

Enemy Within

AMMUNITION DIVERSION IN UGANDA AND BRAZIL

In October 2006 warriors in the Karamoja region of northern Uganda shot dead 16 Ugandan soldiers who were conducting forcible disarmament operations. The findings in this chapter suggest that some of those soldiers may have been killed by bullets that were destined for their own use. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 52 police officers were killed on duty in 2004. The evidence presented in this study indicates that some of them may have been killed by bullets originally issued to their own forces.

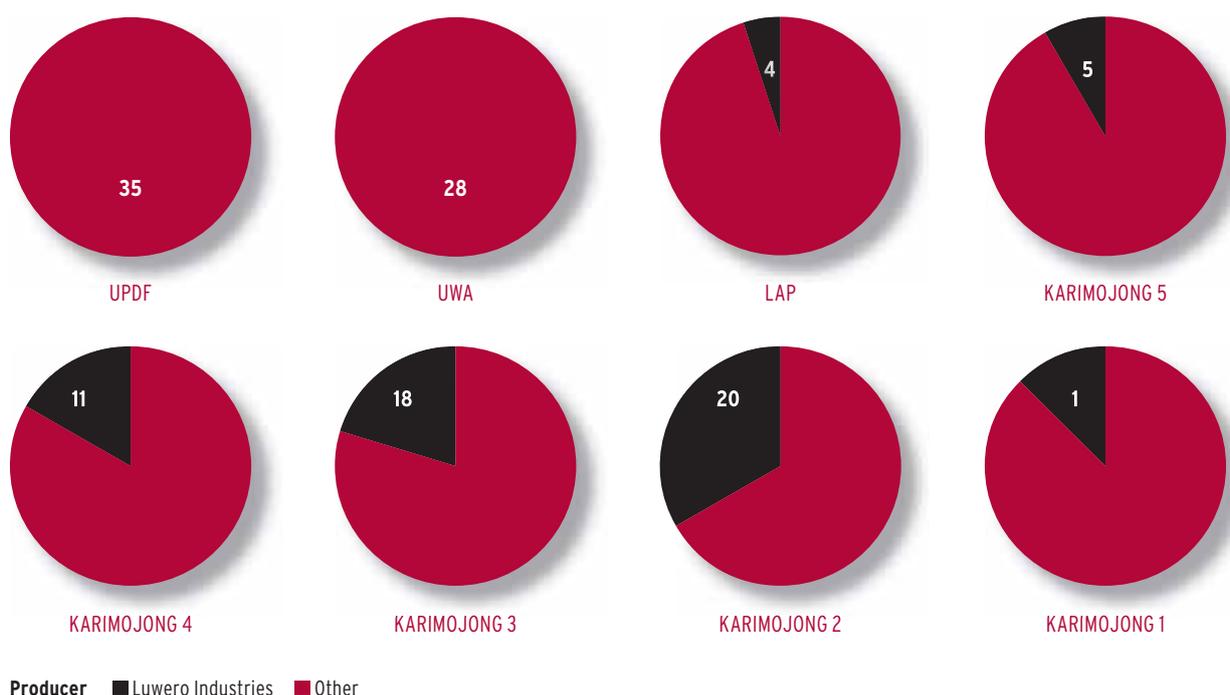
This chapter presents findings from two pilot studies that are part of the Survey's rapidly expanding Ammunition Tracing Project. Both pilot studies were conducted in places with extremely high levels of armed violence.

The chapter reveals evidence that much of the ammunition circulating among non-state actors in the two regions has been illicitly diverted from state security forces. By mapping and quantifying ammunition flows, the chapter provides firm evidence of the critical role that diverted arms and ammunition play in sustaining armed violence.

Karamoja, Northern Uganda: The Karimojong are semi-nomadic pastoralist groups that have fought inter-clan conflicts with small arms since the 1970s. Numerous state-led initiatives to disarm the Karimojong warriors appear to have been undermined partly because members of Uganda's regular and auxiliary forces supply them with ammunition.

Five reasons support this conclusion. First, although Ugandan state forces and Karimojong ammunition profiles are not mirror images of one another, they are sufficiently similar to conclude that state and non-state actors have very similar sources of ammunition. Second, statements by the military, made in the Ugandan press, admit to trade between Local Defence Unit members (part of Uganda's secondary defence forces) and their brethren Karimojong warriors. Third, poor-quality, Ugandan-manufactured ammunition—which has been publicly criticized by members of the security forces—circulates among the Karimojong in relatively high numbers (see Figure 9.5). Importantly, it is far less frequent in the hands of state armed forces, suggesting an 'off-loading'

Figure 9.5 **Luwero Industries (Uganda) 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition stocked by groups in Karamoja (proportion of each group's stock) (n = 402)**



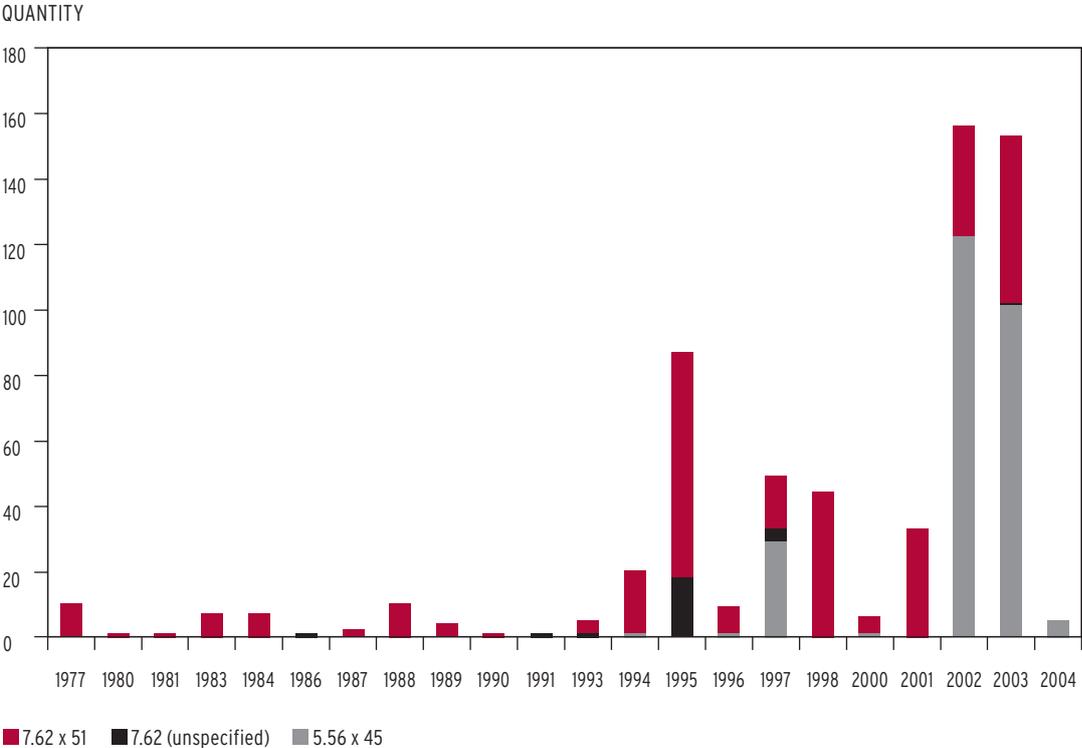
Note: Figures on the pie charts give numbers of individual rounds.

phenomenon on the part of state forces. Fourth, there is considerable evidence of trade in military commodities other than arms and ammunition. Finally, Karimojong warriors are emphatic that their primary source of arms and ammunition is Ugandan security force personnel and they are angry at having been disarmed—in some cases a number of times—and then having to buy back arms and ammunition.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Since the mid-1980s, criminal organizations have gained territorial control of several poor neighbourhoods (*favelas*) of Rio de Janeiro. These factions engage in armed competition for control of profitable drug retailing points and also confront public security forces. Ammunition plays a fundamental role in fuelling this conflict, and much of it appears to have been diverted from state security forces.

A combination of factors suggests that state security forces—most notably the police—are the source of much of the assault rifle ammunition in the hands of criminal gangs. First, the ammunition is restricted-use, assault rifle ammunition used by the police of Rio de Janeiro. Its civilian customers are limited in number. Second, the prevalence of 5.56 x 45 mm ammunition in the sample manufactured in 2002 and 2003 coincides with the years in which the police forces of Rio de Janeiro purchased large quantities of 5.56 x 45 mm ammunition. There is a similar parallel between increases in 7.62 x 51 mm ammunition and the adoption by the police of weapons of that calibre in the mid-1990s (see Figure 9.10). Third, the July 2005 revelation of police involvement in large-scale diversion of ammunition implicates the police as a source of ammunition entering the illicit market.

Figure 9.10 Quantity of seized restricted-use CBC assault rifle ammunition by calibre and year of manufacture (n = 612)



Note: No cartridges manufactured in 1978, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1992, and 1999 were found in the sample, which is why these years are not represented in the figure.
 Source: Data supplied by DPTC, analysed by Viva Rio

Finally, the time period between the ammunition’s date of manufacture and its seizure on the illicit market is short, which—similar to the Uganda case—indicates a short supply chain and a source proximate to the place of seizure.

Conclusion: The chapter concludes that the ammunition-tracing methodologies presented here are vital research tools for understanding illicit flows of ammunition. The cases of Karamoja and Rio de Janeiro re-emphasise the role of state security forces in the acquisition of ammunition by non-state armed groups.

In the Ugandan case, the evidence points firmly to members of the security forces transferring ammunition to the Karimojong. This is in direct opposition to successive and ongoing disarmament initiatives that are aimed at halting the conflict in this part of Uganda. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, there is insufficient evidence to suggest this kind of trade. Nevertheless, there is evidence that—whether through trade, loss, or theft—security forces’ ammunition is fuelling some of the city’s extreme armed violence.

The problem of ammunition diversion must be addressed if security forces are to be prevented from contributing to armed violence. ❏