



The rhino rifle syndicates

by Ashwell Glasson | Feb 17, 2020 | Africa in Fact, Issue 52

Poaching: the big guns

South Africa's game reserves have been hard hit by an intensive campaign of poaching and wildlife crime



The carcass of a female white rhino in the Malelane area of the Kruger National Park. It was shot dead by poachers on 16, August 2018 and discovered by rangers the following day. Photo: WIKUS DE WET / AFP

The rampant increase in wildlife poaching has been widely acknowledged as one of the greatest threats to biodiversity conservation in Africa. The Asian demand for rhinoceros horn has seen a massive onslaught on the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) and black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) populations. Since 2008, there has been a gradual and then explosive growth in rhino poaching in South Africa and, to a lesser extent, Mozambique and Botswana. In South Africa, the Kruger National Park region and the game reserves of KwaZulu- Natal have been the hardest hit by an intensive campaign of poaching and wildlife crime. Links to transnational crime syndicates and corruption have surfaced rapidly. The challenge became highly charged between conservation NGO movements and state conservation agencies.

According to Save the Rhino, an NGO that monitors rhino poaching statistics, South Africa lost 1,000 rhino per year between 2013 and 2017. In contrast, official rhino poaching statistics for 2018 and 2019 have shown a marked decrease. The decrease may be due to several factors: more law enforcement and counter poaching effectiveness (especially in the Kruger National Park and adjoining private reserves), a depleted rhino population and the additional effort that poachers must now make to locate rhino. The Kruger National Park covers an area of 19,485 km² in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga in north-eastern South Africa. It extends 360 km from north to south and 65 km from east to west. It is estimated that some 3.3 million people live within 50 km of the Kruger National Park's western boundary, though this figure is based on the last South African population census in 2011.



This does not take into account the Mozambican population on the Kruger National Park's eastern boundary, or the Zimbabwean population just north of the Crooks Corner border between the three countries. The bulk of the population is rural, in many cases poverty stricken and highly dependent on the environment for their well-being and daily survival. In comparison to protected areas in the European Union and North America, the Kruger National Park is a massive area to protect and manage. Furthermore, South African National Parks (SANParks), the agency delegated to manage the country's national parks, must compete for budget allocation from the fiscus. Other priority areas such as primary law enforcement, basic education, public health and related needs often take precedence over conservation and the management of parks. SANParks supplements its fiscal grant by undertaking revenue-generating activities such as providing accommodation, food services, safaris, walking trails, bird-watching, historical site tours, specialist activities and more.

A key element of SANPark's strategy is community development, which is focused on building strong relations with local communities and traditional leadership. This includes providing communities with access to protein sources from culling and related park operations and harvested thatch for home-building programmes. This approach must also be seen within the bigger question of land reform and access to resources that dominate much of the current discourse in South Africa. At present, the Kruger National Park has a field ranger complement of approximately 450 rangers and other specialised counter-poaching resources and capabilities. The field rangers have extensive paramilitary and wildlife law enforcement training as well as in depth field-craft skills focused on operating safely within a dangerous game environment. The Kruger National Park's capabilities include aerial support (helicopters and fixed wing light aircraft), canine tracking units, environmental crime investigation specialists and a partnership with the stock-theft unit and the wildlife crime section of the South African Police Service (SAPS).

It now also has a multi-sensory detection system, known as the MEERKAT, funded by the Peace Parks Foundation, which helps to locate poacher groups and direct rapid-response ranger teams and tracking dogs. In addition, the park has tested shot detection technology that is able to triangulate shots fired, which may have had a deterrent effect on poacher tactics. In 2013, with poaching of its rhino population rising, the Kruger National Park recognised the need to change its strategy and adopted a more vigorous counter-poaching approach. SANParks appointed well-known retired army Major General, Johan Jooste, to lead efforts to upgrade and enhance the parks response. The approach was successful, and Kruger National Park and General Jooste were requested to expand their efforts and support provincial conservation agencies and increase the integration of private reserves and anti-poaching units.

There still is a great focus on integrating operations with police, private anti-poaching units, provincial anti-poaching services and SANParks. But the militarisation of anti-poaching efforts has also resulted in the development of a ministerial approved Rhino Laboratory plan for law enforcement that guides much of the work in protecting rhino. At present, the Kruger National Park estimates that there may be as many as seven to eight poaching incursions into the park every day. Poaching groups have a very specific modus operandi that has been refined over time. On-the-ground poachers coordinate with local couriers, supervisors and local bosses to share information and adapt tactics. Teams of three to four individuals enter the park, travelling light and on foot. Each member of the poaching group has a specific role: one is the axe man, another the gun-bearer and another the shooter. Rhino are thick-skinned animals, weighing several tonnes. They are highly resilient to physical attack by humans.

Taking down a rhino requires a heavy calibre bolt-action rifle in the .375 to .458 magnum range. Given that the aforementioned sensory systems and in-depth monitoring are likely to

locate them, poachers have to ensure that the rhino is killed with one shot, two at most. Then they must quickly hack off its horn and rapidly exit the park. In many instances the poachers are in such a hurry to depart that they leave a rhino alive, not wanting to risk the additional shot to put it down. They leave horrifically injured animals and often orphaned calves alone to face the elements. Social media and other platforms have distributed brutal visuals of injured rhino. Poachers have also shown ingenuity in assembling homemade suppressors to try to reduce the sound of gunshots. In many cases, they modify the firearm and weld on suppressors. Generally, firearms seized in the private reserves tend to have their serial numbers filed off, but the majority of the rifles seized in the Kruger National Park still have their serial numbers.

Poaching syndicates are ever more aware of the Kruger National Park's ability to trace firearms. This is also true of provincial conservation agencies such as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency in the Eastern Cape Province. What is clear is that each poaching group will require at least one firearm. Going on the lower estimate of seven incursions a day, that suggests as many as 2,555 illegal heavy calibre firearms in the park annually. Even half that number would be a high figure, given the power of these weapons. That would be equivalent to the number of weapons needed by two infantry battalions. Firearms are generally available in Africa, mainly self-loading carbines such as AK-47s and R-series weapons. Self-loading carbines have been the mainstay of low intensity warfare, civil war and violent extremism. But they are of little benefit to poachers who target rhino and elephant who need heavy calibre, bolt-action "hunting" rifles. Suitable rifles are obtained in a number of ways.

Firstly, farm attacks in South Africa have led to a hidden network of gangs providing poaching syndicates with stolen firearms and ammunition either through direct sales, on a rental basis, or for a percentage of the poaching proceeds (though the latter needs further confirmation). These potent networks have likely overseen the movement of rifles across provincial boundaries and across national borders. Although South Africa has strong legislation addressing firearm licensing, training and management, there are concerns that the regulations are inconsistent and the implementation lacking. This enables the illegal trade in firearms. According to registered security service providers, many gun shops have not been inspected for several years. Secondly, corruption at police station level has seen the sale and rental of firearms directly to poachers out of station armouries and evidence lock-ups. Several private counter poaching companies in the region have noted that rifles seized in arrests are being used by other poaching groups.

The third source of firearms is Mozambique, via a murky set of firearm consignments and deals struck by two particular gun dealers. Rumours also point to the rental of firearms from white South African farmers to poachers and poaching syndicates. A tendency to racially profile poachers has ignored the fact that there are white players in the industry, including professional hunting outfits and even the rhino owners themselves. In an intensive investigation between 2015 and 2017, Kathi Lynn Austin of the Conflict Awareness Project undertook an investigation into the supply of small arms manufactured by the Czech company CZ Brno to Mozambique – specifically, how they were getting to the poachers to be used in poaching events. Austin's investigation used the follow-the-guns methodology, and highlighted critical links between CZ Brno in the US and in the Czech Republic with the arms trade with Mozambique.

Portugal is used for the transshipment of the firearms; transnational criminal syndicates needed their frontline poachers to have access to rifles that are powerful enough to kill a rhino, so they enabled a dedicated arms pipeline from Europe to Africa. Between 2014 to 2018 the average proportion of CZ Brno firearms as a percentage of the total seized in the Kruger

National Park was 22.18%. However, about 85% of all CZ Brno rifles seized in the Kruger National Park originated from the Mozambican arms trade. This is highly concerning, given that there are only two licensed gun dealers in Mozambique, although this in itself does not mean that either gun dealer is involved in illegal firearm sales. Historically, Mozambique does not have a culture of recreational or professional hunting, although this is changing with the establishment of new protected areas, Big Five tourism lodges and hunting concessions. Mozambique is trying to diversify its tourism industry from the traditional beach tourism to a focus on ecotourism.

With this diversification into Big Five reserves comes a need for high calibre rifles to protect guests on safaris. This will likely lead to a steady legal growth of rifle sales in Mozambique over time. South African national parks and law enforcement agencies have engaged with their Mozambican counterparts, but the Mozambican authorities appear to have done little or nothing as regards the CZ Brno imports and distribution by the "Rhino Rifle Syndicate", as it might be called. Firearm import and export certificates from countries of origin, transshipment documentation and port clearance approvals are often tampered with. It is recommended that the Mozambican authorities take a stronger stance on firearm import controls. The sad state of affairs of firearms management at some South African police stations should sound an alarm to the SAPS, as well as policymakers. Inspections of station armouries and evidence lock-ups need to be accelerated and conducted on an ad hoc basis.

The private security industry regulatory authority in South Africa must also take stronger measures to review and inspect the armouries and stockpiles of private security companies. Clear insight into the possible complicity of some of these companies is needed. Most of the poachers are now coming from the western boundary of the Kruger National Park; an overall drop in Mozambican poaching is noticeable. Overall, it is clear that the SAPS lack capacity and resources to investigate the role of illegal firearms in poaching. The Kruger National Park's mandate ends at its fences, and the need for effective law enforcement in the rural areas around countering poaching remains critical



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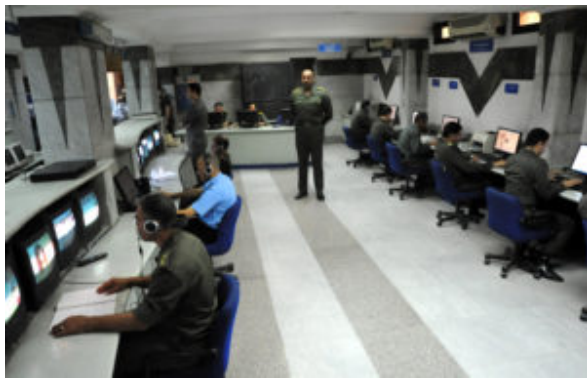
How governments are 'weaponising' surveillance

by Frederico Links | Feb 17, 2020 | Africa in Fact, Issue 52



Surveillance technology: used and abused

African states have been deploying surveillance capabilities to spy on and intimidate youth movements and activists



Egyptian army officers monitor local and international TV stations and websites at the military press office department in Cairo in June 2012. Egyptians were voting in a run-off presidential election, pitting an Islamist against Hosni Mubarak, amid political chaos, highlighted by uncertainty over the future role of the army.

Photo: AFP PHOTO/STR

On 20 August, 2016, a group of mostly young social media activists gathered at a property in the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, to discuss national political affairs. The political climate was tense in the central African country following brief, intense protests against the continued rule of long-time strongman Pierre Nkurunziza, politically motivated killings, repression of the media and an attempted coup the year before, in May 2015. As the gathering got under way, police swooped in and 46 of the activists, who had organised the meeting via the messaging app WhatsApp, were arrested. Eight of them were kept in jail for a while. "Police accused them of tarnishing the image of Burundi by spreading defamatory information against public authorities," said a civil society activist, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "Before the arrest of those WhatsApp group members, the minister in charge of public security had issued a threatening statement against social media activists," the activist told Africa in Fact.

"On 17 May, 2016, he said that those using social media tools to spread rumours should not feel safe; that security services have now acquired the capacity to monitor them, to locate them and arrest them." The Burundian activist said that in the wake of the incident suspicions grew that the regime had acquired sophisticated digital surveillance capabilities to monitor and intercept the communications of citizens. As a result, with the traditional media sector, especially broadcasting, effectively captured or destroyed by the Nkurunziza regime, and with many journalists having fled the country and now operating from exile, a heavy culture of self-censorship enveloped the country, even on social media platforms. Since the youth-led uprisings that became known as the Arab Spring of 2011 that toppled authoritarian regimes across North Africa, indications are that many African governments have sharpened their communications and digital surveillance capabilities, especially seeking to clamp down on political expression on popular social media platforms that are primarily used by the youth.

In September 2019, the Uganda-based Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) Institute released its 'State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2019' report, which found: "The continued surveillance of the public, with limited oversight, in addition to the increased surveillance capacity of governments, and the interception of communication, including that of critics and human rights activists, threatens internet freedom. These measures have been coupled with regulatory control of the internet, including now widespread and restrictive measures such as censorship, filtering, blocking, throttling and internet shutdowns evident in several countries." The report mentions that while most of the



repressive surveillance practices uncovered were primarily perpetrated by authoritarian regimes – of which there are apparently 23 among the 55 African governments – even those countries classified as “flawed democracies”, such as South Africa, engaged in highly questionable surveillance activities.

Since 2011, countries such as Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and the list goes on, have “weaponised” the internet and social media platforms through surveillance and repressive computer misuse, social media tax, and cyber security and terrorism laws. This has been especially noticeable following similar youthful outspokenness online like that which preceded and fuelled the Arab Spring. And some states have even gone as far as deploying troll armies and state sponsored disinformation campaigns – what the Oxford Internet Institute calls “organised social media manipulation campaigns” – to counter narratives on social media platforms that are perceived to be anti-government. In its September 2019 report, ‘The Global Disinformation Order’, the institute identified 10 African governments involved in or running “organised social media manipulation campaigns” – specifically, Angola, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe.

The growing spectre of harm and alarm represented by such tactics, and the increasingly pervasive nature of state surveillance practices, along with the very real threat of surveillance overreach and abuse – as well as the ease with which surveillance and hacking technologies can be acquired internationally – have given rise to a global climate of widespread repression before expression. This was flagged as a burgeoning global human rights concern by United Nations special rapporteur David Kaye in June 2019. The UN special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, in a report submitted before the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), stated: “We live in an age of readily available, easy to abuse and difficult to detect tools of digital surveillance. In his groundbreaking surveillance report in 2013, the previous mandate holder, Frank La Rue, noted that weak regulatory environments had provided fertile ground for arbitrary and unlawful infringements of the rights to privacy and freedom of opinion and expression.”

Many of the examples of abuse and infringements that Kaye was referring to undoubtedly emanated from the African continent, where some of the more repressive and authoritarian, as well as some seemingly democratic, states have been active over the past decade or so in global digital surveillance technology markets and have been caught out engaging in murky and unlawful surveillance activities. One such country is South Africa. “There’s plenty of evidence that South Africa’s security agencies have put resources into monitoring and interfering with democratic formations, particularly during the Zuma administration,” says Murray Hunter, a surveillance researcher who formerly headed the influential Right2Know (R2K) campaign’s state surveillance monitoring project. “This includes civil society groups, student protest movements, dissident unions, and media organisations. “A few years ago, there was also reporting on a leaked SSA [State Security Agency] document that revealed the agency’s official national security estimates, i.e. what it perceives to be the biggest genuine threats to state security,” Hunter explains.

“As this report shows, the state was frankly and seriously anticipating an Arab-spring style uprising in the lead up to the 2014 elections. In other words, the state had reframed what many would consider to be legitimate and unrelated social protest as a potential existential threat.” South African civil society and the media have exposed such practices over the years and even taken the state to court. In September 2019, the investigative journalism initiative, the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism, supported by R2K and others, won a high court judgment that effectively scrapped the primary law enabling communications surveillance and interception, the notorious Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act (RICA) of 2002. With SSA expected to



appeal the high court decision, and the South African Police Service (SAPS) already having lodged an appeal, it's unclear how the case will eventually end. But the decision reverberated around the world and has emboldened international calls for reform of state surveillance practices globally.

One country in particular need of reform is Zimbabwe, just north of South Africa, which has a long history of repression of legitimate dissent and political expression. While invasive state surveillance was already an uncomfortable fact of life for political activists and journalists up until then, since 2016 the situation has become much worse, according to political activist Henry Munangatire. He was one of the core organisers and strategists of the July 2016 #thisflag pro-democracy protest movement – run primarily via various social media platforms on mobile phones – spearheaded by young Zimbabwean pastor Evan Mawarire, who attracted a large youth following and international attention, as well as state harassment, intimidation and repression. Munangatire said that at the height of the #thisflag movement, which called on people to stay home in protest at the state of the country, state security operatives used the state's communications surveillance capabilities to hunt down and imprison youth movement leaders, many of whom managed to evade capture and had to be smuggled out of the country.

“All of a sudden you had young people using this hashtag to talk about their economic and social situations, which at that point were a result of 36 years of corruption and mismanagement of the country by Zanu-PF,” he says. “The success of this movement culminated in building social media activism and on-the-ground activism, which, of course, led to the creation of other hashtags, such as #Mugabemustgo, which were created online and led to civil disobedience and people expressing discontent at the system. “So it was at that point that the Zanu-PF government realised it didn't know what to do with the internet and they started crafting a cyber security Bill. And that Bill basically sought to criminalise the use of social media in politics and social activism, even if it is peaceful activism,” Munangatire says. He added that while the cyber security Bill had moved onto the back-burner since the 2017 military coup that removed long-time Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe from office, it has since been revived by the Mnangagwa regime, which has pushed for its urgent enactment into law.

The Zimbabwe Cyber Crime, Cyber Security and Data Protection Bill was approved by the Mnangagwa cabinet at the beginning of October 2019 and has been sent to parliament for enactment into law. The Bill has already attracted criticism for its provisions that enable a clampdown on social media. The 34-year-old Munangatire said he lives under constant and invasive state surveillance and has been arrested twice for his political activities over the years. His experiences are unfortunately not isolated ones on the African continent. The warning signs for Africa are clear and everywhere, as articulated in the CIPESA 'State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2019' report: “While digital authoritarianism has been in existence for decades, it is clear that its use by authoritarian regimes to surveil, repress, and manipulate domestic and foreign populations is a tool of state control over their rights. If left unchecked, democracy and internet freedom will continue to regress.”

However, according to Hunter, the situation was not all doom and gloom. “While pervasive surveillance may be a fact, we should not assume that it's an inevitable fact,” he says. “As societies, we need to raise the political and social cost of security-statist thinking. That means helping raise public awareness of the issues and the threats and the costs of surveillance. We can march for privacy, and vote for privacy, and debate and discuss for privacy, and pay for privacy and donate for privacy and design for privacy and litigate for privacy and legislate for privacy – and we should.”





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A rapidly changing landscape of ever increasing threats

by Toby Shapshak | Feb 17, 2020 | Africa in Fact, Issue 52

Cyber crime: It's a war

Cyber crime knows no boundaries and the perpetrators are constantly improving their capabilities



According to Ivory Coast's police department in charge of cyber crime (PLCC) nearly 100 internet criminals were arrested in the country in 2018. The country is known for its Web scammers.

Photo: ISSOUF SANOGO / AFP

Cyber crime cost Africa an estimated \$3.5 billion in 2017 alone, according to pan-African IT business advisory company Serianu, but most countries don't have the right legislation to defend themselves from – let alone prosecute – this new form of crime. The brutal war in Yemen provides a timely example of how what might appear to be a traditional regional conflict of the type far too common in Africa and the Middle East is also one being fought in a uniquely modern way using cyber warfare and drone attacks. The conflict between the Iran-backed Houthi rebels and a Saudi Arabia-led coalition backed by the United States, United Kingdom and France is brutally old fashioned, fought with guns, mortars and tanks, killing about 91,600 people since 2015 and displacing more than two million others, according to recent reports by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the United Nations. But in two ways it is a very modern war; two Houthi drone strikes in September 2019 on Saudi oil facilities threatened 10% of the world's supply, while cyber warfare is also a key part of this conflict.

Rebels also took control of Yemen's internet service provider (ISP), Yemen Net, when they took over the capital, Sana'a, in 2015 – opening up "another front", Allan Liska, a threat intelligence

analyst at internet technology company RecordedFuture, said in an interview with Cyberscoop, an online media outlet for technology decision makers. But cyber war is not just part of an active conflict like Yemen; it is growing in Africa, too. "Cyber crime today knows no borders, and its technical capabilities are improving fast," says Riaan Badenhorst, general manager at IT security consultants Kaspersky Africa. Moreover, cybercrime in Africa is increasing at an "exponential rate", says Nozipho Mngomezulu, a specialist telecoms and internet partner at Johannesburg law firm Webber Wentzel. Quoting Serianu's 2017 cyber security report, Mngomezulu says that in Africa cyber attacks hit Nigeria the hardest, with losses of \$649 million, followed by Kenya with \$210 million and Tanzania with \$99 million.

Meanwhile, during that time, more than 95% of public and private organisations across the continent spent less than \$1,500 a year on cyber-security measures, with SMEs in particular failing to invest. Mngomezulu noted that the Institute for Security Studies had found that South Africa was the target of 13,842 cyber attacks every day. "Cyber criminals currently see Africa as a safe haven, where they can conduct their operations without the fear of being held accountable," she told Africa in Fact. "Cyber criminals view Africans as easy targets that can be easily manipulated. And most African countries are yet to catch up with the rest of the world insofar as cyber security is concerned." Several African countries have also effectively shut down their own internet during times of crisis – including Zimbabwe, Cameroon and Chad – making it possible for repressive regimes to keep citizens from protesting, literally by cutting off their means to communicate. Social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, which are key channels for spreading information, are the most frequent targets.

In the past year WhatsApp, the messaging service owned by Facebook with over a billion users, has been "turned off" in several countries. Social media are also the most important avenues for the spread of disinformation. In September 2019 Google's security team revealed that Apple phones had been hacked, apparently by the Chinese, to spy on the oppressed Muslim Uyghur population in that country. Not long afterwards, WhatsApp sued Israeli security firm NSO Group for attacks on about 100 users, mostly human rights activists, lawyers and journalists. Yemen has also seen a spike in malicious software, known as malware, although it is unclear whether cyber criminals intend them for espionage or criminal purposes. But "the intent for criminals to take advantage of people in a war zone, as well as nation states to do espionage ... is there," said Winnona DeSombre, a threat intelligence researcher at RecordedFuture in an interview with Cyberscoop.

One fearsome form of cyber crime with clear criminal intent is ransomware, in which hackers take control of computer systems and demand a payment to return control to their owners. In August 2019, Johannesburg's city power utility was hacked with ransomware, while the city of Johannesburg itself was hit in October. The 2017 WannaCry ransomware attacks, which targeted several African countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Egypt, Mozambique, Tanzania, Niger, Morocco and Tunisia, are thought to have hit 200,000 computers in 150 countries, and the total damage was estimated at between hundreds of millions and billions of dollars. A 2016 African Union Commission and Symantec report analysing cyber-security trends and governments' response to them, found 34 out of the continent's 55 countries lacked specific legal provisions to combat cyber crime, says Mngomezulu, citing also "weak infrastructure security, a lack of skilled human capital and a lack of awareness of the sector's dynamics".

"There is little sense of a cohesive strategy to fend off cyber attacks, little knowledge sharing, and certainly no cyber-defence capacity as part of national defences," says Arthur Goldstuck, the managing director of South African-based researchers World Wide Worx. Meanwhile, the threat of ransomware remains as powerful as ever, while it also evolves in sophistication, says Badenhorst. Attacks on urban infrastructure, such as the recent ones on Johannesburg, are

often worryingly successful, he added. They have a far-reaching impact on essential systems and processes and affect local businesses and citizens as well as the municipal or government authority itself. Kaspersky's detection data shows that larger organisations, such as city authorities and enterprises, are the fastest growing target. The company monitored 194,803 ransomware attacks in South Africa alone in 2018. That was a 64% increase over 2017, according to the company. Meanwhile, attacks on the employees of large organisations surged 17.9% in the 12 months to May 2019.

"Phishing and malware continue to be relentless threats, leveraged by cyber criminals," warns IBM's Sheldon Hand, business unit leader at IBM Security, told Africa in Fact. Organisations must understand the need to educate employees about attempts to trick log-in details and other information out of them. "Unpatched vulnerabilities will continue to be exploited by attackers," Hand adds, pointing to the need to continually update business cyber-security measures. Most African countries are "one ransomware attack away" from waking up to the need for defensive capabilities against these attacks, says Goldstuck. "The most commonly used tactic is to pray that nothing happens. However, prayer does not have a great track record in cyber security." Meanwhile, the threat landscape is changing rapidly, with new cyber threats emerging every year. "Many organisations across all industries face unmanageable levels of threat, the risk of exposure, and an ever-growing attack surface," says IBM's Hand.

Retailers, particularly those with a growing online presence, continue to be vulnerable, while the finance and insurance industries are the most targeted, he says. Transportation services – including airline, bus, rail, and water forms of transport – are an increasingly attractive target for malicious actors, Hands points out, because of the industry's reliance on information technology to facilitate operations, its ubiquitous need for integration of third party vendors, and its vast supply chain. All around Africa, at a continental level, "the lack of political urgency in enacting adequate cyber-security legislation is particularly worrying," says Mngomezulu. Given the increasing sophistication of cyber crime and cyber warfare, and the general lack of sophistication around these problems in government and business circles, as well as among individuals, we all should be worried.



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A legacy of bloodshed and corruption

by Joe Walsh | Feb 12, 2020 | Africa in Fact, Issue 52

The arms industry: fuelling conflict

The world's biggest arms fair, which turned 20 in 2019, is lauded as a 'fantastic showcase' by its British hosts, but critics strongly disagree





A vendor uses an Armtrac 20T robot to squash a 2015 Rugby World Cup branded rugby ball as he demonstrates its capabilities during the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) exhibition in London in September, 2015.

Photo: LEON NEAL / AFP

The Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), which boasts of being the world's largest arms fair, celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. The biennial event, held in London, aims to bring together the global arms industry under one roof, showcasing more than 1,700 exhibitors and 36,000 attendants from more than 50 countries. It is supported by the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence and Department for International Trade, as well as BAE Systems, the UK's largest arms manufacturer. Political insiders defend the country's role as an arms exporter and the DSEI's role in generating arms sales as sources of high-tech research and jobs. "The UK defence industry is looking to recruit more engineers, scientists and developers into 200,000 jobs and up to 10,000 apprentices within UK defence companies," according to James Gray MP, a member of the House of Commons Defence Committee, quoted in a DSEI statement. "DSEI is a fantastic showcase for defence companies where international buyers, sellers, developers, thinkers, educators and the trainers can all get together."

Yet critics of Britain's role in the global arms trade, and the industry as a whole, see DSEI less as a "fantastic showcase" and more as the shiny centrepiece of a globally destructive sector unrivalled by any other. The exhibition is met with protests and the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has called for it to end. Arms exports are estimated to contribute as much as £12 billion to the UK economy. Andrew Feinstein, a former South African MP for the ANC and author of *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*, is one such critic. "In the 20 years of its existence DSEI has, probably more than any other trade show of any sort anywhere in the world, contributed to the death and suffering of Africans," Feinstein told *Africa in Fact*. "Its legacy is one of bloodshed, corruption and Britain being at the forefront of undermining good governance across the African continent." Countries with a recent history of conflict or military suppression sent delegations to DSEI 2019, officially invited by the UK government. From Africa, they included Algeria and Nigeria, while Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara did not preclude it from an official delegation invitation.

Algeria found itself on the UK government's list of core markets for defence and security opportunities, along with Tunisia, South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola. Egypt was also among them – and remains a core market for UK arms exports. A delegation was officially invited by the UK government to attend DSEI last year despite appearing in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 2018 "human rights priority countries" report. According to the UK government's report, "the human rights situation in Egypt continued to give cause for concern". It cited new restrictions on media and online freedoms, and a government campaign



against civil society, cases of torture, enforced disappearances and extended pre-trial detention. At least 250 cases of enforced disappearances were documented by lawyers, with thousands of individuals estimated to be in pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement for extended periods.” Andrew Smith, spokesperson for the NGO Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), explains the apparent contradiction within UK policy. “There’s always been a total hypocrisy at the heart of UK foreign policy and UK arms exports,” he told Africa in Fact.

“The FCO might deem some of these countries a concern, but the government as a whole can still deem them very close allies.” Feinstein agrees. “By any measure, Britain sells arms to whoever it wants to. The bottom line is the UK puts sales of weapons way ahead of any consideration of human rights. It puts profits ahead of people,” he says. But the DSEI does not see this as a true characterisation of its exhibition or of how it and the UK government operate. “The presence of a delegate or visitor from any country should not be taken as a presumption that the export of equipment to that country would be permitted,” a spokesman for DSEI said. “That is a matter for the UK government and their export licensing process, which operates to the highest regulatory standards.” Feinstein dismisses these assertions: “Their [DSEI] first assumption is profoundly wrong. The second, that the UK has an ethical system that guides export arms policy, is frankly a nonsense,” he argues. That Egypt and South Africa, the respective powerhouses of north and southern Africa, have been identified as core markets is no surprise due to the relative size of their economies and the different roles they fulfil.

Egypt, due to its proximity to the Middle East, can serve as a political ally for the UK arms industry’s main market, Saudi Arabia, and the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Egypt’s president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, has also called for the lifting of a UN arms embargo on neighbouring Libya. Under its former leader, Muammar Gaddafi, Libya was a key market for the UK government, especially after the former prime minister, Tony Blair, visited the country in 2004. Smith believes that the legitimacy conferred by the UK government is another driving factor behind the country’s large arms trade. “When a regime is buying weapons from the UK, they’re not just buying weapons; they’re also buying political support that goes with those weapons,” he argues. This applies equally to countries such as Libya, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The UK gets money and the buying country gets both arms and tacit political support to maintain their position. Although both the UN and European Union (EU) can, and do, implement arms embargoes, these can ultimately prove ineffective due to previous deals, Smith explains.

In Egypt, for example, arms sold to former President Hosni Mubarak in the 1990s were used against civilians during the Arab Spring, despite an embargo now in place. “After the coup [in Egypt], an arms embargo was brought in by Europe, but it was probably the single worst embargo in the history of arms embargoes, because it was [so] momentary [that] absolutely nobody followed it,” Smith says. Embargoes can prove ineffective because arms generally have a longer lifespan than the period of an embargo. Any arms deal signed the day before an embargo is put in place can still be completed. At the other end of the continent, South Africa is seen as the gateway to the African market, making it an attractive country to set up business in and to build links to the rest of Africa to sell arms. Feinstein outlines why the UK and Europe target this market particularly, and what advantages they have over the world’s largest arms exporter, the US. “South Africa has been involved in a number of very corrupt arms transactions so [it makes it attractive] for British and European arms companies who can’t compete with the Americans because the Americans have massive economies of scale over Europeans, or the Chinese who practically give away their weapons, so Europeans [are willing to] pay enormous bribes.”

Yet, after 20 years of DSEI few people, if any, celebrate the anniversary – other than global arms dealers and people in the corridors of a couple of UK government departments in

Whitehall. “The best thing we can do, if we are truly concerned about the socio-economic development of Africa, would be to shut it [DSEI] down and to properly regulate our arms trade,” concludes Feinstein. For the moment, though, the UK and Europe will continue to sell weapons. DSEI will continue to bring together the global arms trade. And African citizens will continue to suffer the consequences. “Nobody is forced to sell weapons to anyone,” says Smith. “Not every country in Europe is a major arms dealer. But those that are, are doing tremendous damage around the world.”



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Opaque and difficult to quantify

by Sigrid Lipott | Feb 7, 2020 | Africa in Fact, Issue 52

Light weapons: a roadmap

Africa has made some innovative interventions to reduce illicit small arms flows, despite a scarcity of data and challenges on several fronts



A member of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) armed forces sings moments before casting his vote at a polling station in southern Sudan's regional capital, Juba, on 9 January, 2011 in the first hours of a week-long independence referendum, which led to the formation of South Sudan. Photo: ROBERTO SCHMIDT / AFP


In January 2017, the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union adopted its Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa (AUMR) by the year 2020. The AUMR recognises that the use of small arms and light weapons continues to destabilise the continent – while the causes and factors driving conflicts in the continent have changed. The document encompasses a number of steps and modalities for action, with a focus on preventing the illicit flow of weapons throughout the region. Among those, reliable information and analysis are critical to understanding the nature, extent and impact of illicit small arms proliferation. It is

against this background that the AU Commission and Small Arms Survey undertook the first ever continental mapping of illicit arms flows, with a view to promoting transparency and stronger commitment among African states to use evidence-based approaches to controlling the proliferation, circulation, and trafficking of small arms.

The report, “Weapons Compass, Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa”, published in January 2019, unpacks trends in illicit small arms proliferation, reviews examples of existing good practice and summarises recommendations to tackle illicit flows. Defining these illicit arms is not easy because they take many forms. In outline, illicit arms are those “weapons that are produced, transferred, held or used in violation of national or international law” and can include both military-style small arms and light weapons and commercial firearms. The report draws on a review of existing knowledge combined with new research, including consultations with and contributions received from multiple stakeholders, such as AU member states, regional economic communities, regional bodies, and specialised UN and civil society entities.

In particular, between 2017 and 2018 21 African countries and a number of international actors responded to data requests and questionnaires previously prepared by the Small Arms Survey. The mapping that resulted from the analysis identified six major sources of illicit weapons, originating both from within and outside Africa. For better data visualisation and analysis, the continent has been disaggregated into the five regions as designated by the AU (northern Africa, western Africa, central Africa, eastern Africa and southern Africa). Action is required on several fronts, notably at the regional and national levels. The implementation of international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) can contribute to significantly preventing and reducing illicit arms flows on the continent.

Moreover, a number of subregional organisations have been mandated to tackle one or several aspects of small arms issues: in 2016, 22 organisations out of 52 worldwide working to implement the UN PoA were based in Africa. Nevertheless, very few African states have put mechanisms in place to keep track of arms trafficking. Data on illicit weapons is scarce and the scale of the phenomenon can only be roughly estimated. Illicit flows are opaque and difficult to quantify, given the concealed, multifaceted and context-specific nature of the trade. Despite increased international attention to small-arms related issues, to date there has been only limited progress in states’ reporting and transparency on the core issues relevant to arms control. Firstly, information on both the authorised industrial production and transfer of small arms is patchy.

Despite gaps in reporting, though, there is evidence that several countries maintain capacities to produce small arms or ammunition. Curiously, capacity seems to exist in at least 19 states, with most of them located in northern Africa (capacity in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda is, though, to be confirmed). Secondly, authorised trade in small arms is also relatively poorly documented as statistics are based on states’ voluntary reporting and less than half of African states report to the main platform, the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database. The available statistics, however, suggest that the value of reported imports to Africa has been increasing since the beginning of the century, with northern Africa as the subregion that imports the most small arms, averaging \$62 million per year, followed by western Africa (\$35 million). Thirdly, data on both licit and illicitly held weapons is similarly scarce. 

Small Arms Survey’s estimates indicate that civilian actors hold more than 40 million of the small arms on the continent; by contrast, armed forces and law enforcement agencies hold less than 11 million small arms. Past studies used to give an overall figure of 100 million arms in the continent, but the numbers could thus be larger. West Africa has the largest number of both licit and illicit civilian-held firearms on the continent (roughly 11 million), followed by north Africa (10.2 million). Staggeringly, Africa seems to host relatively few small arms

compared with other global regions: its rate of 3.2 civilian-held small arms for every 100 people compares well to the rate in the Americas, which is 46.2. Illicit weapons in Africa enter the market at virtually every stage of the weapons' life cycle.

Legacy weapons from past conflicts in the continent, and in particular from the peak of Africa's late 1990s/early 2000s civil wars, still constitute the main source of illicit firearms in circulation. However, research indicates other important sources, ranging from recently manufactured weapons to weapons imported recently from outside Africa or diverted from legal commercial flows. The iTrace System, developed by Conflict Armament Research, shows, for instance, that between 1% and 3% of illicit small arms documented in Somalia and Burkina Faso and between 9% of ammunition seen in Burkina Faso and 17% in Somalia have been manufactured since 2010. The source of these weapons is both internal to Africa and external. Cross-border trafficking is a major source of weapons across all of the African sub-regions.

Documented weapons often reflect small scale smuggling of arms and ammunition, but this so-called "ant trade" can involve large volumes of arms trafficked into conflict theatres. As a result, weapons are often trafficked between countries without contiguous borders, or re-circulated across large geographical areas. Smuggled weapons also include weapons that were recently diverted from national stockpiles. Outflows of looted national stockpiles followed the collapse of the Libyan government in 2011, for instance. Weapons of Libyan origin were reportedly trafficked to a number of neighbouring countries and as far as the Central African Republic (CAR) and Somalia. Diversions from national stockpiles remain a primary concern in the Sahara-Sahel region as well as in central Africa.

Weapons from Ivorian stockpiles, for instance, have been recovered in a range of countries, including the CAR, where weapons formerly belonging to Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have also been found. Diversions from national stockpiles are also a concern in African sub-regions less affected by conflict, as media reports in Madagascar and South Africa show. Diversions from national stockpiles include weapons lost or seized from troops deployed in the context of peace operations. The main actors of land-based trafficking are typically armed groups, criminal gangs, local manufacturers, corrupt security officials, as well as peacekeepers returning from international duty. Smaller-scale trafficking can also involve local border communities. Pastoralist groups in Kenya (Turkana), Uganda (Dodoth) and South Sudan (Toposa), for example, have traded arms across borders to protect themselves and their cattle.

Interestingly, intelligence-based information sharing is currently helping to reveal that terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda-linked groups have acquired capacities to move equipment across borders in western Africa. Arms can be also diverted from civilian holdings, although the extent of this phenomenon is particularly difficult to measure. As of June 2018, only 12 African countries had provided statistics to Interpol's illicit arms record and tracing management system, which allows police agencies worldwide to record detailed information on firearms lost, stolen, or trafficked. Other sources, however, show that the diversion of civilian holdings can be significant. In South Africa, for example, during the year 2015/2016, an average of 20 firearms per day were stolen from private individuals.

The proliferation of unlicensed craft producers represents an enduring threat throughout Africa. Craft production appears to be concentrated in West Africa, where at least 12 countries appear to host craft producers. The weapons produced range from rudimentary hunting weapons to sophisticated firearms, including copies of assault rifles. In some of these countries, the possession of craft-produced weapons is common. Such weapons are involved in 80% of gun-related crimes in Ghana, whereas in Nigeria 17% of rural gun owners hold them. The nature and extent of craft production capacities is less clear in eastern and southern Africa. However, it is known that capacities exist in almost half of AU member states, with the



exception of northern Africa. Overall, craft production is the second-most prominent source of illicit weapons.

Many of the illicit small arms circulating in Africa originate from the continent. However, external sources of illicit arms have gained prominence over the past few years. Arms transfer diversions are well documented in the context of arms embargoes. Africa is both a recipient and source of embargo-breaking arms transfers. Violations of the arms embargo imposed by the UNSC on Libya, South Sudan, Ivory Coast, the CAR and Somalia have been documented. Analysis carried out by UN experts and monitoring groups shows that the largest cases of transfer diversions have been directed to Libya, before the strengthening of the arms embargo in 2014. Middle Eastern states have been repeatedly identified as points of origin for several cases of illicit transfers of small arms to embargoed countries.

Yet at the same time, illicit weapons from Libya before 2014 were destined not only for Africa but also for the Middle East. Illicit transfers to Africa, including in violation of arms embargoes, originate also from Europe, notably eastern Europe. A relatively recent phenomenon is the proliferation of converted imitation firearms, which enables the circulation of illicit handguns at a much-reduced cost. While this was initially particularly significant in North Africa, major shipments of readily convertible imitation guns from Turkey have recently been intercepted in, or on their way to, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia. In 2017, 25,000 Turkish imitation pistols were seized in Port Kismayo, Somalia. External sources of illicit small arms include the diversion of recently authorised imports of arms and ammunition.

Such diversions were a regular occurrence in Africa in the 1990s, but the phenomenon has decreased to some extent because conflict actors are increasingly relying on more sophisticated ways of procuring small arms already available on the continent. The limited participation of African states on international information-sharing platforms has not prevented the continent from hosting innovative interventions to tackle illicit arms flows, which in a number of cases have proved to have a positive impact on illicit flows. Joint border initiatives represent an emerging area of good practice, such as the joint border commission established between Kenya and Ethiopia and the cooperation agreement between Chad and Sudan. Joint commissions are also being established such as that between the CAR, Chad and Sudan on the one hand and Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria on the other.

Sub-regional, cross-border security strategies, such as the Mano River Union Strategy, and regional joint operations are also gaining traction. An example of the latter was Operation Trigger III, a firearms seizure conducted simultaneously in nine North and West African countries by Interpol in cooperation with UNODC and WCO in 2017. Other notable arms-control measures relate to sub-regional and national end-user controls. States such as Burkina Faso and South Africa, as well as regional organisations such as ECOWAS, have developed national and sub-regional end-user control systems. Addressing gaps in the certification and verification of end uses and end users is key to preventing the diversion of arms. The approaches discussed above are, however, limited to specific sub-regions.

The mapping study mentioned earlier has provided a typology for categorising broader illicit arms flows, but many knowledge gaps remain, especially in the area of policy planning. We need more information in a range of areas, such as studies of the demand factors driving illicit arms flows and the scale and nature of illicit arms flows in non-conflict settings. The study also shows that there is room for improving current practices in a number of areas, for instance as regards the disposal of surplus and collected weapons, including those recovered in the context of peace operations. More attention needs to be paid to the quality of national legislation on the enforcement of arms embargoes, as well as emerging threats such as convertible imitation firearms.



Continental and sub-regional instruments designed to reduce illicit small arms flows are in place, but fulfilling such commitments requires engagement at international, regional and national levels. It is recommended that the AU's political bodies engage with external players to encourage, for example, the main arms exporters to Africa to report their exports. Strengthening cooperation and information exchange at the regional level by establishing sub-regional and national databases to monitor trends will also be key to generating actionable weapons intelligence. Last but not least, national authorities need to change their approach to the coordination of assistance and capacity building efforts, and better support capacity-building initiatives in these areas.

Africa has made some innovative interventions to reduce illicit small arms flows, in line with efforts at the international, regional and sub-regional levels. Raising awareness about them could be a valuable asset in countering the major drivers of illicit weapons flows, and contribute to the successful implementation of the Silence the Guns agenda in Africa.



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