect of conflicts in some African countries has been influencing the influx of illicit SALWs into Nigeria. In some instances, some of the arms that were given to soldiers that participated in peacekeeping operations in other countries normally get to the hands of some unauthorized civilians in Nigeria. Based on this, Dokubo (2010:148) maintains that:

Peacekeeping in troubled spots of the region also produces reverse proliferation – from zones of active conflict into zones of tension. Some of the weapons used in communal violence in Nigeria have been traced to soldiers returning from peacekeeping duties in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Weapons not sold in the illicit market are dumped carelessly in armories, posing a threat to human life and subjected to pilfering.

The lack of maintenance culture as well as ineffective management by some state officials in Nigeria has been responsible for the theft of weapons from the military armories. It is for this reason that Asamu (2006: 131) states that “there is ample evidence to show that some of the weapons used by these militiamen came from the government armory. Other weapons seem to have found their ways into the country through its porous borders.” Thus, the indifference attitude of some of the state officials towards the movements of weapons in Nigeria has led to its wide spread proliferation. Consequently, the notion of ‘state-level failure’ to provide security has been attributed to the proliferation of illegal SALWs. This implies that the ineptitude of government and its security agencies to provide security to its citizens breeds conditions for crimes like terrorism, armed conflicts, armed robberies, kidnappings, etc in a country (Dokubo, 2010).

In another development, remnant weapons from some war torn countries are being smuggled into Nigeria. It is perhaps for this reason that Okereke (2015:143) maintains that “the Libyan crisis has contributed to the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) across the Sahel Saharan Belt.” Instructively, some of the arms or weapons that were carted away by fighters in trouble areas in Africa were used to exacerbate conflicts in some other countries like Nigeria. Based on this, the Director of UNREC, Olatokunbo Ige, argues that “Nigeria is one of the countries that is experiencing some of the most devastating effect of SALW as a result of spillover effect of the recent crises in Libya, and Mali as well as unresolved internal conflicts in different parts of the country especially in the North East, Niger Delta and Southern regions” (Vanguard, 2016:4).

Significantly, the possession of SALWs by groups that engage in conflict poses danger to the security of a nation. It threatens peace and harmony. This is essentially because illegal weapons can be used to terrorise the individual citizens. As a matter of fact, the deployment of weapons by fighting groups has only succeeded in intensifying the lethality and casualties in some of the internal conflicts in Nigeria (Okereke , 2014).

The Challenges of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

Undoubtedly, the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons has security implications for Nigeria. It affects both socio-economic and political aspects of the Nigerian state. To this extent, it generates social unrest, economic dislocation and political instability in the society. In Nigeria, the various armed groups that perpetrate violence through the use of illicit weapons are doing so

in order to achieve their ulterior motives. For all intent and purposes, it can be stated that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been used by individuals or groups that engage in violent conflicts mainly to terrorise people in a society, to influence politics, and to gain a livelihood (Dokubo (2010). These include groups like terrorists, insurgents, religious extremists, militias, armed robbers, drug barons, kidnappers, and in some cases political thugs etc. Thus, the activities of illegal users of SALWs pose a threat to the security of any given nation. It also has negative effects on development process of a nation.

In most situations of inter communal clashes as well as religious conflicts in Nigeria the individual non state actors normally use weapons to attack their opponents. It is perhaps for this reason that hardly could any communal or religious conflict break out in Nigeria without reports of having victims that are either maimed or killed. Based on this, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as cited in Dokubo (2010: 133) maintains that:

While not by themselves causing the conflicts in which they are used, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons affects the intensity and duration of violence and encourages militancy rather than a peaceful resolution of unsettled differences. Perhaps most grievously, we see a vicious circle in which insecurity leads to a higher demand for weapons, which itself breed still greater insecurity, and so on.

The above captures clearly the nature and dimensions of some of the domestic conflict situations in Nigeria, such as the ethno-religious conflicts, the Niger Delta conflict and the Boko Haram conflict. These conflicts have been debilitating in terms of casualties and the stress in which they put the Nigerian security operatives. By their different nature and characters some of the conflicts have been protracted. To this extent, in recent years in Nigeria many individuals have lost their lives and property destroyed as a result of violent conflicts. Consequently, the use of illicit weapons by non-state actor combatants in different parts of Nigeria has succeeded in the escalation of conflicts. This tendency generates insecurity of lives and property. However, for a proper appreciation of danger of illegal small arms and light weapons on security, this study will focus its analysis on two conflict cases in Nigeria, namely, the Niger Delta conflict and Boko Haram insurgency.

Certainly, the Niger Delta conflict has been devastating to the economy of the Nigerian state. This is essentially because the uprising by the youth militias in the Niger Delta has been affecting oil exploration and production activities in the area. To this extent, there has been reduction in oil production in the Niger Delta as a result of incessant attacks on oil companies and their facilities by the militants. The various militant groups have been using sophisticated weapons to cause havocs. For example, Tom Polo, one of the leaders of the militant groups in Camp 5 in Delta was said to own weapons such as AK 47 rifles, general purpose machine guns, GMPGs, rockets launchers, and gun boats (Emmanuel, 2014: 104). Therefore, the availability of weapons serves as impetus to the militants in the Niger Delta to carry out their attacks on oil companies. For example, according to Agbonifo (2014: 164) "in November and December 2005, militants detonated two explosives in the creeks of Rivers State, destroying two Shell Development Company (SPDC) pipelines located in Okrika and Andoni." Also, the youth militias in the Niger Delta engage in criminal activity of kidnapping or abducting foreign expatriates for ransom (Danjuma, 2011).

At another instance, during the Nigeria's Independence Day celebration on 1st October, 2010, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) was said to be behind two car bombings against the crowd at the Eagle Square in Abuja. The attack led to the death of 12 people and 17 people were injured (Ayanlaja and Ukwenga, 2011: 91). Even after the proclamation of amnesty by the Nigerian state on the youth militias in the Niger Delta who were prepared to renounce violence, some new groups have emerged and continued with violence in the area. These include the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM) etc. These groups have been launching series of attacks on oil companies and their installations across the Niger Delta area. This increasingly new dimension of attacks in the Niger Delta conflict has been posing the challenge of insecurity in the area.

In another development, it can be said that the Boko Haram conflict became protracted due to availability of arms to the members of the group. In a fundamental sense, at the initial stage when the Boko Haram group was operating as a peaceful sect it was alleged in certain circles that some politicians were arming them by using the members to mobilise support for votes. Based on this, Herskovits (2011:100) maintains that "Boko Haram began in 2002 as a peaceful Islamic splinter group. Then politicians began exploiting it for electoral purposes." In the same vein, Omotosho (2014:10) argues that:

One can surely assume that radical Islamist groups in the North also entertain their contacts inside the state apparatus. Against the back drop of Boko Haram activities in the country, there is a popular allegation against the political class in Nigeria about the roles played by different political parties and religious leaders.

It was partly lack of fulfillment of promises made during campaigns by some elected politicians that made the Boko Haram religious sect to resort to violence. Instructively, the members of the political class that took advantage of using the influence of some Boko Haram leaders in winning elections in Borno state during the 2003 general elections later on dumped them. This was attributed to the increase in frustration of the sect members. It is on the basis of this that Omotosho (2014:10) further maintains that:

Taking into consideration some of the personalities arrested in connection with the Boko Haram activities, it is the belief of the populace that the state allowed the fundamentalists to operate for quite some time because some of them were formerly top government functionaries and has connections to the government. For instance, the majority of those assassinated by the Boko Haram sect in Maiduguri are government agents and other dignitaries. For instance the younger brothers of the Shehu of Borno and former Governor were shot by rampaging Boko Haram.

Over the years, the conflict in the north east has become protracted due to the manner in which the Boko Haram group has been avoiding dialogue with the state (Danjuma, 2014). Undoubtedly, the uncompromising stance of the Boko Haram members has been generating insecurity in some of this country. For instance, in elaborate accounts of danger of insecurity pose by Boko Haram insurgency, Ibrahim and Obels (2017:1) maintain that:

The thirteen states of North-East and North-West zones of Nigeria have experienced a murderous and devastating insurgency by the Boko Haram (BH) sect since 2009. The BH insurgency has not only dislocated social and economic activities but also resulted in at least 20,000 deaths, the enslavement of thousands of girls and women, the forced conscription of thousands of boys and young men into the insurgency, and the flight of at least 2.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The humanitarian costs of this conflict are tremendous, not only to Nigeria but also to the three neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Boko Haram has been a major threat to the national and human security of tens of millions of people living in West and Central Africa. The scale and scope of the insurgency varies significantly across different states, regions and communities.

Fundamentally, the Boko Haram sect portrays an ideology that challenges the authority of the central government in the Nigerian state. To this extent, it seeks to change the secular structure of the Nigerian state and establish its own version of Sharia law system in the country (Onuoha, 2014). However, to accomplish its mission the Boko Haram relies on the use of violence to subdue the people. Based on this, Azazi (2011: 114) maintains that “Boko Haram is an enemy of all decent people. It is striving to spark a religious war the way racist extremists in the past have tried to provoke race war.” The manner in which the Boko Haram sect carries out its insurgency activities in some parts of Nigeria and other neighbouring states depicts that the group is a calamity to humanity. It symbolises ‘holocaust’ through the rampant killings of innocent civilians. Also, it is the agent of retrogression by bombing and destroying public and private property. Given the rate at which the Boko Haram sect has been using bombs to cause damages in Nigeria and other neighbouring states, it has been claimed in certain circles that the group has some links with foreign terrorist organisations like al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and al-Shabab in Somalia (Ayanlaja and Ukwenga, 2011).

However, since all efforts by the Nigerian government to engage in dialogue with the Boko Haram members fail, the response of the government to control the series of attacks being launched by the sect has been decisive. This is by using military force. To this extent, the counter insurgency measure embarked upon by the Nigerian security agencies through the establishment of Joint Task Force (JTF) as well as the collaboration of civilian JTF has been assisting in decimating and degrading the Boko Haram members in their different locations and bases in the north east.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this work has focused on the influx of illegal small arms and light weapons as a challenge to security in Nigeria. Thus, it can be stated that the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons affects the national security posture of the Nigerian state in many ways. It threatens the peace and development of the country. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a significant relationship between the proliferation of illegal SALWs and escalation of violent conflicts, thereby posing the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. This is because the availability of weapons creates the avenues for gangs, such as youth militias, terrorists, kidnappers, ethnic jingoists, and religious extremists to unleash violence on their rivals or opponents. In other words,

it can be said that the more there is proliferation of illegal arms in the hands of individuals the more the tendency to use them in violent conflicts in a country.

Therefore, there is the need for the Nigerian government to take adequate measure to control the influx of illegal SALWs from both the supply and demand sides. Here, it is necessary for the Nigerian government to strengthen the existing laws on the control of weapons. Both the willing sellers and buyers of illegal arms should be apprehended and adequately punished by the Nigerian government. In addition, the various security agencies like the police, customs service and immigration service etc patrolling the Nigerian borders should be well equipped with modern and sophisticated gadgets so as to check the influx of illegal arms. Furthermore, cooperation among the security agencies in checking the activities of smugglers of illegal SALWs is supposed to be enhanced. Based on this, it can be said that a working synergy among the various security personnel in Nigeria can bring about effective control of illegal weapons in the country.

Finally, it is imperative for all the Nigerian citizens to consider security as a collective responsibility. Since security is a serious business, it is important for all the stakeholders in the Nigerian project to work hand in hand with the security agencies in enhancing the security posture of the country. Here, the traditional rulers, religious leaders as well as the generality of the members of public in Nigeria should assist and report cases of people dealing or transacting in illegal arms in the country to the security agencies. This will go a long way in assisting the ongoing arms survey embark by the government to ascertain the level and propensity of illegal weapons in the country. The various efforts of the Nigerian government through the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) to recover illegal arms from the hands of criminals and militia gangs are seen as a right step towards the right direction of enhancing the security of the country.

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