

**OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
THE CONTROL OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT
WEAPONS**

1. *The proliferation and illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is a complex and multidimensional problem that affects nations, its people and communities in diverse ways. These include the deterioration of physical security, the undermining of development prospects, the degradation of access to and availability of social services, etc. In recent past, the society has become awashed with all calibres of Small Arms and Light Weapons which have found their way into the hands of unauthorized persons and in that process, its misapplication and misuse have become a recurring decimal which has led to series of*

frontages that have been opened, causing all sort of security challenges globally of which Nigeria is not an exception.

2. *According to a Geneva based small arms survey conducted in 2007, it was estimated that at least 875 million SALW are in circulation. The West African Sub-region and by implication Nigeria are not immune to this gruesome spread of illicit arms. A similar survey conducted in 2019 revealed that 10 million illicit SALW are in circulation in West Africa with 70 per cent of these believed to be in Nigeria. These widespread availability of SALW and misuse have a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. Currently, Nigeria is facing series of internal security challenges and it is no news that the illicit proliferation of arms has been*

the enabler and fueller to these violent crimes and conflicts within the nation, thus, affecting peace and security in the nation. The menace of this proliferation has therefore remained at the front-burner of the global and national security discourse given their devastating impact on peace and stability.

3. Against this background, the expectation of the citizenry and the personal importance attached to combating security challenges by the President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, President Muhammadu Buhari (GCFR), makes the rudiment of these security issues more apparent. It is in view of this that the Federal Government of Nigeria found it necessary as part of efforts to rejig the security architecture of Nigeria, to establish the National Centre for the

Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW) to serve as the institutional mechanism for the prevention and control of SALW towards strengthening peace and security in Nigeria.

4. Accordingly, the President on 3 May 2021 directed the establishment of the NCCSALW in line with Section 5 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended). This was to institutionalise the control of SALW in the short term while necessary legislative actions are being taken to establish a National Commission for the long term.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEGAL STATUS OF THE NCCSALW

5. The NCCSALW is currently domiciled in the Office of the National Security Adviser and

headed by the National Coordinator who is assisted by the Deputy National Coordinator. The Centre operates as an 8-branch structure with each branch headed by a Director. These branches are reflected in the organogram as shown on the screen. The Centre is also organized to have zonal offices headed by zonal coordinators in the 6 geopolitical zones of the Federation. The zonal centres are situated at locations as follows:

- a. North West Zone- Headquarters in Kaduna.
- b. North East Zone- Headquarters in Maiduguri.
- c. North Central Zone- Headquarters in Minna.
- d. South West Zone- Headquarters in Ado Ekiti.

e. South-South Zone- Headquarters in Calabar.

f. South East Zone- Headquarters in Enugu.

6. The Centre at the moment is a transitional arrangement that is meant to serve as forerunner to a full-fledged commission that is to be established by an Act of Parliament. To this end, the President has on 14 September 2021 transmitted the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons Bill 2021 to the Senate for legislative consideration. Presently, the Bill has scaled through the final public hearing which is a prelude to assent of the Bill that will transform the Centre into a national commission with the requisite legal status for the discharge of its mandate as required by Article 24 of the ECOWAS Convention.

**EVOLUTION OF SALW CONTROL IN NIGERIA
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
NCCSALW**

7. *Efforts to eradicate illicit circulation of SALW in West Africa dates back to October 1998 when ECOWAS member states signed the Declaration of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons. Sequel to this, the United Nations (UN) in 2001 adopted the United Nations Programme of Action (UNPOA) to prevent, and combat the threat posed by the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. The UNPOA encouraged states to establish national commissions/focal points to ensure effective coordination between governments and relevant agencies as well as sub-regional organisations in the implementation of SALW control agreements.*

8. *By 2006, the ECOWAS Moratorium was transformed into a Convention with the implementation frameworks leading to the establishment of the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) and the National Commissions/Committees on the Control of SALW (NATCOM). NATCOM was established to serve as the institutional framework for combating SALW issues in the ECOWAS region and the commissions meet annually under the auspices of the ECOWAS Commission. Furthermore, NATCOM's role borders on checking the prevalence of illicit SALW in the sub-region and also to ensure compliance with international best practices on SALW control measures in order to curb irresponsible flows and unauthorized retransfers of SALW.*

9. The first Nigerian NATCOM was inaugurated in 2002 by the then President and domiciled in the defunct Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa (MCIA). The Committee was moved thereafter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with the merger of these two ministries following the Civil Service Reform of 2007 and then to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) by a Presidential Directive in 2008. In April 2013, the Presidential Committee on SALW (PRESCOM) was established to replace NATCOM and domiciled at the MFA.

10. While PRESCOM managed to perform the functions of a NATCOM, its effectiveness, however, was limited by the lack of a legal status and institutional infrastructure that would enable it appropriately engage with stakeholders and develop the necessary links that would enable it

optimally benefit from various multilateral and global supports such as grants and capacity building.

OBJECTIVES AND CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE NCCSALW.

11. Pursuant to the President's commitment to secure Nigeria, the leadership of the Centre, upon assumption of office, conceptualised its Vision which is '**to promote an illicit arms-free society**'. To actualise this vision, it came up with a Mission Statement which is '**to prevent and control the proliferation of SALW in collaboration with stakeholders towards strengthening peace and security in Nigeria**'. the establishment of the Centre was to meet the following objectives:

- a. *To institutionalise SALW control at all levels of the polity.*
- b. *To mainstream illicit SALW eradication effort in our national discourse.*
- c. *To domesticate illicit SALW in order to engender a whole-of-nation approach.*
- d. *To facilitate wider stakeholder participation in the eradication of illicit SALW including key roles for civil society organisations.*
- e. *To ensure due compliance with the ECOWAS and the UN conventions and protocols on the eradication of illicit SALW.*

12. *These objectives help to drive the core function of the Centre. Also, the Centre has continued to vigorously pursue the achievement of these objectives through a diligent execution of its*

core functions. It is pertinent to mention here that, the national commitment to secure Nigeria envisions that the realization of these core objectives will be pursued in ways that are consistent with the provision of the constitution and relevant policy and legal instruments as well as international norms and best practices. Built on the paradigm shift in Nigeria's conception of its national security from a state-centred to a people-centred approach, these objectives anticipate that all tiers of government in Nigeria will play significant roles in preventing and controlling the proliferation of SALW towards strengthening peace and security in Nigeria.

13. *Furthermore, in gaining better traction, the NCCSALW seeks to ensure better collaboration with relevant stakeholders and key sectors of the*

security agencies. Accordingly, the objectives have been expanded into core functions of the Centre as follows:

- a. To formulate and implement strategies, plans and policies for the eradication of proliferation of SALW.*
- b. Supervise the implementation of the strategies, plans and policies for the eradication of proliferation of SALW by Law Enforcement Agencies in the country.*
- c. Coordinating the design and implementation of an effective public education and awareness campaign relative to SALW.*
- d. Creating and maintaining a national database on all SALW and transmitting same to the UN, AU and ECOWAS and any*

other international organisation that may so require.

- e. Advising ECOWAS, AU and exemptions to be granted to member states for weapons of Categories 1, 2 and 3 to meet legitimate national defence and security needs, or to participate in peacekeeping or other operations in accordance with the decisions of the UN, AU and ECOWAS or other regional or sub-regional bodies of which Nigeria is a member.*
- f. Liaising with ECOWAS, AU and the UN in all matters relating to the eradication of the proliferation of SALW in general at the regional, continental and global levels.*
- g. Conducting periodic research, studies and surveys to gather accurate information*

on impacts of interventions, the mutating dimension of the problem of SALW and the lessons learned, and to use such information.

h. Liaison with NPF on the Protocol for the Control of SALW in Nigeria and shall receive quarterly returns of activities on registration and licensing of firearms and ammunition for the purpose of updating the National Database.

i. Coordinating and integrating national efforts required to prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing, trade and use of SALW.

j. Developing and implementing the National Action Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit Manufacturing, Trade, Trafficking and Use of SALW.

k. Coordinating and integrating with the civil society and developing national public awareness programme in the framework of the promotion of the culture of peace and non-violence.

l. Receiving periodic report of returns on SALW holdings from the NPF, Armed Forces and other Security and Intelligence Agencies for the purpose of updating the Sale national database.

m. Ensuring the collection, storage, destruction, management and stockpiling of obsolete, seized, unmarked and illegally held SALW and those collected from peace accords or programmes as well as voluntary handover.

n. Ensuring the emplacement of necessary measures for safe and effective

management, storage and security of national stocks of all SALW.

o. Ensuring that stockpiles of SALW by the manufacturers, dealers and individuals are securely stored in accordance with the appropriate standards and procedures.

p. Register and securely store or destroy SALW collected from the NPF, Armed forces, Intelligence and Security Agencies seized or recovered from criminals, terrorists, insurgents and any other person in possession of illegal SALW.

q. Performing other functions that may be assigned by the NSA.

ROLE OF NCCSALW IN STEMMING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

14. The NCCSALW is basically charged with the responsibility of combating illicit trafficking of arms by strengthening laws and regulations, reinforcing operational capacity and improving the system of tracing arms flow. Put more succinctly, the Centre is tasked with the duty of mopping up all SALW in circulation in the society. Therefore, combating proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW is a multisectoral approach that provides for a wide variety of measures and approaches, including legislation and regulation, law enforcement, public enlightenment, civil society cooperation, stockpile management, collection and destruction as well as development. Hence, the role of the NCCSALW lies in 5 thematic areas and these include, formulation of policies

and plans, information and collaboration with International Organisations as well as NGO's. Others include; Identification and monitoring of arms trafficking routes across the country and the neighbouring countries, Organising public enlightenment campaigns or programmes on the dangers of illegal use and transfer of illicit SALW in the country.

15. Formulation of Policies and Plans Towards Institutionalising SALW Control at all Levels in the Society. The Centre, as part of its role hinges on formulating policies and plans geared towards institutionalizing SALW control at all levels of the society. This simply means that the Federal Government has decided that all issues related to stockpile management of arms and ammunition have to be centralized through a

standard database where the Centre keeps track of all weapons holding for the purpose of ensuring that the weapons will no longer find their way into the wrong hands. Accordingly, the Centre plans to concretise the process of marking all weapons holdings of all security agencies and maintain a national database to ensure traceability. The Centre is working assiduously to educate all arms bearing security agencies on this development and positive responses are being received. Furthermore, all illicit weapons that have been recovered by security agencies or presently undergoing legal actions are being stockpiled and managed by the NCCSALW for either possible destruction or handed over to legitimate users. The Centre is currently monitoring the litigation process ongoing on the recent discovery of smuggled arms and ammunition by the Nigeria

Customs Service and several others with the Nigeria Police and private individuals. Very soon the Centre will commence taking over of the recovered arms with a view to ensuring their eventual destruction or re-injection into the arms bearing security agencies.

16. Identification and Monitoring of Arms Trafficking Routes Across the Country and Neighbouring Countries. *The identification and monitoring of arms trafficking routes across the country and the neighbouring countries of Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republics is another major role of the NCCSALW in combating the contemporary security challenges in Nigeria. This is with a view to initiating appropriate measures to cut the supply chain of illicit weapons into the country. The activities of mischievous non-state*

actors along the nation's borders and influx of SALW and other related materials through ports and porous borders have continued to pose a major security threat. Nigeria shares about 4,047 km land borders with neighbouring countries; Benin Republic to the West (773km), Niger to the North (1,497 km), Chad to the North-East (87 km through the islets of the Lake Chad) and Cameroun to the East (1,690km). These areas are largely porous and not adequately policed. Consequently, the activities of criminal networks who are engaged in smuggling, trafficking in humans and illicit drugs and proliferation of SALW are pronounced across Nigeria's international borders. These activities, as we all know, have been exacerbated by the crises in Libya, Mali, Chad, Central African Republic and Sudan amongst others and thus have also made

small arms readily available and cheap for unauthorized persons in Nigeria. However, it is worth mentioning that the Federal Government of Nigeria is also evolving best practices in border security management to enhance our territorial integrity. Necessary measures aimed at placing an end to the illicit trade around the borders in collaboration with the Nigeria Immigration Service is in top gear.

17. Generation of Public Awareness/Public Enlightenment Campaigns or Programmes.

Public awareness/public enlightenment campaigns or programmes has the potential to contribute successfully to community education on the dangers of illegal use and transfer of illicit SALW in the country. Campaigns, and other forms of media education and entertainment

(such as television programs, film and live productions), could be targeted at the general public with a view to encouraging positive attitudes toward stopping gun trafficking and its misuse. The Centre, in collaboration with relevant government information machineries is putting in place a well-focused mass media campaign, educational program and live-theatre production targeted at the general public. The intent is to persuade potential audiences of the benefits of their attention and the penalty associated with dealing with arms. Through the various medium that abound, appropriate information has been made available to people to help curb the ugly menace of small arms proliferation in the country.

18. Partnership and Cooperation with Regional and International Organisations.

The regional or trans-national dimension of the problem of illicit weapon circulation makes it rather impossible for any one nation to tackle the problem. Accordingly, partnership and cooperation with regional and international organisation is key in order to contain the threat. Experience shows that regional mechanisms can play a critical role in supporting national SALW-related interventions, including the work of NCCSALW. The benefits include facilitating the exchange of experiences, good practices and relevant information between member states, supporting cross-border initiatives, providing technical advice and supporting project development and implementation. Perhaps as a result of this, progress in the establishment of

NCCSALW would be most achieved where there are effective sub-regional SALW agreements and coordinating agencies. The existence of the Centre also encourages the nation to take action, as it increases the accountability of the Federal Government of Nigeria before the regional institutions. The Centre therefore works closely with these organisations in order to successfully execute its mandate. Some of these partners include:

- a. The Small Arms Unit of ECOWAS.*
- b. United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).*
- c. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).*
- d. The Country Office of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).*

- e. *The UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), based in Togo.*
- f. *The Mines Advisory Group.*
- g. *Leadership Initiative for Transformation and Empowerment (LITE Africa).*
- h. *The Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland.*

19. **Commissioning Security Agencies, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations to Organise Conferences, and Workshops on proliferation of Illicit SALW.** *Combating proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW is a multisectoral approach. Accordingly, the Centre works in collaboration with security agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSO), traditional and faith-based institutions as well as local*

communities in the organisation of forums such as conferences and workshops on the proliferation of illicit SALW with a view to bridging the gap created by insufficient information on the dangers of arms proliferation. Presently, the NCCSALW is engaging in the development of joint and participatory strategies with CSOs and local communities to prevent and control the spread and misuse of SALW, protect the population and communities from recruitment into armed crimes and the threat of SALW in circulation. The Centre intends to promote confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue, quick reporting and the early identification of gun trafficking routes.

20. **Collaborating with Arms Bearing Security Agencies.** Collaborating with arms bearing security agencies for the collection and destruction of illicit weapons recovered from criminal elements, including bandits, terrorists and other violent groups is another step the Centre is taking in the national effort to combat insecurity in Nigeria. The Centre since inception has been in the process of identifying key security agencies that will help in driving the process of ensuring that the Centre delivers its mandate. In view of the need to take stock of all SALW in the holding of all arms bearing security agencies, the need to collaborate with these agencies cannot be overemphasised. As you may wish to know, the Centre is building a Central Database for weapons inventory management and stockpiling. This will help to keep track with all weapon

holding in the various organizations and the society at large. In achieving this, the Centre intends leveraging on the existing estates and capacities of the security agencies that abound in the nation. Furthermore, the Centre has commenced building capacity of the arms bearing agencies on inventory and stockpile management. Lastly, the Centre has been able to conduct intelligence-driven covert operation in conjunction with relevant security agencies, to intercept and or recover illicit SALW from gunrunners and arms traffickers. All these and many more would not have been achievable without the strong collaborative efforts of the security agencies.

21. **Identification and Monitoring of Local Crafts and other Metal Workers Engaged in the Fabrication of Illicit SALW.** It is the desire of the NCCSALW to galvanize the efforts of local

arms manufacturers and encourage local manufacturing of SALW. Bearing in mind the efforts of our local black smiths in fabrication of delivery system that can be able to discharge ammunition that has the same lethal effect as what is being produced by the duly registered arms manufacturers, the Centre is working on galvanizing these local efforts in order to develop local capacity. It is also working to reduce and or eliminate the interface between these local manufacturers and unscrupulous agents whose intent is to patronize these local fabricators in order to acquire the weapons to carry out heinous crimes in the society. Therefore, the Centre must be seen to encourage the skill sets of our local black smiths engaged in fabrication of arms and our military industrial complex so that we can boost our national capacity. Furthermore, the

Centre is working on establishing the linkage between the national effort and the regional effort aimed at ensuring that the proliferation of SALW is curtailed to the barest minimum.

22. **Investigation and Prosecution of Captured Gunrunners/Arms Traffickers.** The willingness to indict and prosecute arms traffickers would advance current attempts to hold traffickers accountable and contribute to ending the deadly violence fuelled by illegal arms. Nigeria is currently reviewing its domestic laws aimed to control arms brokering, which exist alongside other arms control mechanisms. The NCCSALW, while awaiting the assent of the Legislative Act establishing the National Commission is monitoring all imported weapons and arms issues undergoing investigation and

litigation nationwide. The Centre seeks to specifically regulate arms broker activities and arguably maintains the strictest control regime. Accordingly, Government of Nigeria is committed to protecting its people, economic interests, infrastructure and way of life.