

By Eric G. Berman with Louisa N. Lombard

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AND SMALL ARMS

A REGIONAL TINDERBOX



A Small Arms Survey publication



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'The Central African Republic and Small Arms is the most thorough and carefully researched report on the volume, origins, and distribution of small arms in any African state. But it goes beyond the focus on small arms. It also provides a much-needed backdrop to the complicated political convulsions that have transformed CAR into a regional tinderbox. There is no better source for anyone interested in putting the ongoing crisis in its proper context.'

—Dr René Lemarchand

Emeritus Professor, University of Florida and author of
The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa

'The Central African Republic, surrounded by warring parties in Sudan, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, lies on the fault line between the international community's commitment to disarmament and the tendency for African conflicts to draw in their neighbours. The Central African Republic and Small Arms unlocks the secrets of the breakdown of state capacity in a little-known but pivotal state in the heart of Africa. It also offers important new insight to options for policy-makers and concerned organizations to promote peace in complex situations.'

—Professor William Reno

Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies,
Department of Political Science, Northwestern University

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The objectives of the Small Arms Survey are: to be the principal source of public information on all aspects of small arms and armed violence; to serve as a resource centre for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and activists; to monitor national and international initiatives (governmental and non-governmental) on small arms; to support efforts to address the effects of small arms proliferation and misuse; and to act as a clearinghouse for the sharing of information and the dissemination of best practices. The Survey also sponsors field research and information-gathering efforts, especially in affected states and regions. The project has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, and sociology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

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This study has a long history. The decision to undertake it dates back to a July 2002 meeting in Geneva with my predecessor, Peter Batchelor, when I was a Boston-based consultant to the Survey. We reviewed under-researched conflict areas in Africa in which small arms flows probably merited greater attention, and ultimately decided that I should go to Bangui. I appreciate Peter's initial interest, as well as the continued support of Keith Krause, the Survey's Programme Director. Thomas Biersteker, and the Watson Institute for International Studies of which he was the Director, also merit mention here. Much of the research for this book was undertaken while I was a Visiting Fellow at Watson, and I very much enjoyed my time in Providence (and the reverse commute).

Shorter versions of this study have appeared in the *Small Arms Survey 2005* and a Survey Special Report (in French) in 2006. This book is considerably more detailed and includes a separate chapter that covers events up to June 2007. I am indebted to the hard work, good humour, professionalism, and zeal of Louisa Lombard, author of the Epilogue, whom I met at Brown University, who travelled to the Central African Republic and the region with me, and who has subsequently become an expert on the country in her own right. The entire study is considerably richer because of her effort and perseverance.

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In any acknowledgments there is a chance that the author has forgotten to thank some people who merited being singled out. This is more likely with the passage of time. Apologies to those I have inadvertently offended.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Liz Umlas, and children, Rachel and Jonah, for their encouragement and understanding.

Preface

The origins of this study date back to a meeting at the Small Arms Survey's offices in Geneva in early 2002. Peter Batchelor, my predecessor as Managing Director, and I were discussing future research projects in Africa. We talked about peace prospects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including the challenges confronting the nascent Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the expected security vacuums that would be created with the planned departure of foreign troops from that country, and the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force's limited mandate. We knew that many other organizations were focused on these issues, too. We decided, therefore, in consultations with others such as colleagues at the UN, to undertake field research in the Central African Republic (CAR). CAR lay outside the international spotlight on DRC, and was seen as unstable and a potential foil to the political and security gains being made in its southern neighbour. Moreover, we were surprised by the paucity of information and analysis that existed on CAR.

The initial research for this report was undertaken in 2003. That year I made three trips to CAR and the region. In February I visited CAR and DRC. I returned to CAR in June, at which time I also travelled to Gabon. The third trip to CAR took place in December. The report also benefits from the work a research assistant, Louisa Lombard, carried out in Cameroon and CAR in June 2003. The security situation in CAR prior to the March 2003 coup d'état did not permit me to venture much beyond the capital, Bangui. Subsequent visits later that year were also limited to Bangui by time and logistical constraints. Additional research was undertaken in Chad, France, Nigeria, Switzerland, and the United States.

The Survey has remained involved in CAR and the region, and this report takes advantage of subsequent research. In particular, it benefits from the experience and additional travels of Louisa Lombard. Since 2004 she has returned to CAR routinely—both for the Survey and for others. She is responsible for the Epilogue that was written during 2005 and 2006, and updated in early 2007.

Since 2006, new armed groups have sprouted and the *coupeurs de routes* or *zaraguinas* that have acted brazenly for much of the past 20 years continue to terrorize people and rob and pillage largely with impunity. The small peacekeeping operation of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), set to enter its seventh year, has made limited progress. In September 2008, the United Nations Security Council finally dispatched Blue Helmets to CAR and Chad, but an insufficient number to meaningfully alter the security environment.

The good news is that the international community has paid more attention to CAR, as the (admittedly anaemic) UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) illustrates. In May 2008, the International Criminal Court handed down an arrest warrant against former Congolese warlord and presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in CAR. The next day the government of Belgium arrested him. And in June the UN Peacebuilding Commission formally placed CAR on its agenda as a country meriting concerted and sustained international aid.

The not-so-good news is that the Central African Republic remains a country in trouble. The prevalence of small arms and armed groups throughout the country, small and weak state security forces, porous borders, a tradition in Central African policy of changing governments with bullets rather than by ballots, neighbours in conflict, and the propensity of other countries' leaders to intervene militarily across borders using proxy forces are just some of the challenges facing the government and the international community. Each of these challenges on its own would require concerted effort to address successfully. Taken together these concerns suggest that the citizens of the Central African Republic will continue to experience armed violence and insecurity, and that the government will remain susceptible to armed insurrection. The findings in this volume are intended to assist those fashioning policies and programmes that improve on previous performance to benefit the people of that country.

The story of small arms and the Central African Republic clearly shows how local conflicts, when left largely unattended, can affect and destabilize neighbouring countries. It highlights the importance of targeting ammunition in

any disarmament or arms collection scheme—and how *matériel* recovered, if not destroyed, often recirculates. The study further underscores the importance of ensuring that former combatants are successfully reintegrated into society and how failure to do this has regional ramifications.

Although the focus of this book is on a sparsely populated landlocked country that historically has registered limited international interest, the lessons to be learned from this study are widely relevant.

Eric G. Berman

Geneva, October 2008

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List of Abbreviations

AEF	Afrique Equatoriale Française
AFDL	Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire
APFC	Association pour la protection de la faune de Centrafrique
APRD	Armée pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie
ARRC	Africa Rainforest and River Conservation
ASSOMESCA	Association des œuvres médicales des églises pour la santé en Centrafrique
BCAGS	Bureau centrafricain de gardiennage et de surveillance
BMIA	Batallion mixte d'intervention et appui
BONUCA	Bureau d'appui des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République Centrafricaine
BPSI	Battalion de protection et de sécurité des institutions
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces
CAR	Central African Republic
CEMAC	Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahelo-Saharan States
CLD	Comité local de désarmement
CMRN	Comité militaire de redressement national
CNDDR	Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation, et réinsertion
CNPDR	Commission nationale contre la prolifération des armes légères et de petit calibre, pour le désarmement et la réinsertion
CNRI	Centre national de recherche et d'information
CNS	Compagnie nationale de sécurité
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
CTD	Comité technique de désarmement
CTR	Comité technique de réinsertion

DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DGRE	Direction générale de la documentation et des enquêtes
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOFAC	Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des écosystèmes forestiers d’Afrique centrale
EU	European Union
FAC	Forces armées congolaises
FACA	Forces armées centrafricaines
FAN	Forces armées du nord
FANT	Forces armées nationales tchadiennes
FAP	Forces armées populaires
FAR	Forces armées rwandaises
FAT	Forces armées tchadiennes
FAZ	Forces armées zaïroises
FCFA	CFA franc
FDPC	Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain
FIDH	Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l’Homme
FOMUC	Forces multinationales de la CEMAC
FORS DIR	Force spéciale de défense des institutions républicaines
FPP	Front patriotique pour le progrès
FROLINAT	Front de libération nationale du Tchad
FSA	Fusil semi-automatique
FUC	Front uni pour le changement
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
GUNT	Gouvernement d’union nationale de transition
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAMICA	Manufacture militaire centrafricain
MANPADS	Man-portable air defence system(s)
MCLN	Mouvement centrafricain de libération nationale
MDD	Mouvement pour la démocratie et le développement
MECAR	Mutuelles d’épargne et de crédit en appui à la reconversion
MINURCA	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic

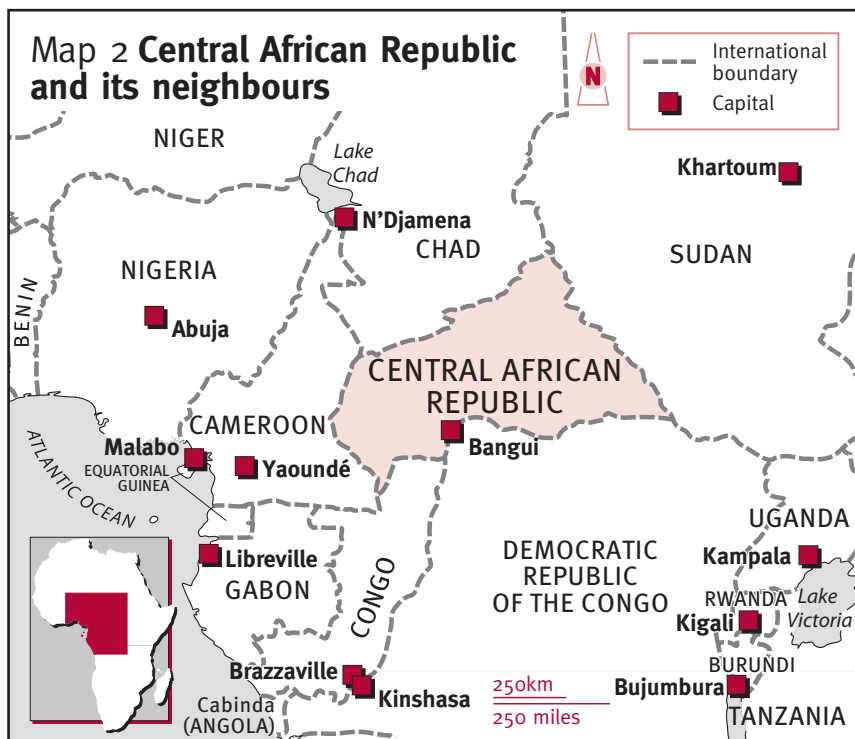
MINURCAT	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
MISAB	Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui
MLC	Mouvement de libération du Congo
MLPC	Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain
MONUC	United Nations Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
MSG	Multiservice Conseil Gerance
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
OCRB	Office central de répression du banditisme
PDRN	Programme de développement de la région nord
PDZCV	Programme de développement des zones cynégétiques villageoises
PNDR	Programme national de désarmement et de réinsertion
PRAC	Programme for Reintegration and Assistance to Communities
RDC	Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain
RoC	Republic of the Congo
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade (launcher)
SAPL	Société d'application des procédés Lefebvre
SCPS	Société centrafricaine de protection et de surveillance
SDU	Self-defence unit
SERD	Section d'enquête, de recherche et de documentation
SPLA/SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Army / Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SRI	Section de recherche et d'investigation
SSR	Security sector reform
UFDR	Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement
UFR	Union des forces républicaines
UN	United Nations
UN Comtrade	United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Forces
USD	US dollar
USP	Unité de la Sécurité Présidentielle
WFP	World Food Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund/ Word Wide Fund for Nature
ZCV	Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises

[illegible]

Executive Summary

Between 1997 and 2006, the Central African Republic (CAR) hosted four international peacekeeping operations and witnessed conflicts in neighbouring states that have routinely made international headlines. Yet relatively little literature exists on the country. As will be shown, this study has relevance far beyond the troubled, landlocked nation that is its subject. It challenges many widely held assumptions about security sector reform (SSR) that have continental and global implications. The study also provides a richer context for acquiring a better understanding of continuing threats to peace and security throughout the region. It underscores how conflicts are interrelated and how progress in one country can harm other countries if proper attention is not paid.



CAR—a country spanning 623,000 square km (somewhat larger than Portugal and Spain combined)—has fared poorly and experienced considerable turmoil since gaining independence from France in 1960. Its 3.9 million citizens are among the poorest people in the world. There have been four coups d'état (and many more attempted coups), the latest on 15 March 2003, when former military Chief of Staff Gen. François Bozizé overthrew elected President Ange-Félix Patassé.

Despite these upheavals, the proliferation and use of small arms did not play a prominent role in the country's misfortune until 1982. It was then, after a failed coup attempt, that non-state actors in CAR began to take receipt of arms from abroad. The change in government in Chad in 1982 also had serious ramifications for CAR, including the movement of armed personnel across the border. The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a number of coup attempts, suspected coup attempts, and relatively small-scale violence involving dissatisfied factions and the *Forces armées centrafricaines* (Central African Armed Forces, FACA) (Kalck, 1992, pp. xlv–lv).

The situation deteriorated sharply after 1995. In 1996 elements of the FACA mutinied, resulting in the looting of the arms depot at the Kassai barracks in the capital, Bangui. The following year many more thousands of weapons flooded CAR when Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko was overthrown. More weapons entered CAR two years later when the Ugandan-supported rebel group the *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo, MLC) of Jean-Pierre Bemba defeated the *Forces armées congolaises* (Congolese Armed Forces, FAC) of Mobutu's successor Laurent-Désiré Kabila, in the north of the DRC, along its border with CAR. Chad introduced more weapons still into CAR by supporting former FACA Chief of Staff François Bozizé in his 17-month struggle against Central African President Ange-Félix Patassé. Bozizé succeeded in overthrowing Patassé in March 2003.

This book comprises four parts. The first examines small arms availability and distribution with respect to state and non-state actors in CAR. The second looks at small arms flows and trafficking, both direct transfers from states and indirect transfers from states and armed groups. The third assesses the impacts of small arms use and availability. The fourth analyses the various disarmament efforts undertaken in CAR in recent years.

Below are the main findings.

- Armed elements in CAR seriously outgun government forces (with the exception of the presidential guard), which are not prepared to counter them.
- The government, which in October 2003 claimed that around 50,000 small arms were circulating nationally beyond its control, may have been *underestimating* the scale of the problem.
- Long-standing arms stockpile multipliers for the Central African Armed Forces are extremely small. Consequently, past calculations of government small arms holdings throughout Africa may be well below present estimates.
- Galil and M-16 assault rifles are not in broad use due to the scarcity of 5.56 mm ammunition they require.
- Peacekeeping operations have not been a significant source of weapons.
- While regional states have supplied weapons to government forces and to rebels seeking to acquire power, the type of hardware has been relatively limited and has not included surface-to-air missiles.
- Non-state actors not only receive *matériel* and other kinds of support *from* governments, but they can also play a crucial role in providing military aid *to* governments.
- While rates of firearms-related deaths and injuries in CAR may be lower than in other conflict zones in the region, the country suffers greatly from the economic and psychological effects of small arms use and availability.
- Arms recovery programmes in CAR have been poorly designed and badly implemented. In addition, they have been considerably less successful than touted, and arguably have undermined national security.
- The safari hunting industry can play a positive role in countering the deleterious socioeconomic effects of poaching.
- While small arms proliferation has historically not been a problem in CAR, it continues to increase.

It is hoped that the study's findings will aid policymakers in devising new security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes—both in CAR and elsewhere. For the challenges that the Central African Republic faces—a weak central government, regional conflicts, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, to name but a few—are not unique to CAR. ■

A mutineer during the military unrest of 1996.

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Introduction

Since the end of the cold war, armed conflict has consumed much of the African continent. The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which at one point involved no fewer than eight countries' armed forces and a similar number of non-state armed groups, exemplified the challenges to peace and the threats to human security. The sometimes insatiable demand for small arms and light weapons (SALW)¹ seemed never to outpace supply. Firearms were imported from willing overseas manufacturers and brokers, as well as from within the region and the continent. Poor stockpile management, corruption, and seizure exacerbate the situation: legal transfers of weapons often become illegal.

Numerous studies have been undertaken on particular countries or regions to assess the problems associated with small arms proliferation and the illicit trade of such weapons. The Central African Republic (CAR), however, has received little attention even though it had found itself largely surrounded by countries at war, and has suffered from political instability. Recognizing this incongruity, the Small Arms Survey undertook this case study to learn more about the effects of small arms use and availability on CAR and the region. The challenges facing the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operation in DRC, especially the volatile north-eastern region of that country and its proximity to CAR, provided further impetus for undertaking this project. Similarly, the humanitarian crisis since 2003 in Darfur, Sudan, which borders CAR, has made an analysis of how conflict in CAR fits into the regional security picture all the more pressing. CAR currently faces multiple armed groups intent on changing power in Bangui, and small arms proliferation appears to be increasing (see Epilogue). This study aims to provide a background for how such a troubling state of affairs came about.

A brief history of CAR

CAR has experienced four coups d'état—and many more attempted coups—since gaining independence from France in 1960 (see Table 1). The most recent

Table 1
Central African heads of state, 1960–2007

President	Tenure	Ethnic group	Birthplace/ hometown (prefecture)	Position prior to assuming office	Reason for leaving office (date)
David Dacko	1960–65	Ngbaka	Bouchia (Lobaye)	Minister of the Interior, Economy and Trade ¹	Coup d'état (31 December 1965)
Jean-Bédél Bokassa	1966–79	Ngbaka	Bobangui (Lobaye)	Chief of staff of the armed forces	Ousted in absence by French troops (20–21 Septem- ber 1979)
David Dacko	1979–81	Ngbaka	Bouchia (Lobaye)	Bokassa's per- sonal adviser	Coup d'état (1 September 1981) ²
André Kolingba	1981–93	Yakoma	Kembé (Basse-Kotto)	Chief of staff of the armed forces	Election defeat (19 September 1993)
Ange-Félix Patassé	1993–2003	Sara	Paoua (Ouham- Pendé)	Former prime minister	Coup d'état (15 March 2003)
François Bozizé	2003–	Gbaya	Bossangoa (Ouham) ³	Former chief of staff of the armed forces	–

Notes:

¹ CAR enjoyed substantial autonomy prior to independence.

² Dacko handed over power to Kolingba peacefully in a bloodless coup that followed a disputed election.

³ President Bozizé was born in Mouila, Gabon, but grew up and has his roots in Bossangoa.

Sources: BBC (2005); Sangonet (2005); *Telegraph* (2003); Fundación CIDOB (2001a; 2001b); Kalck (1992); O'Toole (1986).

coups occurred in March 2003, when François Bozizé seized power. The president at the time, Ange-Félix Patassé, had won multi-party elections in 1993 and 1999. The few presidential elections prior to that had largely fallen short of free and fair. Bozizé² had achieved power in the same manner as two former Central African presidents: Jean-Bédél Bokassa and André Kolingba. Bokassa and Kolingba had another thing in common besides being former chiefs of staff of the armed forces: they had both overthrown David Dacko. Dacko had ruled CAR from independence through 1965 and again from 1979 to 1981.



None of CAR's presidents who have been ousted in coups has been killed, and all have fared considerably better than those Central Africans not fortunate enough to serve as head of state. The landlocked country of 623,000 square km (somewhat larger than Portugal and Spain combined) remains substantially undeveloped. CAR's 3.9 million citizens, comprising some 80 ethnic groups, are among the poorest in the world, earning on average significantly less than a dollar a day. According to a 2003 UN report, CAR had the highest rate of maternal mortality during childbirth, an increasing HIV/AIDS rate, and a population that was largely unschooled (UN OCHA, 2003c). The 2006 Human Development Index, which measures

a series of socio-economic indicators from 177 countries, ranks CAR sixth from last (UNDP, 2006, p. 286).

The pre-independence experience of the country certainly contributed to its present-day challenges. It fared particularly badly as a French colony and also from the Arab slave trade. As a part of *Afrique Equatoriale Française* (French Equatorial Africa, AEF), Ubangi-Shari, as CAR was known from 1910 to 1958,³ received less attention and resources than the other AEF territories, which are today known as the Republic of the Congo (RoC), Gabon, and Chad. Thousands of inhabitants of Ubangi-Shari were forced to work on infrastructure projects elsewhere in AEF that were of little economic benefit to CAR. Moreover, during the Arab slave trade raids from what are today Chad and the Sudan led to a severe decline in the population of large areas of present-day CAR, with ramifications for development as well as ongoing ethnic and religious tension.



Native troops being trained as part of the Free French colonial army, 1941. © George Rodger/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

Still, CAR has been relatively peaceful compared with the majority of its neighbours. Of the five countries that border CAR, only Cameroon can say the same. Chad, the DRC, the RoC, and Sudan have all endured civil wars and insurgencies. Chad, a country twice CAR's size and twice as populated, has suffered decades of sporadic armed conflict. The Sudan, twice as large as Chad, with a population of more than 35 million, reached a settlement with its main southern insurgent group after more than 20 years of fighting, but is presently involved in conflict in the western region of Darfur. DRC, formerly Zaire, only slightly smaller than Sudan but with 50 per cent more people, experienced armed conflict for most of the period between 1996 and 2003 and is home to numerous armed groups. The RoC has experienced bouts of bloody fighting (1993), a civil war (1997–99), and a round of renewed hostilities (2002). Only Cameroon has been relatively stable, its single transfer of presidential power, in 1982, having been peaceful.⁴ Unfortunately for CAR, 80 per cent of its 3,600 km international border abuts the three neighbouring countries that have suffered the greatest political turmoil and received the greatest levels of armament.

Small arms did not figure prominently in the country's misfortune until 1982. It was then, after a failed coup attempt (Kalck, 1992, p. xlii), that non-state actors in CAR began to take receipt of arms from abroad. The change in

government in Chad in 1982 also had serious consequences for CAR, including the movement of armed personnel across the border. Subsequently, during the remainder of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, CAR experienced a number of coup attempts, suspected coup attempts, and relatively small-scale violence involving dissatisfied factions and the *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA) (Kalck, 1992, pp. xlv–lv).

The situation deteriorated sharply in 1996, however, when elements of the army mutinied. In all, there were three separate uprisings that year. The third mutiny culminated in the looting of the country's arms depot at the Kassai barracks in Bangui (McFarlane and Malan, 1998, pp. 49–51).⁵

In 1997, following the overthrow of Zairian (later the DRC) President Mobutu Sese Seko, thousands more weapons flooded into CAR. A similar situation arose two years later, when the Ugandan-backed *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (MLC), a rebel group led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, defeated the FAC of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, Mobutu's successor, in northern DRC. Bemba sent hundreds of MLC soldiers to CAR in 2001 (in response to the Kolingba coup attempt) to assist the beleaguered Patassé, leaving many small arms behind. During 2002 and 2003 more weapons still entered CAR via Chad, which backed Gen. Bozizé's military campaign.⁶

The growing political instability in CAR during the 1980s and 1990s can partly be traced to leaders' manipulation of ethnic allegiances. Despite Dacko's ineffectiveness and Bokassa's gross human rights abuses, CAR had been spared serious ethnic tensions until Kolingba's regime. The ethnic groups near the Ubangui River—particularly the Ngbaka (M'baka), to which both Dacko and Bokassa belonged,⁷ and the Yakoma—had received disproportionate benefit from French colonial rule. These two ethnic groups, with similarly sized populations, together represent less than ten per cent of the country's citizenry. The largest groups in CAR—the Gbaya (Baya), Banda, Mandja, and Sara—live in the savannah areas north of the capital and comprise more than 80 per cent of the population. (The largest of the more than 60 remaining ethnic groups is the Mboum from the south-east.) Kolingba upset the status quo when he infused his government, and particularly the army, with fellow Yakomas on an unprecedented scale. Patassé, a Sara from the north, never trusted the army. Instead of trying to reform it, he built up the presidential guard at the

army's expense. This dynamic helps explain the backdrop to the army mutinies in 1996 that led to a series of political crises culminating in Patassé's ouster in March 2003.

Equally important to understanding the descent into violence in the mid-1990s was the country's economic collapse. Under international pressure and the prospect of increased aid, Patassé implemented a series of economic reforms, including the devaluation of the currency (by 50 per cent), which further impoverished citizens. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescinded the promised assistance programme in late 1995, citing government mismanagement of the funds. During the two-year period 1994–96 external debt ballooned by USD 120 million (from USD 824 million to USD 944 million), while economic growth remained negligible. Even the national oil company proved unable to pay its taxes, and civil servants' tab of arrears swelled to several years' worth of pay (McFarlane and Malan, 1998, pp. 49; 58, n. 2). Frustration with the government became palpable, with frequent strikes and protest marches.



A young MLC soldier in Sibut, 2003. © Marco Longari/AFP

Regardless of Bozizé's political skills and proclaimed reformist zeal, the proliferation of small arms throughout CAR will further complicate an already challenging situation. This study focuses on events between the years 1996 and 2003 that have affected the state's ability to regulate weapons among civilians and have led to a massive influx of arms into large parts of the country. Together, they pose a clear threat to national security and to law and order. The pattern of former leaders returning and making violent claims on the presidency could become even more dangerous given these developments. Continuing unrest in neighbouring countries, particularly Chad and Sudan, underscores the regional risks of CAR's poorly controlled, highly armed territory.

The present study

This study contains four parts.

Part I documents the availability and distribution of small arms in the country. It reviews weapons possessed by both state and non-state actors. Each branch of the state security sector is considered separately, as is each armed group. Anti-poaching initiatives, given their reliance on international funding and planning, are treated in a third section. Then the composition, strength, structure, and armament possessed by each of these groups are documented. While focusing on the years 1996–2003, the period of greatest change in the small arms situation, this section also traces significant historical trends and changes. An effort is made to determine the arms stockpiles held by the institutional actors.

Part II discusses small arms flows and trafficking and consists of three sections. The first section reviews weapons that have entered CAR from outside the state *and represent official government policies*. This includes state-to-state (legal) as well as state-to-non-state (illegal) transfers. The section concludes with a rather unusual case in which a non-state actor has provided weapons to a state actor. Weapons from regional armed forces that have transited through or sought refuge in CAR are discussed in the second section. Even though these weapons come from 'outside' CAR, they are treated separately as they have *arrived independent of political will*. States sharing a common border with CAR are discussed as well as Rwanda. The third section reviews

weapons that have been generated from within the state. Legal state-run enterprises as well as cottage industries and craft production are covered. The role of Central African armed forces and police as sources of weaponry through corruption, ill-discipline, and seizure is also examined. Similarly, peacekeeping forces stationed in CAR are also reviewed in this section to discover whether any of their weapons may have been seized, lost, or otherwise unaccounted for. The section concludes with examples of routes used for the illicit trafficking of small arms that pass through CAR.

The impacts of small arms' use and availability are discussed in *Part III*. Efforts are made to distinguish both direct and indirect effects of these weapons on both humans and wildlife. Direct impacts include death and injury as well as psychological trauma. The study also explores these weapons' indirect political, economic, and social effects on Central African society. Special attention is paid to the ramifications of mutinies and coup attempts, armed robberies, roadblocks, and poaching. Though the reasons for the difficulties of Central Africans' lives are manifold, small arms nevertheless emerge as central to many of these challenges due to the instability their misuse promotes.

Part IV of the study documents and assesses the recent disarmament and arms recovery programmes in the Central African Republic. It first examines domestic arms collection programmes and the policies and procedures of the state security sector agents charged with the task. It then continues with an analysis of internationally-funded efforts, including anti-poaching projects as well as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes. It describes the various programmes and attempts to account for what has been collected. Just as importantly, it asks what has happened to the weapons recovered. It seeks to identify the major challenges and successes. It evaluates the relative importance of such factors as financial and human resources, programme design, and political will.

This study provides the historical background—the domestic and regional factors that led to the proliferation of small arms in CAR, a fairly recent phenomenon—to understanding how the current state of affairs came about. Through this investigation, we see how security sector reform and disarmament can contribute to either an improvement or a deterioration, depending on how such programmes are planned and carried out. Clear strategies for increased

effectiveness emerge. The creation of a national commission on small arms and disarmament indicates the seriousness with which the CAR government is working to address these issues, and the analysis contained herein will, one hopes, serve as a resource for such efforts. It is hoped this study's findings will be of use to policy-makers in CAR, as well as beyond the country's borders. For the problem of illicit small arms proliferation is, unfortunately, far from unique to CAR. ■

FACA soldiers march in a parade in Bangui, March 2004.

© Desirey Minkoh/AFP



PART I

Availability and Distribution of Small Arms

Central African governments have relied on and supported different services within the armed forces and security sector to varying degrees. For the first 20 years of independence, however, the state more or less effectively—and, at times, ruthlessly—monopolized the coercive use of force.⁸ This changed in the early 1980s, with the establishment of the first armed opposition groups.⁹

President Patassé never trusted the army given his predecessor Kolingba's decision to pack the force with his fellow Yakomas. Instead of trying to reform the institution, Patassé built up the presidential guard at its expense. This attitude largely explains why, in 1996, so many soldiers opted to mutiny. When the presidential guard failed to provide him with the protection he sought, Patassé created a succession of pro-government militias.

Patassé never exercised effective control over the weapons that his regime distributed to such entities. These militias were relatively well armed, many receiving Kalashnikov (or Chinese Type 56) assault rifles.¹⁰ By contrast, many government soldiers possessed antiquated weapons, such as MAS-36 bolt-action (single-shot) rifles.

Governmental institutions issued with small arms

Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA)

Attempted coups, mutinies, and politically motivated neglect—as well as selective reward processes—have taken their toll on the FACA. After the 1996 mutinies, the FACA received little support. President Bozizé, though, has shown interest throughout his career in reforming and strengthening the institution (*Frères d'Armes*, 2000, pp. 22–24).

The country's first president, David Dacko, had deliberately kept the armed forces small and weak. In the FACA's early years, all the officers were French,

and Dacko largely left the development of the forces to a French military adviser (Kalck, 1992, p. 13). Events elsewhere on the continent influenced his decisions. Dacko was believed to have been unsettled by the military coup in Togo in January 1963, which involved the murder of the first president of an African country in the post-colonial period, as well as by the August 1963 resignation of the RoC president in response to growing political unrest and to stave off a potential civil war. Dacko suspended recruitment into the army during 1963. And in a move tinged with irony, he appointed his cousin Jean-Bédél Bokassa as his army chief of staff that year to strengthen his hold on power (SHAT, 1963, p. 10).

Bokassa initially rewarded the armed forces. He raised their salaries, promoted many officers, and procured additional arms for them. The defence budget doubled between 1967 and 1969 alone (Decalo, 1989, p. 157).

The armed forces ultimately suffered greatly under Bokassa, however. As time passed, he increasingly questioned their loyalty and sometimes killed top officers, promoting others seemingly at random. Besides trying to establish a delicate balance of instilling both fear and greed, Bokassa deployed most of the troops in Bouar and along the Sudanese border, far from the capital, and reportedly did not issue live ammunition to regular troops. By the time Dacko resumed power in 1979, the FACA was one of the worst-trained and least-equipped militaries in Africa (Decalo, 1989, pp. 157, 168).

The ethnic composition of the armed forces changed drastically during the 1980s. As CAR's first non-Ngbaka president, Kolingba recruited and promoted his fellow Yakoma in the FACA to unprecedented levels. Whereas Yakoma comprise about five per cent of the population, they soon accounted for between a quarter and a third of the army as a whole and perhaps half of its commissioned officers during Kolingba's rule (Faltas, 2001, pp. 82–83).

Bozizé, with French assistance, is in the process of reforming and strengthening the army. After the 1996 mutinies, the army, which Patassé had not trusted from the outset of his presidency, received little subsequent support. Bozizé quickly integrated several hundred of his armed supporters into the army after two months of basic training, but integration and demobilization benefits have not come quickly enough to some of his former armed supporters, and many have protested. And many former CAR soldiers who had fled to DRC

in the wake of Kolingba's failed coup attempt in 2001 have returned to CAR and have been offered the prospect of rejoining the army. Anicet Saulet, a government official and a former leader of the 1997 army mutiny, said that some of the delays in recruitment were caused by administrative difficulties, but added that ethnic considerations were also a motivating factor (UN OCHA, 2003d).

The force has never been very large, and its strength peaked under President Jean-Bédel Bokassa. By the end of his tenure in September 1979, the armed forces consisted of 7,500 soldiers (Decalo, 1989, p. 165). By the early 1980s, however, the army's strength was much reduced.

Kolingba, while promoting Yakoma interests, kept the army smaller than under Bokassa, and assumed additional responsibilities for its oversight. After seizing power he disbanded the government as it had been constituted and created a 23-member Comité militaire de redressement national (Military Committee for National Recovery, CMRN) in its stead (O'Toole, 1986, p. 68). As president of the CMRN, he also held the position of chief of staff of the armed forces and minister of defence. In his early years in power, the army at one point consisted of a single infantry battalion and support units, with a majority of the soldiers based in Bouar, far from the capital (see Keegan, 1983, p. 100).

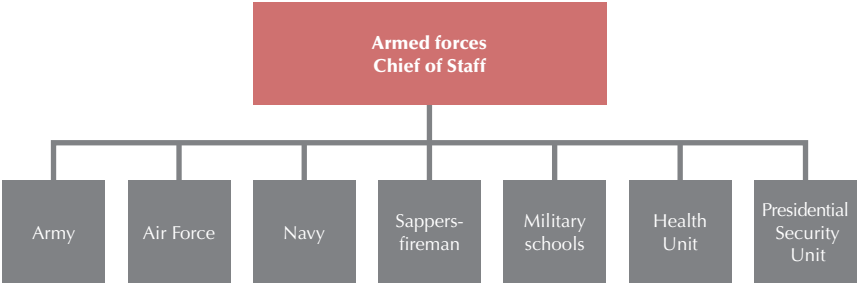
Kolingba relied to a large extent on France for his and his country's security. For example, the number of French troops stationed in the country increased considerably under his rule. During the 1980s, French troops grew some eightfold¹¹ and were much more numerous than their Central African counterparts. Support for Kolingba was not, however, the primary impetus for France, whose effort to check Libyan military activity in Chad and the sub-region (Bigo, 1988, p. 277) explained the greater numbers of French troops in CAR, from which Kolingba nevertheless benefited.

France, however, closed its military bases in CAR during Patassé's first term. Although Paris had significantly reduced its military presence in CAR in the 1990s from 1980 levels (for example, Dumoulin records the number of French troops in CAR to have been 1,500 [1997, p. 113]), the French military aided Patassé during the 1996 and 1997 military unrest, and supported the ad hoc African peacekeeping force known as the Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui (Inter-African Mission for Monitoring the Bangui Accords,

MISAB) that deployed in the wake of the mutinies. But within two weeks after the UN Security Council resolved on 27 March 1998 to establish the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) to replace MISAB, France closed its military bases in CAR and withdrew its troops, save for a few hundred who remained to participate in and support the UN peacekeeping operation.¹²

Considerably more is known about the FACA under Patassé, when it fared particularly poorly. In 2000, according to then Central African Minister of Defence Jean-Jacques Demafouth, 500 new recruits joined the FACA’s ranks (*Frères d’Armes*, 2000, p. 19). Their addition, along with an influx of several hundred presidential guard members, brought the strength of the FACA close to 4,000. In 2000, the FACA was reported to consist principally of five infantry battalions. (The strength of the average battalion appears to have numbered around 400 men, though it varied depending on the number of companies the battalion contained.) The navy and air force each had about 200 personnel.¹³ The sappers-fireman battalion, created in 1988, numbered 80 men in 2000, with a planned recruitment that year designed to bring the unit’s strength up to 150. Some 300 soldiers served in the FACA’s health service in 2000. As part of an agreed reform measure, the presidential guard (described separately below) was brought under the command of the army chief of staff in 2000—at least on paper. (See Figure 1 for the structure of the FACA in 2000.) Approximately

Figure 1
Organizational chart of the Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA), as of 2000



Sources: *Frères d’Armes* (2000); interviews and written correspondence

1,250 FACA soldiers reportedly fled to the DRC after Kolingba's unsuccessful coup attempt of May 2001.¹⁴ Another 300 apparently attached themselves to Gen. Bozizé's rebel force in November 2001.

It is difficult to ascertain the quantity and type of weaponry in service with the FACA. In October 1963, shortly after independence, the army was lightly armed, possessing 1,017 weapons. All but ten of these items were small arms. The only rifle issued was the MAS-36, comprising nearly two-thirds of firearms in the military's inventory. Light weapons consisted of two 12.7 mm machine guns, four 60 mm mortars, and four 81 mm mortars (SHAT, 1963, p. 38). The introduction of Kalashnikov assault rifles and an assortment of light weapons (for example, in 1977 the FACA's arsenal was reported to include Soviet light mortars and anti-tank rocket launchers—Clayton 1986, pp. 237, 240) over the years has not changed the bottom line: the FACA is a lightly armed force.

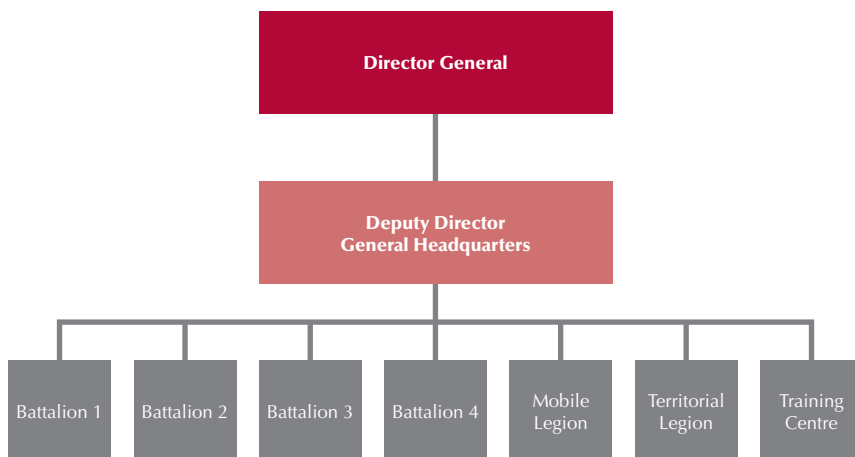
Gendarmerie

Rather than complementing the army, the gendarmerie has historically competed with it—or with other government security agencies—for the president's trust and support. Since it was officially created shortly after independence, the gendarmerie has at times functioned independently and at other times served under the chief of staff of the armed forces. Initially, Dacko had favoured the gendarmerie over the army (Decalo, 1989, p. 145). Bokassa, as chief of staff of the armed forces at the time of his coup, was understandably wary of the gendarmerie, whose head, Commander John Izamo, had been selected by France for his loyalty. The French were planning a coup in which Izamo would take control of the country, but Bokassa acted first, arresting Izamo at the outset of his own takeover (O'Toole, 1986, pp. 48–49). The gendarmerie had proved itself loyal to Patassé during the army mutinies of 1996, but it remained relatively weak during his tenure. Instead, Patassé relied primarily on the presidential guard, various militias, and international forces to protect him.

The strength of the gendarmerie has remained relatively constant. Reportedly, there were 1,600 gendarmes in 1970, approximately 1,000 as of 1983, and some 1,300 in 2000, with plans to increase the size of the force to 1,800 (*Frères d'Armes*, 2000, p. 34; Keegan, 1983, p. 100). In June 2002, 200 new recruits (the first since 1994) began a nine-month training course at the gendarmerie school

Figure 2

Organizational chart of the Central African Gendarmerie, as of December 2003



Source: Central African Gendarmerie

in Kolongo (*Frères d'Armes*, 2002, p. 40), suggesting that the force has yet to realize its planned strength, or that intentions have changed. According to President Bozizé, there were 1,310 gendarmes in 2003 (CAR, 2003b, p. 6).

Gendarmes are principally armed with pistols, MAT-49 sub-machine guns, MAS-36 bolt-action rifles, and Kalashnikov assault rifles.¹⁵ In 2002 forces loyal to Gen. Bozize ransacked many of their depots, and their armament in 2004 consisted mostly of MAS-36 rifles. Gendarmes dispersed throughout the country find themselves outgunned by highway bandits who may carry Kalashnikovs or light weapons (MCE, n.d.).

Presidential Guard

The force primarily responsible for protecting the president has had many names over the years. Initially known as the Garde républicaine (Republican Guard) after CAR was granted independence, it became the Presidential Guard and then the Imperial Guard under Bokassa. To distance his presidency from the record of the Imperial Guards' human rights abuses, Dacko changed the name to the Praetorian Guard. It was known as the Presidential Guard during



CAR President Ange-Félix Patassé is escorted by his guards in Bangui, May 1996. © Francois Mori/AP Photo

Kolingba's rule, when it was placed under French command¹⁶ (Decalo, 1989, p. 169). French influence remained strong for the first few years of Patassé's presidency, but in February 1997 Paris withdrew the 23 French technical advisers charged with the president's personal security (Kalck, 2005, p. lii).

Two things, however, have remained fairly constant concerning the unit entrusted primarily to protect the Central African head of state: it has been comparatively capably staffed, and it has been relatively well treated. Bokassa reserved spots in the presidential guard for people from his home village (Decalo, 1989, p. 157). Under President Patassé, the presidential guard allegedly counted Chadian mercenaries among its forces (*Africa Confidential*, 2001), although in 2004 sources close to Patassé disputed the assertion.¹⁷ As of 2006, President Bozizé reportedly had a Chadian personal security contingent.¹⁸

In 1997 President Patassé undertook to transform the presidential guard into the Force spéciale de défense des institutions républicaines (Special Force for

the Defense of Republican Institutions, FORSDIR), a process completed in early 1998 (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 1999). In 2000, as part of a package of negotiated reforms, President Patassé changed FORSDIR into the Unité de la Sécurité Présidentielle (Presidential Security Unit, USP), and, at least on paper, integrated it into the FACA. Although the USP was supposed to report to the chief of staff of the armed forces and ultimately to be accountable to the minister of defence, in reality it continued to report to, and take orders directly from, the president and remained largely autonomous.¹⁹ At the end of 1999 the strength of FORSDIR was officially put at 642, but Sami Faltas contends that its actual size was closer to 900 (Faltas, 2001, p. 92).

Furthermore, its members are better armed than colleagues serving with other armed services and public security institutions in the country. For example, under President Patassé presidential security personnel, whether in uniform or not, could be identified by the personal firearms they carried. They tended to be outfitted with Kalashnikov assault rifles, AA-52 light machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs).²⁰

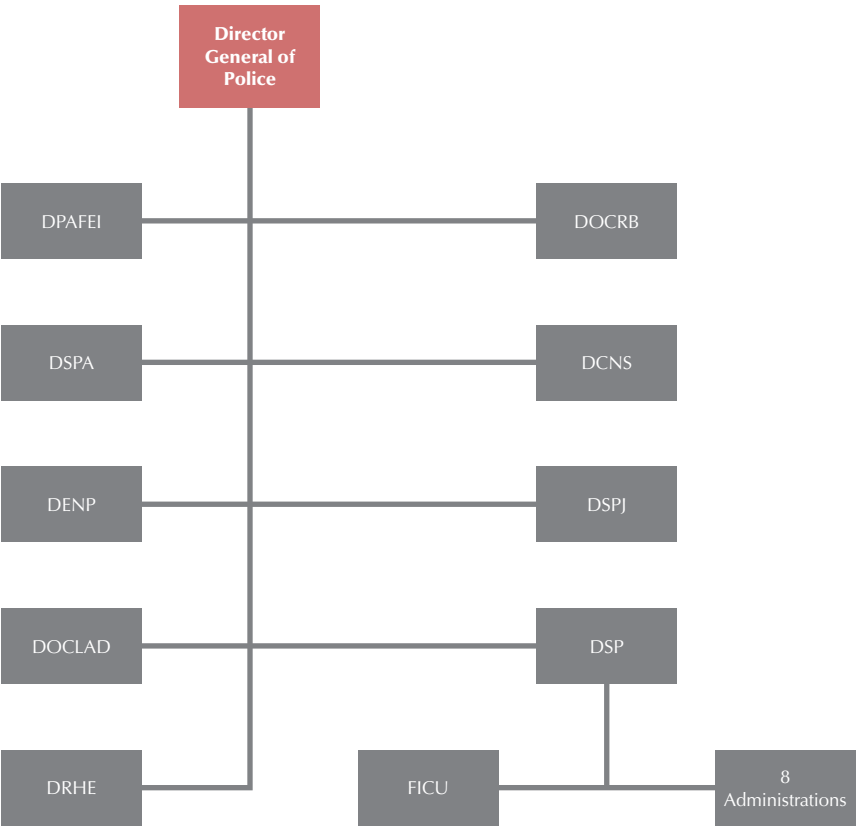
Police

Police services in CAR have never enjoyed significant government support. In 1963, for example, the police, which then numbered 315, possessed just 61 firearms: 6 pistols, 40 sub-machine guns, and 15 rifles. All of the latter were bolt-action Mousquetons, first produced in the 19th century (SHAT, 1963, pp. 62–63). Subsequently, police officers were usually armed with French MAS-36s, another bolt-action rifle, but of more recent (Second World War) vintage. By 2004, however, they were effectively unarmed. Most police depots were looted during the mutinies and coup attempts of 1996–97 and 2001–02.

As with other state security forces the composition of the police force has reflected the ethnicity of the executive in power. Bokassa, for instance, packed the police with Ngbaka kinsmen (Decalo, 1989, p. 157).

The structure of the police uses the French system as a model (MCE, n.d.). The police force in December 2003 was comprised of nine *directions* (divisions)²¹ (see Figure 3). These were: the national security company; the national police academy; the central counter-narcotics office; the central office for counter-robbery; the office for air traffic, border control, emigration, and immi-

Figure 3
**Organizational chart of the Central African Police,
as of December 2003**



Notes:

- DPAGEI: Direction de police de l’air, de frontière, d’émigration et d’immigration (Air, Border, Emigration and Immigration Police Administration)
- DSPA: Direction de service de police administrative (Police Administration)
- DENP: Direction de l’école nationale de police (National Police School Administration)
- DOCLAD: Direction d’office central de lutte anti-drogue (Counter-Narcotics Central Office Administration)
- DRHE: Direction Ressources Humaines et Equipement (Human Resources and Equipment Administration)
- FICU: Force d’Intervention de Corps Urban (Urban Corps Intervention Force)
- DOCRB: Direction d’office central de répression du banditisme (Central Office for Crime Suppression)
- DCNS: Direction compagnie nationale de sécurité (National Security Company Administration)
- DSPJ: Direction de service de police judiciaire (Judicial Police Service Administration)
- DSP: Direction de sécurité publique (Public Security Administration)

gration; the office for human resources and equipment; the office for public security; the police administration; the judicial police; and the urban intervention division. As of mid-2006, the director general of the police was working with French technical experts to design a restructuring plan for the force (UNSC, 2006, para. 29).

The strength of the police in December 2003 stood at 1,685. According to Contrôleur Général Ernest Latakpi, the director general of the Central African Police, there were 1,415 ‘uniformed’ police, 70 completing their training in Cameroon, and another group of 200 at the initial stages of training in CAR.²²

Only one police unit is well armed: the Central Office for the Repression of Banditry (Office central de répression du banditisme, OCRB), charged with combating banditry. Its members used to be armed with MAS-36s, but in December 2003 all 45 of them were issued with a Kalashnikov assault rifle.²³ This was possible because the OCRB is allowed to use some of the armaments that it recovers from criminals (see Part IV).²⁴

In December 2003 President Bozizé authorized a transfer of 50 Kalashnikovs for the 1,685-strong police force and provided officers with 50 magazines and 1,500 additional cartridges.²⁵ Latakpi gave each of the eight police commissariats in Bangui two Kalashnikovs, except for the third *arrondissement* (district), to which he gave three. He also gave ten Kalashnikovs to the Compagnie nationale de sécurité (National Security Force, CNS). The remaining 23 Kalashnikovs were distributed throughout the rest of the force in ones and twos.²⁶

Other

Outside of the police, gendarmerie, and armed forces (including the presidential guard), the state also provides arms to several smaller structures. According to French military archives, in 1963 three such public forces possessed armaments: forest guards, hunting guards, and diamond mine district personnel.²⁷ In 2000 the state employed 70 guards to protect its natural resources—no new recruits had been hired since the mid-1980s (Blom and Yamindou, 2001, p. 11). In December 2003, the number stood at 51.²⁸ Many of these functions are now filled by private companies and ad hoc state-authorized (but apparently not state-employed) initiatives discussed below. The state’s intelligence services were also armed. Moreover, it is assumed that customs officials are armed,

but information on these bodies was especially difficult to obtain. They are not believed to be numerous or well armed; indeed, the Port of Bangui relies on (unarmed) guards from a private security company to patrol its facilities.²⁹

It is difficult to document the firearms in service with other governmental institutions outside of the armed forces and police. Back in 1963 the forest guards and hunting guards were armed with MAS-36 rifles (50 and 30, respectively), while the diamond mine district personnel were equipped with 24 pistols (SHAT, 1963, p. 65). The strengths of these three forces were not listed, but it is likely that all three numbered fewer than 100 people. The members of the state's intelligence services are not believed to be particularly numerous or well-equipped. The Centre national de recherche et d'information (National Centre for Research and Information, CNRI) and the Section d'enquête, de recherche et de documentation (Division for Investigation, Research, and Documentation, SERD) with approximately 250 personnel, were officially dismantled in 1997. The staff and arms (Kalashnikovs and AA-52s) of the CNRI, the larger of the two agencies, were transferred to FORSDIR.³⁰ According to Thierry Maleyombo, CAR's High Commissioner for Human Rights, SERD was reportedly disbanded (again) in November 2003 following the conviction of five SERD men for rape (UN OCHA, 2003f; UNHCR, 2005). However, in 2005 SERD still existed; after dismantling it, Bozizé renamed it the Section de recherche et d'investigation (Division for Research and Investigation, SRI) (UNHCR, 2005, p.18). One informed observer put the force's strength at the time at 20–50 men and said all carried arms.³¹ The two names SERD and SRI are often used interchangeably in popular discourse.

It is not believed that the current intelligence service, the Direction générale de la documentation et des enquêtes (General Division for Documentation and Investigations, DGRE), is particularly large or well armed.

Armed groups

In the early 1980s the proliferation of small arms throughout Central African society was not a pressing concern. Indeed, as late as 1979 there is reason to believe that relatively few arms were circulating outside of state actors in Central African society. When the Bokassa government committed a second

series of large-scale killings of civilians in 1979,³² citizens fought back with poisoned arrows (Kalck, 1992, p. xxxv). Given the level of violence to which the government had resorted, it seems likely that those being attacked would have used firearms to defend themselves if they had been available.

Civilians throughout the country now have greater access to small arms. The number and types of weapons in circulation, however, differ markedly from region to region. Though very little research has been conducted on the extent to which individuals have armed themselves, anecdotal evidence suggests some trends. In 2003, for example, according to an expatriate who lived and worked in Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga prefectures for several years, nearly every household in Vakaga is armed, with every person older than 30 years of age owning a weapon. These are not craft-production hunting rifles, but commercial firearms. The Kalashnikov is most common, but there are also quite a number of FN-FALs. G-3s are also widely used. Far fewer armaments are circulating in Bamingui-Bangoran.³³ Across the country in Sangha-Mbaéré prefecture, more than 60 per cent of the population of the Kouapili district of Salo reportedly possessed at least one firearm in 1998. These weapons, however, tended to be rudimentary, locally produced hunting rifles (Mogba and Freudenberger, 1998, p. 118). Manufactured shotguns are also in plentiful supply. Russian 12-gauge shotguns made by Baikal are so prevalent in that part of the country that locals use the term 'Baikal' to describe all such weapons.³⁴ Apparently, in the south-east of the country it is not uncommon for three or four families in a ten-family village to own locally made weapons, which they use for both protection and hunting.³⁵

There are several indications that non-state groups began to arm themselves in the last months of 1979 and the early 1980s. The brutality of government forces during Bokassa's regime might have discouraged opponents from taking up arms until then. There are reports that Dacko was forming a militia made up from his Ngbaka ethnic group (O'Toole, 1986, p. 66), but little in the literature substantiates such claims. It is known, however, that in the wake of the 1981 national elections and the political upheaval that it caused, Patassé began to receive arms in 1982.³⁶

Government record keeping of weapons among its citizenry is deficient, though this reportedly was not always the case. A law signed by André Kol-

ingba on 17 March 1984 (which remains on the books) stipulated that civilians seeking to register their firearms had to obtain authorization first from the ministry of the interior and then from the president himself. Any arms found to be illegally held would be confiscated and sold, with the government retaining the proceeds (CAR, 1984). According to a government official, before the 1990s these laws were stringently applied. Authorities kept records of gun ownership even at the village level. Those found in possession of non-registered weapons could expect to have them confiscated and destroyed, as the law stipulated. This was true even of home-made, traditional weapons.³⁷

A number of factors help explain why government weapons regulation is no longer so stringent. The deterioration of the civil service due to upheaval and salary arrears, and the centralization of the state, both contribute to the fact that few citizens register their guns. After Mobutu's fall from power, Central Africans believe, weapons became easily available from smugglers piloting pirogues across the Ubangui River, the two countries' highly permeable border.³⁸ In addition, Patassé's essentially cavalier attitude towards creating and arming militias has become one of his legacies, and as a result large numbers of arms are unaccounted for.

Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain

Many members of President Patassé's political party, the Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain (Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People, MLPC), were armed. President Patassé and his supporters first received arms after his unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1981. Some MLPC members remained armed even after President Patassé took office in 1993. President Bozizé's government has placed the strength of an armed 'parallel police force' of MLPC members at 820 (CAR, 2003b, p. 7). It is unclear whether this is the same as the 'MLPC militia' mentioned by some informed observers. One source put the strength of this group at between 500 and 1,000 in 2003, adding that each member was equipped with an automatic weapon and some perhaps with crew-served armaments and grenade launchers.³⁹

For the most part, it appears that other political parties' supporters were not armed as a widespread policy—certainly not to the extent of the MLPC. Kolingba, for example, apparently did not arm supporters of his party,

Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain (Central African Democratic Rally, RDC). A plausible explanation is that he felt he could comfortably rely for his security on the French military as well as the country's army, which, as explained above, he progressively staffed with members of his Yakoma ethnic group during his rule. There is no evidence that other political parties, such as Dacko's Mouvement pour le démocratie et le développement (Movement for Democracy and Development, MDD) or Goumba's Front patriotique pour le progrès (Patriotic Front for Progress, FPP), had armed their supporters.

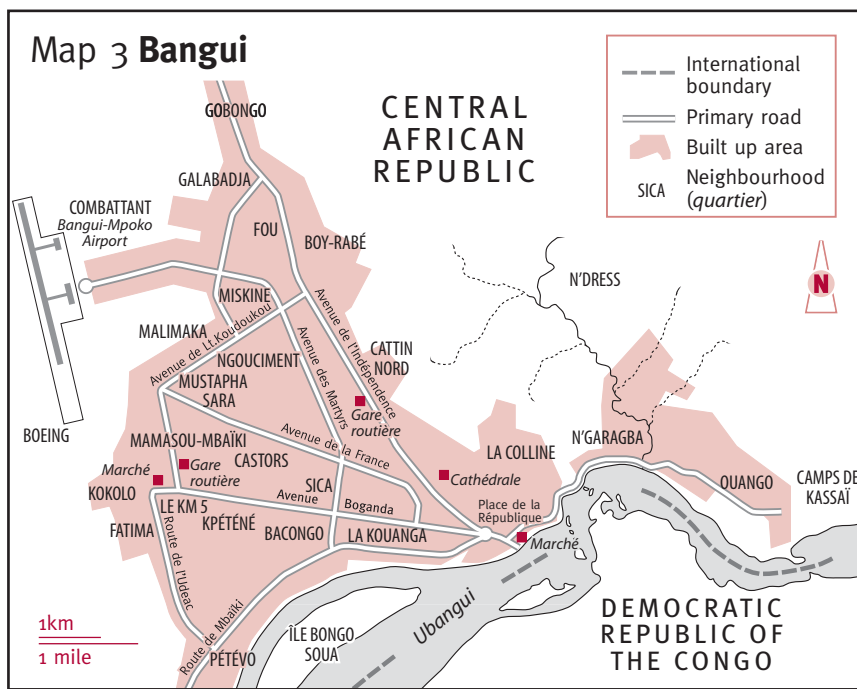
The practice of arming political supporters has become more widespread since the late 1990s, however. Rumours circulated before the 1999 presidential election that some political parties had armed themselves with weapons that originated with ex-Forces armées zairoises (ex-Zairian Armed Forces, ex-FAZ) or FAC soldiers that crossed into CAR with their weapons when retreating from armed conflict in the territory south of the Ubangui River. Evariste Konzale, the Central African Minister Delegate for Disarmament and Security at the time, acknowledged the allegations but downplayed their significance, saying that no evidence existed to support them (RFI, 1998).

Patassé apparently took the threat seriously—and had reason to do so. Patassé was sufficiently concerned about reports that Kolingba's son, Serge, was arming a Yakoma militia in Mobaye after the 1999 elections that he is alleged to have sent government forces to intercept and kill a suspected collaborator (US DOS, 2000).⁴⁰ Eighteen months later, Kolingba sought to retake the capital by force, but was defeated.⁴¹

Karakos, Balawas, and Sarawis

Following the mutinies of 1996, President Patassé, who had previously relied primarily on the presidential guard and armed MLPC elements, now felt that these forces were insufficient to guarantee his personal and political survival. He thus established three Bangui-based militias known as the Karakos, Balawas, and Sarawis. These neighbourhood militias would soon grow to encompass some 1,500 individuals in total. They largely comprised young men whom the president counted among his supporters.

Patassé drew support from northern ethnic groups, particularly among the Kaba, the Sara, and the Gbaya. These groups are the most populous in the



north-west, where he was raised. He was born in Ouham-Pendé prefecture in the town of Paoua. His father was a member of the Suma sub-group of the Gbaya ethnic group, while his mother was a Sara.⁴²

Bangui has eight *arrondissements*, divided into *quartiers* (see Map 3), which tend to be dominated by particular ethnic groups.⁴³ At Patassé's direction, MLPC ministers created three militias following the second army mutinies in 1996 (Melly, 2002, pp. 21–22). The Karakos ('peanut' in the local dialect) militia was based in the Boy-Rabe *quartier*, where mostly Gbaya reside (Leaba, 2001, p. 172), in the fourth *arrondissement*. Subsequently, following an order from the president, its members were to be officially integrated into the FACA, but this proved partial and temporary.⁴⁴ The Balawas ('shea nut' in the local dialect) militia, comprising chiefly members of the Kaba ethnic group, was based in the Combattant *quartier* in the eighth *arrondissement*. The Sarawis militia was concentrated in the Sara *quartier*, named after the ethnic group residing there in large numbers, in the fifth *arrondissement*. Sarawis militia members

were also present in large numbers in other quarters of the fifth arrondissement, such as Malimaka, Miskine, Mustapha, and Ngouciment. Demafouth said each militia peaked at a strength of around 500, and was armed mostly with Kalashnikovs.⁴⁵ Gen. Bozizé placed the three militias' collective strength at closer to 1,700 (CAR, 2003b, p. 7).

Société centrafricaine de protection et de surveillance

President Patassé subsequently created two more militias. In 1999 he established the Société centrafricaine de protection et de surveillance (Central African Protection and Surveillance Company, SCPS). Headed by his chauffeur, Victor Ndoubabé (the son of a family friend), the SCPS was ostensibly a private security company. While it did engage in commercial activities, it is best seen as a standby militia force tasked with providing security to the president.⁴⁶ President Patassé had been under substantial international pressure to reform and scale down significantly the FORSDIR. Indeed, the SCPS would come to count among its number former FORSDIR members (Leaba, 2001, p. 168).

Ndoubabé was killed in the March 2003 coup,⁴⁷ and the SCPS ceased to exist as a cohesive unit shortly thereafter. In early 2003 informed observers placed its strength at between 1,000 and 1,500. According to President Bozizé, the number of surviving ex-SCPS guards in November 2003 was 850 (CAR, 2003b, p. 7). These guards were armed with Kalashnikovs.⁴⁸

'Abdulaye Miskine'

In 2000 President Patassé established yet another militia known alternately as the Bataillon de Sécurité Frontalière (Border Security Battalion) or by the name of its leader 'Abdulaye Miskine'—whose birth name, according to President Patassé, is Martin Koumta Madji. Chad has accused Miskine of being a Chadian insurgent who killed another rebel leader. President Patassé maintained that he was a Central African patriot who Chad had wrongly identified.⁴⁹ Leaving aside his contentious background and objectives, there is consensus that, at the time of Gen. Bozizé's October 2002 coup attempt, the militia numbered between 300 and 350.⁵⁰ President Patassé armed them with Kalashnikovs.⁵¹ Miskine departed CAR in November 2002,⁵² but later returned. Some of his men joined other pro-Patassé forces, while others joined Bozizé's cause. With

Bozizé's successful coup, it was widely believed in 2004 that Miskine did not have any armed troops under his command, though his men may have joined other fighters or criminal groups.⁵³ More recently, his name has again surfaced as among the leaders of the armed rebellion in the north-west that emerged in 2005.

Mutineers

The leaders of the 1996–97 mutinies also reportedly armed civilian supporters. The numbers were reported to be in the hundreds, with teenagers and younger boys among those recruited (US DOS, 1998). Given that the mutineers were concentrated in the southern parts of the city, it would seem logical that the civilians were from *quartiers* such as Ouango, N'garagba, and Petevo in the seventh and eighth *arrondissements*.

Oversight of most of these initiatives was minimal. One interlocutor says he personally saw a list of weapons and their recipients for at least one of these original three militias. However, the list was lost after the May 2001 coup attempt.⁵⁴ Others said no such records were kept. Whatever the case, all agree that the government has long since lost control of the men and weapons.



Central Africans call for a peaceful resolution to the mutiny of May 1996. © Pascal Le Segretain/Corbis Sygma

It would appear from the context of the time that the mutineers' oversight of weapons they issued to civilians would have been limited to non-existent. However, Anicet Saulet, a leader of the mutinies, says that while the mutineers did not keep detailed records of weapons they disbursed, they maintained effective control of the weapons they dispensed to supporters—mostly MAS-36s as the mutineers used the better firearms, such as Kalashnikovs. They retrieved most of these weapons when they agreed to return to the barracks at the end of 1997.⁵⁵

Self-defence units and vigilante groups

Other armed neighbourhood watch-type organizations, or vigilante groups, are operating throughout CAR, although firearms and ammunition are often not in plentiful supply. For example, villagers in Donzi, in Ouham prefecture, formed a self-defence patrol in early 2004 after suffering repeated attacks from highway bandits armed with Kalashnikovs. The 27 young men who make up the Donzi group carry hunting rifles, but ammunition is often in very short supply (UN OCHA, 2004b). Local defence groups have become prevalent throughout the country. People refer to them as 'archers'. They are generally armed with traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, and have decapitated captives.⁵⁶

Sometimes these groups work closely with the government, sometimes they do not. Haute-Kotto prefecture, also beset with highway robbers and kidnappers, developed a network of local vigilante groups in December 2003. Governor Serge Gabin Nakombo met with village leaders in Bria to plan the establishment of village-based self-defence groups. These groups would not supplant state security forces, but rather supplement them (UN OCHA, 2003j). In Bangui, however, those participating in local security arrangements have clashed with state security forces. In December 2003, for instance, three members of a self-defence group based in the Cattin Nord *quartier* were killed and another was seriously wounded, allegedly by members of SERD. The young men had been arrested after exchanging automatic rifle fire with some attempted robbers (AFP, 2003). As one FACA soldier told a reporter for ID+, a Bangui news magazine, 'It is very difficult to tell a robber from a self-defence group member, especially if they are illegally armed' (ID+, 2003).⁵⁷

Other

Just as Patassé subcontracted his security to a variety of militia, many other functions that were previously the sole responsibility of the state are now being carried out by private companies and ad hoc state-authorized (but foreign-funded) concerns. Several private security companies have been established since 2003 in Bangui, but, with the exception of the SCPS, they are effectively unarmed. Only a few companies have equipped their guards with *pistolets d'alarme* (blank-firing pistols).

The first private security company in Bangui was King Security Services (previously known as MSG for Multiservice Conseil Gerance), established in 1988.⁵⁸ In December 2003 there were eight security companies with two—Boxer and Powers—having received authorization since Bozizé assumed power (see Table 2). Their clients include foreign embassies, the UN and other international organizations, and private enterprises.

In December 2003 these companies employed about 750 guards, mostly in Bangui. King and Fox were the largest employers, each accounting for about one-third of the total. Four other companies together accounted for the other

Table 2
Private security companies in the Central African Republic,
as of December 2003

Name	Year established	Number of guards	Areas of operation	Small arms and light weapons held
BCAGS	1998	98	Bangui and Nana-Mbaéré	Blank-firing pistols
Boxer	2003	50	Bangui and Vakaga	None
Cobra	1992	32	Bangui	Blank-firing pistols and live-firing pistols
Fox	1993	245	Bangui	Blank-firing pistols
Golf	c.1992	0	N/A	N/A
King	1988	260	Bangui	None
Powers	2003	74	Bangui	None
Secuveille	c.2002	0	N/A	N/A

Sources: BCAGS, Boxer, Cobra, Fox, King, and Powers

250 or so guards. According to industry insiders, Golf and Secuveille did not have any current contracts as of December 2003, and therefore no employees.⁵⁹ Only Bureau centrafricain de gardiennage et de surveillance (BCAGS) and Boxer had guards working outside the capital at the end of 2003.⁶⁰ Cobra used to have guards stationed at airports in Bamingui-Bangoran and Haute-Kotto prefectures.⁶¹

Private security company guards rely principally on walkie-talkies, handcuffs, truncheons, dogs, whistles, and flashlights. Some employ anti-aggressor devices such as chemical sprays and electric stun guns. Three companies—BCAGS, Cobra, and Fox—use blank-firing pistols.⁶² The pistol Fox uses is called the ‘Self Defender’, which it imports directly from the French manufacturer Société d’application des procédés Lefebvre (SAPL).⁶³ Only Cobra says it has authorization to equip its guards with live-firing pistols.⁶⁴ According to the private security companies, it is the ministry of the interior that provides the necessary permits to both import and use these weapons.

Anti-poaching initiatives

The Central African government has authorized 15 protected areas throughout the country in an effort to limit or prohibit activities that pose a threat to flora and fauna.⁶⁵ More than ten per cent of the country, or an area roughly twice the size of Switzerland, is presently covered (see Table 3), and in 2003 the government was entertaining the possibility of creating additional zones.⁶⁶ In 2000 70 guards were employed by the state to protect its natural resources; no new recruits had been hired since the mid-1980s (Blom and Yamindou, 2001, p. 11). As of December 2003 the number had dwindled to 51.⁶⁷ Such a ‘force’ would be hard-pressed to protect a single reserve or park. Indeed, three reserves (Zemongo, Yata-Ngaya, and Nana Barya) lack any management. Oversight at most others is poor (Blom, Prins, and Yamindou, 2004). (As one Central African official explained, the policy is to have ‘at least one [guard]—and sometimes none’ at each area.)⁶⁸

Recognizing that the state was unable to protect national wildlife, in 1988 the European Union (EU) launched the first of several anti-poaching initiatives (complementing government efforts) that involved the recruitment of armed

guards. At the height of the programme in the early 1990s, the EU was funding 120 armed anti-poaching guards in CAR. By December 2003 there were around half as many.⁶⁹ The guards are armed with Kalashnikov rifles and two AA-52 machine guns, which the ministry of defence issued to them. In addition, the teams retain some *matériel* seized from poachers.⁷⁰ In 1990, following the creation of two new protected areas in Sangha-Mbaéré prefecture, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) also financed an anti-poaching initiative in CAR. Initially ten eco-guards were recruited. By June 2003 there were 40, with plans for more if funds become available. The government furnishes each guard with a MAS-36 rifle. Teams also have access to a couple of automatic rifles.⁷¹

As of the end of 2003, no single government agency oversaw anti-poaching initiatives and registry of weapons for the protection of wildlife. Apparently it is necessary to negotiate agreements with the current office holder and not simply the office. This creates additional confusion as ministries' mandates are frequently changed and ministers' tenures can be relatively brief. Indeed, there were three ministers in charge of environmental affairs within a one-year period in the mid-1990s (Carroll, 1998, p. 201).

Stockpiles

Governmental institutions

The successful coup d'état in CAR on 15 March 2003 both clarified and obscured the situation regarding the small arms and light weapons holdings of government forces. As already noted, Gen. Bozizé and his supporters raided many police and gendarmerie depots across the countryside after the failed coup of October 2002. As of 2004 most of the weapons had not been returned, and missing items had not been replaced.

Yet the government has entered into a dialogue with the World Bank in a bid to garner international financial support for security sector reform (SSR). As part of this endeavour it has recorded the strength of the FACA, the gendarmerie, and the police, as well as of various non-state armed groups. The numbers provided are largely believed to be accurate in the case of the state, although it is noteworthy that Bozizé did not provide figures on his presidential guard (which is not believed to be part of the figure he provided for the

Table 3

**National 'protected areas' and foreign anti-poaching initiatives
in the Central African Republic, as of December 2003**

Name	Prefecture(s)	Year est.	Size sq. km.	Programme under	Armed guards'
Réserve de Faune de Zémongo	Haut-Mbomou	1925	10,100		
Réserve de Faune du Gribungui-Bamingui	Nana-Grébizi	1933	4,500		
Parc National de Manovo-Gounda Saint-Floris	Bamingui-Bangoran	1933	17,400	ECOFAC	54
Parc National Bamingui-Bangoran	Bamingui-Bangoran	1933	10,700		
Réserve Naturelle Intégrale de la Vassoko-Bolo	Bamingui-Bangoran	1933	860		
Réserve de Faune de la Ouandja-Vakaga	Vakaga	1925	4,800		
Réserve de Faune de l'Aouk-Aoukale	Vakaga	1939	3,300		
Réserve de Faune du Koukourou-Bamingui	Nana-Grébizi	1940	1,100		
Réserve de Faune de la Yata-Ngaya	Vakaga and Haute-Kotto	1940	4,200		
Parc National André Félix	Vakaga	1940	1,700		
Réserve de Biosphère de Basse-Lobaye	Lobaye	1951	146		
Réserve de Faune de la Nana Barya	Ouham	1953	2,300		
Parc Présidentiel d'Avakaba	Bamingui-Bangoran	1968	1,700		
Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve	Sangha-Mbaéré	1990	3,159	WWF	40
Parc National Dzanga-Ndoki	Sangha-Mbaéré	1990	1,200		

Réserve Naturelle Intégrale de Mbaéré-Bodingué	Lobaye	1996	867	ECOFAC	15
Totals			68,012		
‘Chinko Basin Reserve’	Mbomou	N/A	N/A	ARRC	5
‘Village-run Hunting Zones’	Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga	N/A	Approx. 40,000	ECOFAC	0

* This table does not include 51 park guards hired by the state with outside financing or the 250–300 state-authorized self-defence militia in Vakaga prefecture that undertake anti-poaching activities.

Note:

Official government statistics about national protected areas vary slightly.

Sources: ECOFAC, WWF, ARRC, and Central African Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing officials

Box 1 Yaya Ramadan and his self-defence units in Vakaga Prefecture

In 1984 Yaya Ramadan established a self-defence initiative in Vakaga Prefecture. Yaya was the village chief of Tiroungoulou, a respected religious leader in the region, and a former mayor of Birao. He recognized the threat poaching posed to the region’s animals as well as to the well-being of his fellow citizens. He believed that revenues from international hunting represented a potentially lucrative and sustainable source of income.

The force, which received government approval, was relatively well armed. The support from Bangui was political—not military—in nature, and did not include any weapons. The militia procured its weapons privately. Its members are armed with assault rifles: mostly Kalashnikovs, but also G-3s, M-14s, and FNLs. In August 2003 these units numbered some 250–300 men.

In recognition of Yaya’s standing in the community and conservationist activities, the government later appointed him its representative to the EU-funded anti-poaching programme in the country’s north. Programme de développement de la région nord (PDRN) and its successor Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises (Village-run Hunting Zones, ZCV) have occasionally recruited self-defence personnel for short periods of time to help track poachers. The numbers tend to be small—two- to four-person teams.

Yaya’s murder in May 2002 incited bursts of violence, showing how explosive the situation is in parts of CAR. He was ambushed while driving from Mossabio to Gordil. Cattle herders from across Vakaga’s north-eastern border, whose livestock often grazed in CAR, were believed to have been responsible. More than 100 people died during a spate of retaliatory raids. The situation calmed by the end of 2002, but the incident caused people to arm themselves to an even greater extent than before. Yaya’s death remains a turning point in how inhabitants relate their region’s recent history.

Source: Interview with Olivier Feneteau, Technical Advisor, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, Central African Republic Office, ECOFAC, Paris, 2 September 2003.

FACA). As for former militias, Bozizé appears to have provided a defensible estimate, although it is possible that he overestimated the size of some groups in an effort to secure additional financing. The government has not offered data on stockpiles of small arms and light weapons.

Historical analysis of inventories can help to shed light on current holdings. Very good information is available on the weapons that were in service with Central African state actors in the 1960s. The Government of France kept detailed records of small arms and light weapons in the hands of numerous Central African government services, as well as of their force strengths. Thus, for 1963 it is possible to determine accurate multipliers. They range from a high of 1.60 (the ratio of weapons to forces) for the gendarmerie to a low of 0.19 for the police⁷² (see Tables 4 and 5). Based on subsequent events and available information, the values of current multipliers (except for the presidential guard) are probably in keeping with these figures. The ratios 1.25, 1.15, and 0.67 are used respectively for the FACA, the gendarmerie, and the police. The rationale is that the weapons in service with the FACA and the gendarmerie will have been reduced because of President Patassé's policy of marginalization and Gen. Bozizé's looting.

Bozizé's republican guard—or presidential guard—is reportedly well armed. As previously mentioned, the Central African government conspicuously chose not to disclose information on this unit when discussing its security and disarmament needs and plans. Eyewitness reports, however, suggest a ratio of 3.00, which is in keeping with information available on the ex-USP. The strength of the unit is not known, although a figure of 1,000 men is thought to be a conservative estimate.

It is also possible to calculate a multiplier for the FACA in 1996 with some degree of specificity. According to the Government of CAR, in November 1996, at the time of the third army mutiny, 2,389 small arms and 127 light weapons were stored at Kassai barracks (UNSC, 1997a, para. 22). Demafouth believes that government record keeping was adequate at the time, and that the figures it provided to MISAB were largely accurate. The army's other depot was at Bouar, and contained around 800 weapons, mostly Kalashnikov assault rifles. Very few light weapons were kept at Bouar.⁷³ Demafouth adds that the strength of the FACA was approximately 3,000–3,500 in 1996.⁷⁴ This

Table 4

Weapons in service with Central African state actors, as of 1 October 1963

	Weapon		Total	By recipient				
	Category	Model		Army	Gendar- marie	Repub- lican guard	Police	Other*
Small arms	Pistols and revolvers	M1950	419	105	314	0	0	0
		MAB 7.65	30	0	0	0	6	24
	Sub- machine guns	MAT-49	367	221	126	20	0	0
		PM 38	30	0	0	0	30	0
		Sten	10	0	0	0	10	0
	Rifles	Mousqueton	338	0	0	323	15	0
		MAS-36/51	1,630	636	359	555	0	80
		M1949/56 (FSA)	60	0	60	0	0	0
	Light machine guns	Mle 1924/29	10	0	10	0	0	0
		AA-52	57	45	12	0	0	0
		Bren	14	0	5	9	0	0
	Light weapons	Heavy machine guns	12.7 mm	2	2	0	0	0
Mortars		60 mm	4	4	0	0	0	0
		81 mm	4	4	0	0	0	0
Totals			2,975	1,017	886	907	61	104

* 'Other' includes Gardes Forestiers with 50 MAS-36s, Gardes Chasses with 30 MAS-36s, and Personnels des circonscriptions minières de diamant with 24 7.65 mm pistols. It is assumed that this was the same MAB pistol as that used by the police.

Similarly, the 8 mm rifles in service with the police are assumed to be the same model, the Mousqueton, as those in service with the Republican Guard. Grenade-launching MAS-36 rifles are included among the total number of such rifles. The army had 58 such weapons and the gendarmes had 6.

Source: French Service Historique d'Armée de Terre

Table 5

Strengths of Central African state actors, as of 1 October 1963

Service	French personnel	Central African personnel	Totals
Army	110	651	761
Air Force	24	19	43
Gendarmerie	68	487	555
Republican Guard	2	670	672
Police	7	308	315
Totals	211	2,135	2,346

Source: French Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre

would put the ratio of weapons to soldiers at very close to 1.0. The government, however, took weapons from Kassai barracks and moved them across town to the presidential guard's armoury at Camp de Roux after the first mutiny in April (McFarlane and Malan, 1998, p. 50). It was not possible to ascertain how many weapons were removed and how many may have been returned. But there is no reason to believe that the ratio of weapons to soldiers would have been higher for the army than it was for the presidential guard at the time (which Demafouth put at around 1.3).⁷⁵ Thus, the multiplier for the FACA in 1996 would not have been very different from the 1963 multiplier of 1.34.

By March 2003 there had been no appreciable change in the FACA multiplier compared with 1996. President Patassé continued to starve the military of funds and weapons, while aiding the presidential guard and other forces on which he felt he could rely. Although they could not be verified, reports of the army purchasing weapons from MLC rebels point to the dire straits in which the institution found itself. The multiplier certainly would not have increased under Patassé.

The FACA's fortunes with regard to *matériel* may have changed in the wake of the March 2003 coup, however. After seizing control of the capital, Bozizé recovered 1,300 weapons, primarily with the help of the Chadian Army (UN OCHA, 2003a) and, to a lesser extent, Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (Central African Economic and Monetary Community,

Table 6

Strengths of Central African state actors and estimated stockpiles of small arms and light weapons, as of September 2003

Service	Strength	Estimated stockpiles of small arms and light weapons
FACA	4,442	5,552
Gendarmerie	1,310	1,507
Police	1,600	1,072
Other*	250	250
Presidential guard	1,000	3,000
Totals	8,602	11,381

* Other includes intelligence (DGRE and SERD) and anti-poaching units.

Sources: Other: informed estimate; remainder: CAR (2003, pp. 6–7)

CEMAC) peacekeepers. But it is not clear how many of these weapons, if any, were transferred to the FACA.

Stockpile multipliers for other Central African state actors are more difficult to ascertain, but they are expected all to be below that of the FACA. Some details exist for the presidential guard as recently as 1996 (see Stockpiles section on non-state actors), but those statistics have little relevance for present government holdings in the wake of the March 2003 coup. Officials from the gendarmerie and the police explain that their depots in much of the country were looted between October 2002 and March 2003. In 2004 these stocks had not been fully replenished. Multipliers of 1.2 and 0.8 are used to approximate the number of arms in the possession of the gendarmerie and the police, respectively.

All told, it would appear that government security forces held fewer than 12,000 small arms and light weapons at the end of 2003 (see Table 6).

Armed groups

The ratios used to determine the stockpiles of non-state groups tend to be higher than those employed for governmental bodies. It is assumed here that the Balawas, Sarawis, and Karakos militias received approximately two weapons for every three people recruited. Members of the MLPC, SCPS, and USP are thought to have had access to arms in excess of their respective strengths.

In response to the May 2001 coup attempt, for example, MLPC officials were widely reported to have dispensed weapons, including Kalashnikovs, to party loyalists in Bangui in an effort to apprehend citizens who may have received firearms from Kolingba supporters.⁷⁶ During the March 2003 coup d'état, eye-witnesses claim that thousands of weapons were looted from the home of Gen. Bombayeke, the head of the USP, when Bozizé's men arrested him.⁷⁷ (Bombayeke was imprisoned for more than two and a half years before he was released to house arrest, guarded by gendarmes; AFP, 2005a.)

We estimate that by the end of 2003 various armed groups in the Central Africa Republic—in varying stages of cohesiveness—possessed small arms and light weapons in quantities only slightly smaller than those in government holdings (see Table 7).

Table 7

Estimated small arms and light weapons held by selected non-state armed groups in the Central African Republic, as of November 2003

Service	Estimated/Recorded strength	Estimated holdings of small arms and light weapons
Ex-Balawas ¹	510	340
Ex-Sarawis ¹	600	400
Ex-Karakos ¹	590	400
Ex-'Border Security Battalion' ¹	300	300
Ex-SCPS ¹	850	1,700
Ex-USP ¹	1,345	4,050
Ex-MLPC ¹	820	1,650
'Mutineers' ^{1,2}	1,900	1,000
'Liberators' ^{1,3}	1,100	1,100
Totals	8,015	10,940

Notes:

This table does not include self-defence groups, private security companies, or coupeurs de route. Some estimates are slightly rounded.

¹ No longer a cohesive force.

² Those who joined the May 2001 coup attempt.

³ The fighters who helped Bozizé take power have subsequently been referred to as 'Liberators' or 'Patriots'. As of December 2003, 540 of them had been integrated into the state security sector and are not included in the figure given here. For more information, see the Epilogue.

Sources: CAR (2003); various interviews in Bangui and informed estimates

More significantly, these groups are generally armed with weapons of greater firepower and lethality than those in the possession of the state. Certainly, this is true of the gendarmerie and the police: the relatively few armaments that remain in their hands include a large number of MAS-36 bolt-action rifles. As noted above, President Patassé tended to arm his presidential guard and various militias with assault rifles. There are numerous reports of forces loyal to Patassé also having been equipped with light machine guns and RPGs.⁷⁸

Additionally, there is reason to believe that civilians and armed groups can more easily obtain assault rifles than before. As discussed below (see Part IV), it is increasingly common for police and anti-poaching guards to recover Kalashnikovs. In the past they tended to collect and come into contact with rudimentary and antiquated shotguns and hunting rifles.

The government's calculation of the number of weapons in general circulation may *underestimate* the scale of the challenge. According to Gen. Xavier Yangongo (deputy minister of defence under Patassé), the Chairman of the Commission de la défense et de la sécurité, a committee convened as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission convened in late 2003, up to 50,000 illegally held guns are in general circulation (UN OCHA, 2003i), although he has provided no documentation or analysis to support the assertion. Many people might be inclined to dismiss it, therefore, as little more than a negotiating ploy on behalf of the government to extract resources from the World Bank and the wider international donor community for yet another arms collection programme. The number of guns in society, though, could be significantly higher. It is not unreasonable to assume that the six known militias and the SDU in Vakaga prefecture possess around 9,000 firearms in total. If only one person out of every 100 in CAR (with an estimated population of 3.9 million citizens) was armed, this would add another 39,000 firearms to the pool. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that significant sections of the population are armed (although the quality of some of the weapons is suspect, and many are rudimentary locally produced shotguns) and that the ratio of weapons to people is certainly higher than 1:100. The situation has changed markedly since citizens fought back with arrows against armed government troops in 1979. The vast majority of weapons that have entered CAR in recent years in ways other than direct state-to-state transfer supports the contention that more than 50,000 weapons are circulating outside of government control. Part II elaborates on this point. ■



Self-proclaimed Emperor of the
Central African Empire Jean-Bédel
Bokassa with his wife, 1977.
© Christine Nesbitt/ AP Photo

PART II

Small Arms Flows and Trafficking

As noted in Part I, successive Central African governments kept their armed forces and police relatively small and poorly armed. It is only in comparison with other entities that a particular service could be described as ‘well armed’. With few natural resources with which to barter, and essentially no role in the cold war competition between the superpowers, direct transfers from states have been rather limited. Indeed, Bangui had so few suitors that it is understandable that Kolingba decided to establish diplomatic relations with a fictional country. (There is no indication, however, that the ‘state’ in question, the Dominion of Melchizedek, supplied military equipment of any kind.)⁷⁹

Direct government-to-government transfers do not account for a particularly significant level of *matériel*. According to the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics (UN Comtrade) database, 20 countries provided small arms, parts, and ammunition to the Central African Republic between 1962 and 2003.⁸⁰ By far the most significant suppliers according to Bangui have been the Republic of Congo, France, and Spain. But Bangui did not report to UN Comtrade for 17 years in the period 1962 (the first year small arms were reported in UN Comtrade) to 2004. Export data from UN Comtrade reveals that CAR’s biggest suppliers of small arms, parts, and ammunition are Spain, France, and Romania (with the Republic of Congo not reporting).⁸¹ In these lists, hunting and sporting guns and their ammunition comprise a significant component of both imports and exports, according to available UN Comtrade data. There is significant discrepancy between CAR’s reported imports and supplier countries’ reported exports for years for which both sides do report. Moreover, UN Comtrade data does not capture all supplier countries providing small arms and ammunition to Bangui. Important exceptions include China, Libya, and the former Soviet Union. This part thus reviews the top suppliers of small arms, parts, and ammunition to CAR without limiting itself to UN Comtrade reporting.

Of greater significance than government-to-government transfers of small arms are indirect weapons transfers by defeated, demobilized, or 'visiting' armed forces of neighbouring states. The first wave of weapons to cross into CAR came from Chad in the early 1980s. Additional firearms entered the country from Sudan during the 1980s and 1990s. 1997 was the first year in which a large transfer of weapons entered CAR from Zaire/DRC, with subsequent transfers occurring in 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003. Both neighbouring national armies and non-state armed groups account for this bounty. Although figures are difficult to come by, arguably since the early 1980s indirect transfers from neighbouring armed forces have accounted for the majority of small arms entering the country.

Within CAR, recirculation of weapons from government stocks has proved to be a major source of the arms that flow outside the hands of state actors. Insurgents have ransacked depots during coup attempts or other periods of insecurity, for instance. Those conducting conservation programmes have reported that during anti-poaching operations they often capture weapons that belong in government stocks. With the state security sector already less well armed than armed groups, these penetrations of government stockpiles take on an even greater importance.

Direct transfers from states

France

Not surprisingly, the colonial power, France, remained CAR's primary military supplier in the years following independence. CAR was the first newly independent former French colony to sign a military cooperation agreement with France, on 13 August 1960 (Gregory, 2000, p. 437, n. 8). In 1963, for instance, most weapons in state inventories were French, and the few weapons not French-made likely came from France. Equipment included French pistols such as the 7.65 mm MAB PA-15, the 9 mm M1950, and the 9 mm Walther, as well as the Manhurin MR 73 .38 revolver. The 9 mm MAT-49 sub-machine gun was also issued. French rifles included the 8 mm Mousqueton and 7.5 mm MAS 36, as well as the more powerful 7.5 mm M1949/56 (also known popularly as the FSA), which included smaller numbers of a version capable



French President François Mitterrand and CAR President André Kolingba on Mitterrand's arrival in Bangui, 1984.

© Georges Gobet/AFP/Getty Images

of firing grenades. Light machine guns included a few examples of the 7.5 mm M1924/29 and the 7.5 mm AA-52. As of 1963 there were only a few crew-served weapons: a couple of Browning 12.7 mm machine guns as well as a handful of 60 mm and 81 mm mortars (SHAT, 1963, pp. 38, 51, 57, 63) (see Table 8).

There were very few examples of non-French *matériel* in service with these bodies in the early 1960s. Examples of non-French-made small arms in service with CAR government forces at this time included the British 7.62 mm Sten and 9 mm Italian PM 38 sub-machine guns, and the British 7.62 mm Bren machine gun (SHAT, 1963, pp. 51, 57, 63) (see Table 8). It is not known how CAR obtained these weapons, but, given the extremely close relationship between Bangui and Paris in this period, the lack of an appreciable relationship between Bangui and London or Rome, and the large number of such weapons produced during the Second World War, it seems likely that France provided these weapons as well. According to France, the US government intended to export ten pistols to Bangui for its police force, part of a programme that included bringing a few police officers to the United States for training (SHAT, 1963, p. 23).

Table 8

Weapons in service with Central African state actors, as of 1 October 1963

	Weapon		Total	Recipient				
	Category	Model		Army	Gendar- marie	Repub- lican guard	Police	Other ¹
Small arms	Pistols and revolvers	MAC/MAS- 1950	419	105	314	0	0	0
		MAB 7.65	30	0	0	0	6	24 ²
	Sub- machine guns	MAT-49	367	221	126	20	0	0
		MAS-38	30	0	0	0	30	0
		Sten	10	0	0	0	10	0
	Rifles	Mousqueton	338	0	0	323	15 ³	0
		MAS-36/51	1,630	636	359	555	0	80 ⁴
		MAS-49/56	60	0	60	0	0	0
	Light machine guns	FM-24/29	10	0	10	0	0	0
		AA-52	57	45	12	0	0	0
		Bren	14	0	5	9	0	0
Light weapons	Heavy machine guns	12.7 mm	2	2	0	0	0	0
	Mortars	60 mm	4	4	0	0	0	0
		81 mm	4	4	0	0	0	0
Total			2,975	1,017	886	907	61	104

¹ 'Other' includes the Gardes forestiers with 50 MAS-36s, the Gardes chasse with 30 MAS-36s, and the Personnels des circonscriptions minières de diamant with 24 7.65 mm pistols.

² It is assumed that this is the same MAB pistol as the one used by the police.

³ The 8 mm rifles in service with the police are believed to be the same as the model (Mousqueton) used by the Republican Guard.

⁴ Grenade-launching MAS-36 rifles are included in the total. The army and the gendarmerie had 58 and 6 of these weapons, respectively.

Source: SHAT (1963, pp. 38, 51, 58, 63, 65)

France remained CAR's primary military patron until 1970, when relations between the two countries sharply deteriorated, and France withdrew its troops serving in the country. Nevertheless, France remained engaged with CAR due to wider political considerations. These considerations, however, changed by the late 1970s. Strategic considerations and concerns over human rights drove France to curtail its military assistance and ultimately to decide to orchestrate the overthrow of President Bokassa.⁸²

After President Bokassa was removed from office, France re-engaged with CAR militarily, shipping several consignments of small arms and light weapons during the early years of the Kolingba presidency (see Table 9). France

Table 9

Weapons transfers from France to the Central African Republic, 1981–2003

Year of transfer	Type of weapon		Shipment value	Number of weapons
	Category	Manufacturer/model(s)		
1981	Automatic rifles	Manurhin Défense	EUR 228,673	N/A
1981	Anti-tank weapons	LRAC 89 mm ¹	N/A	50
1983	Anti-tank weapons	LRAC 89 mm	N/A	50
1984	Machine guns	SFM/SFET ²	EUR 76,225	N/A
1984	Assault rifles	DAT (now GIAT) ³	EUR 2,287	N/A
1985	Assault rifles	DAT (now GIAT)	EUR 30,490	N/A
1986	Assault rifles	DAT (now GIAT)	EUR 22,827	N/A
1994	Spare parts	MAT-49, AA-52, pistols	EUR 15,245	N/A
1995	Spare parts	MAT-49, AA-52, pistols	EUR 6,860	N/A

¹ LRAC: Lance Rocket Antichar.

² SFM: Société française des Munitions; SFET: Société française d'Équipements de Tir.

³ DAT: Direction des Armements Terrestres; GIAT: Groupement Industriel des Armements Terrestres.

Source: Written correspondence with French Ministry of Defence, 5 September 2003.

perhaps hoped that Kolingba would draw on his training as a graduate of French military schools in Brazzaville and Fréjus (in France) and provide sound oversight of the military. The presence of some 1,200–1,500 French troops in CAR at the time likely also contributed to France's sense that it would have some oversight of the country's military affairs (O'Toole, 1986, p. 67).⁸³

France's military support for CAR during the tenure of President Patassé was largely indirect, via its own troops and then regional peacekeeping missions. Given the president's long-standing open hostility towards France, Paris was not favourably predisposed to the new president. Even so, the French government pushed hard for President Kolingba to hold free and fair democratic elections in September 1993, and it did so on the clear understanding that Patassé would almost certainly emerge victorious. When FACA soldiers mutinied in April 1996, CAR-based French soldiers (backed up by Gabon- and Chad-based French foreign legion companies) provided crucial assistance to President Patassé, without which he certainly would not have survived politically, and perhaps not corporeally, either (McFarlane and Malan, 1998, pp. 50–51). France backed the January 1997 peace accord and the establishment of MISAB. In 2002 France provided weapon systems and armaments for troops serving with the CEMAC peacekeeping mission. This mission was substantially smaller than the MISAB force assembled in 1997, and ultimately proved ineffective in protecting Patassé.⁸⁴

Direct transfers of French military equipment to President Patassé's government, however, were very limited. CAR did receive some *matériel*, such as vehicles, when France's military base in Bouar formally closed in 1998, but no small arms or light weapons were handed over.⁸⁵ The arrival of French military advisers to train four companies of the FACA during 2000 and 2001 included the provision of some vehicles, communications equipment, and uniforms,⁸⁶ but this did not include any small arms or light weapons.⁸⁷ According to the French government, the only small arms and light weapons Paris transferred to CAR during the ten years President Patassé was in office were spare parts, with the last exchange occurring in 1995 (see Table 9).

Allegations of French military support for the failed coup of May 2001 are unfounded. President Patassé accused France publicly of involvement, and displayed weapons that he claimed his forces had retrieved from Kolingba's

residence (see, for example, Jones, 2001). France did not deny that the weapons were of French origin, but did deny any connection to the coup. It said that the weapons had been intended for CAR's gendarmerie. As a former head of state and minister of defence, Kolingba could have stored weapons in his residence, as there was little or no oversight of his actions. Moreover, additional weapons could have been obtained from the area of Mobaye, Kolingba's hometown, from which he derives substantial support. 'Proof' offered to date has not supported the claims.

When Bozizé seized power in the March 2003 coup, France initially decried the removal of President Patassé, who had been democratically elected. However, France subsequently pursued a constructive relationship with the Bozizé government. Indeed, in Bozizé's first year of power alone he received official visits from more French ministers (three—foreign affairs, defence, and cooperation) than his predecessor had in the past decade (Soudan, 2004). In addition to being the main donor of funds to the CEMAC peacekeeping mission, France announced a military cooperation programme in July 2003, which began that October. The programme does not include the provision of any armaments but rather consists of training several FACA battalions and squads of gendarmes and the donation of equipment, primarily vehicles, uniforms, and radios (Embassy of France in CAR, 2003b).

Libya

President Bokassa turned to Libya for support during the final years of his rule. He visited Tripoli in 1976, where he converted to Islam. Shortly after returning home he reverted to Catholicism. Perhaps this explains the decision of Libyan President Moammar Qadhafi to assist Central African rebels intent on his overthrow.⁸⁸ Whatever the case, Libya continued to assist President Bokassa militarily up to his demise (arguably hastening his departure from office).⁸⁹ Libyan aeroplanes transported stocks of war *matériel* to Bangui in August 1979, and a small number of advance units were put in position to support the president (Decalo, 1989, p. 163). Indeed, Bokassa was in Tripoli at the time of the coup.

During President Kolingba's tenure, Libya provided military assistance to both the Central African government and forces opposed to the president. In 1982 Libya delivered four (M-43) 120 mm mortars, ordered earlier that year.⁹⁰



Painting in Bangui, depicting CAR president Ange-Félix Patassé and Libyan leader Moammar Qadhafi, 2002.

© Christine Nesbitt/ AP Photo

(Although the Small Arms Survey normally caps small arms and light weapons at 100 mm in diameter, the definition adopted by a UN Group of Governmental Experts, this weapon is noted here as it is man-portable and thus believed worthy of inclusion.) That same year some 60 Libyan military advisers arrived in CAR to take charge of armoured vehicles, including Soviet tanks, which Libya had provided. Kolingba asked the Libyans to leave the country in May 1983 (Kalck, 1992, pp. xlv–v).⁹¹ Also in 1982 Libya provided Patassé's supporters near Paoua with weapons, as noted earlier.

Another explanation might be that Kolingba had learned that Libya was also arming Patassé's MLPC⁹² through airdrops of *matériel* including small arms and light weapons along the border with Chad. According to Demafouth, this occurred over a two-month period in 1983.⁹³ Qadhafi reportedly had established a rapport with Patassé when the latter served as prime minister during Bokassa's regime (Decalo, 1989, p. 164). A more significant factor in the Libyan leader's considerations was likely a desire to punish Hissène Habré for overthrowing Libya's ally in Chad, Goukouni Weddeye, in June 1982. Besides continuing to support Goukouni in northern Chad, Qadhafi aided the forces of Wadal Abdelkader Kamougué in the south.

Libya also supplied weapons to CAR during the tenure of President Patassé. In 1998 it dispatched two or three transport aircraft filled with armaments, including small arms and light weapons, to CAR, using the airport outside of Ndélé, not the one in Bangui. These items were destined for the USP headed by Gen. Bombayeke,⁹⁴ not for Gen. Bozizé, and more broadly for the FACA, to which Bombayeke was supposedly subordinate. In May 2001 President

Qadhafi supplied additional weapons to aid President Patassé, this time sending them directly to Bangui.

Libya also employed intermediaries. Some of the weapons Chad provided to CAR following the 1996 army mutinies came from Libya.⁹⁵ Libya also delivered significant quantities of *matériel* to the MLC in Gbadolite, DRC, in October and November 2002 (in support of President Patassé), when the airport in Bangui was not safe to use.

Chad

Chadian support for President Patassé, unlike that of France, involved both troops and small arms. During the 1980s Chad apparently did not transfer any weapons to CAR, despite having procured huge excess stocks from Libya.⁹⁶ Following the 1996 army mutinies in CAR, however, President Patassé received some 500 Kalashnikovs from Chad.⁹⁷ Chad contributed troops during the MISAB operation and the follow-on United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). A small number of Chadian military advisers remained in CAR after MINURCA departed in February 2000.

Unfortunately for President Patassé, Chad also supplied weapons to the rebel outfit trying to overthrow him. According to Major Namboro Kette, cabinet chief of the head of the general staff, Gen. Bozizé received all of his arms from Central African sources.⁹⁸ This claim reinforces the steadfast assertion of Chad that it did not extend any support to Gen. Bozizé. There are credible reports, though, that Chad provided logistical assistance as well as *matériel*, including small arms and light weapons.⁹⁹ The apparent introduction of anti-personnel landmines by Gen. Bozizé's forces¹⁰⁰ suggests that they

Box 2 CAR, Chad, and man-portable surface-to-air missiles

The Government of the United States provided significant levels of *matériel* in the 1980s to the Forces armées du nord (FAN) led by Hissène Habré. It did so because it was concerned about Libyan designs on Chad and President Qadhafi's increasingly close relationship with Habré's political rival, Goukouni Weddeye. Weapons included the Redeye man-portable surface-to-air missile (Foltz, 1995, p. 23). After the October 2002 coup attempt in CAR, when Libyan counter-insurgency aircraft were bombarding Gen. Bozizé's forces, there was a real worry in the United States that Chad might furnish Gen. Bozizé with such MANPADS. Apparently this did not happen.

did indeed receive outside help, as CAR is not known to have possessed any such devices.¹⁰¹ It is not possible, however, to prove that Chad supplied these landmines. What is perhaps more important is not what Chad granted to Gen. Bozizé, but what it seemingly did not: man-portable surface-to-air air-defence systems (MANPADS) (see Box 2).

China

Bangui has historically played China and Taiwan off against one another, seeking—and obtaining—generous financial aid and development assistance.¹⁰² CAR's presidents have switched their country's diplomatic relations between China and Taiwan five times since 1962 (Colette and Yabi, 2004) (see Figure 4 below). In 1965, for example, after CAR broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan, President Dacko secured a CFA franc (FCFA) 1 billion interest-free loan. Assistance from Beijing was limited largely to low levels of technical expertise in agriculture during the tenure of President Bokassa (as he had re-established relations with Taiwan). China, however, rewarded CAR with a FCFA 5.5 billion interest-free loan shortly after President Kolingba visited Beijing in 1983 (O'Toole, 1986, pp. 133–34). In July 1991 Kolingba recognized Taiwan, paving the way for aid projects. Taiwanese largesse proved underwhelming, however, amounting to USD 200,000 for Sudanese refugees in 1992 and some technical assistance (Wang, 2002, p. 86). China provided CAR with various types of assistance (see below) after President Patassé re-established relations with China, including plans for a new football stadium and a housing project. Under President Bozizé China has been especially generous, issuing loans and grants in excess of USD 6 million between June and November 2003 alone (UN OCHA, 2003e).

China has also provided CAR with various small arms and other military equipment. The possibility of China supplying *matériel* to CAR came up during negotiations in 1997 to re-establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. For CAR it was impolitic to retain diplomatic relations with Taiwan at a time when it was seeking UN Security Council support for a UN peace-keeping operation to succeed MISAB (given that China could exercise its veto).¹⁰³ (Reports in the Taiwanese media alleged that CAR's demands—which by this point extended to payment of civil servants' salaries—were becoming too extensive for Taiwan to support (Hung, 1998), but CAR's need for China's

Figure 4

CAR's diplomatic relations with China and Taiwan since independence in 1960

1960s

1962

CAR establishes diplomatic relations with **Taiwan**

1964

CAR suspends diplomatic relations with **Taiwan** in September

1964

CAR establishes diplomatic relations with **China** on 29 September

1966

CAR suspends diplomatic relations with **China** on 6 January, within a week of Bokassa taking office

1968

CAR resumes diplomatic relations with **Taiwan** in May

1970s

1976

Diplomatic relations between CAR and **China** are normalized after the countries sign a joint communiqué on 20 August

1980s

1990s

1991

CAR resumes diplomatic relations with **Taiwan** on 8 July

1991

CAR suspends diplomatic relations with **China**

1998

CAR resumes diplomatic relations with **China** on 29 January

Sources: People's Republic of China (2000); Kalck (2005)

acquiescence if not outright support at the Security Council probably was the determining factor.) Relations were re-established in January 1998, two months before the Security Council authorized that MINURCA takeover from MISAB. According to Demafouth, the consignment of *matériel* arrived by road from the Cameroonian port of Douala in 2000. Equipment included small arms and light weapons as well as vehicles.¹⁰⁴ Under President Bozizé China has furnished CAR with small arms, particularly automatic weapons; it is believed such transfers have been extended as gifts.¹⁰⁵

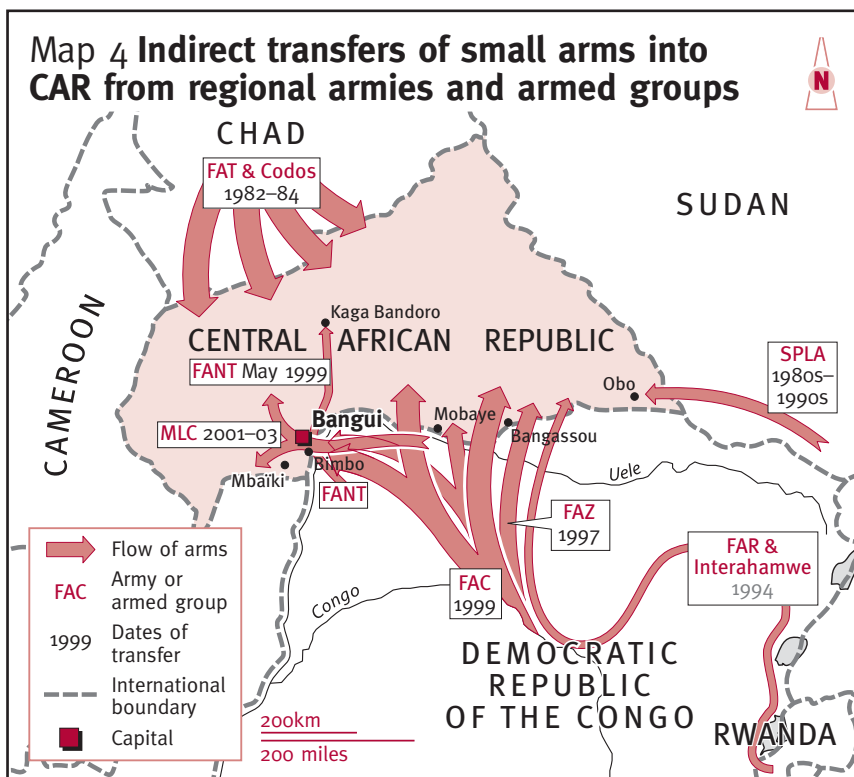
Israel

CAR has received many Israeli-made weapons over the years, some procured directly from Jerusalem, most obtained indirectly from neighbouring countries' militaries. Israeli military officials were active in CAR after the country gained independence, but an early authoritative report on arms holdings in CAR did not note the inclusion of Israeli weapons.¹⁰⁶ Israel, however, is reported to have provided arms to CAR during Bokassa's regime (Beit-Hallahmi, 1987, p. 71), and Israeli rifles and sub-machine guns were reported as part of the FACA's arsenal in 1977 (Keegan, 1983, p. 100).¹⁰⁷ (Kolingba sought assault rifles from Israel ostensibly for CAR's national park guards, but a transfer did not materialize.)¹⁰⁸ It would appear that comparatively more Israeli weapons circulating in CAR have arrived from other countries' combatants than from direct government-to-government transfers, however. For example, Israel is known to have sold weapons to Zaire, and is also reported to have provided weapons to Chad (Klieman, 1985, pp. 139–41). Soldiers from these two countries are known to have brought large numbers of weapons to CAR during the 1990s.

Romania/Soviet Union

The Central African Republic also received small arms and light weapons from eastern Europe. In 1969 Bokassa sent a diplomatic mission to Romania and the Soviet Union, concluding technical agreements with both countries the following year (Kalck, 1992, pp. xxxi–xxxii). Details on the agreement with the Soviet Union remain scarce. During Emperor Bokassa's coronation ceremony Soviet weaponry was on display during a military parade (Decalo, 1989, p. 161). The Soviet Union reportedly provided light weapons including mortars and anti-tank grenade launchers to CAR (Clayton, 1986, p. 240). Soviet small arms including rifles and sub-machine guns were also recorded in the FACA's inventory in 1977 (Keegan, 1983, p. 100), but the equipment's post-factory trajectory has not been traced. The technical agreement between CAR and Romania¹⁰⁹ included the provision of Kalashnikov assault rifles, but no further armaments.¹¹⁰

O'Toole claims that the level of military assistance CAR received from Romania and the Soviet union fell short of Bokassa's expectations, with France re-emerging as the country's largest provider of *matériel* (1986, p. 133).



Indirect transfers from regional armies and armed groups

Chad

Despite the presence of a myriad of political and military actors in Chad, and its long history of warfare since Chad gained independence in 1960, the armed forces involved in these conflicts were not a significant source of weaponry for CAR in the 1960s and 1970s. Largely this is because southerners dominated the Government of Chad, based in N'Djamena, some 500 km north of the border with CAR. François Tombalbaye (Chad's first president) and Félix Malloum (who overthrew Tombalbaye in 1975) were both from the south and members of the Sara ethnic group.

While political tensions existed in southern Chad, even within ethnic groups, the situation was calmer than that in the north,¹¹¹ whose inhabitants considered

Map 5 Chad (with Darfur)



themselves to be substantially disenfranchised. The Chadian civil war began in 1965, and in 1966 the Front de libération nationale du Tchad (National Liberation Front of Chad, FROLINAT), consisting primarily of northerners, was established in an effort to coordinate the various rebel groups.

After the southern-dominated Chadian government fell in 1979, CAR remained largely unaffected by the Chadian conflict for three more years. FROLINAT essentially broke up after defeating the central government.¹¹² A Gouvernement d'union nationale de transition (National Union Transitional Government, GUNT) was created in its stead. The GUNT, which ruled Chad from April 1979 to June 1982, consisted of more than a dozen competing factions.¹¹³ The three most powerful armed forces included Goukouni Weddeye's Forces armées populaires (People's Armed Forces, FAP), Hissène Habré's Forces armées du nord (Northern Armed Forces, FAN), and Wadal Abdelkader Kamougué's Forces armées tchadiennes (Chadian Armed Forces, FAT).

When Goukouni, then the titular head of GUNT,¹¹⁴ and his FAP succeeded in ousting Habré from N'Djamena in December 1980, the FAN withdrew to Sudan, where it rearmed and regrouped. In June 1982 the revitalized FAN returned to N'Djamena and defeated the GUNT. Goukouni and his FAP fighters withdrew to Cameroon and subsequently made their way to northern Chad.

Chad's southern border remained largely quiet while the FAP and the FAN battled one another, with little but cotton crossing into CAR.¹¹⁵ The cold war backdrop to the Chadian conflict enhanced Western fears of Libyan adventurism, however. Regional politics had resulted in a huge inflow of *matériel*, including small arms and light weapons, which would come to have a profound effect on CAR.¹¹⁶

This situation changed dramatically during the second half of 1982. After seizing the capital and besting Goukouni and the FAP, Habré turned his attention southward to the strongholds of the FAT, which were led by Kamougué and Djibril Ngué Djogo.¹¹⁷ Through a mixture of diplomacy and military might, Habré substantially decreased the threat that the FAT posed to his rule, persuading many of its soldiers to lay down their arms or join his army. As a conciliatory gesture, he renamed the army the Forces armées nationales tchadiennes (Chadian National Armed Forces, FANT). Thousands of Chadians fled to CAR during this period, many with arms; Kamougué and the remnants

of his fighting force were among them.¹¹⁸ Estimates as to their number vary from 10,000 to 30,000 by the end of 1984, including 5,000 in Bangui, according to UNHCR (Bigo, 1988, p. 279). One Central African who lived in the region at the time reported that it was common for these impoverished refugees to sell weapons they had brought with them in order to obtain money for food and other basic necessities. Some of the gun buyers then brought their purchases to Bangui, where they would fetch a higher price on the black market.¹¹⁹

Far more worrying for CAR than a sudden influx of Chadian refugees, however, was the creation of Codos, or commandos, in southern Chad. While Habré had substantially reduced the threat the south posed to his fledgling regime, armed opposition in the south had not been wiped out. Many Codos were veterans of Kamougué's FAT who refused to join the new national army or lay down their weapons. Disaffected youth aligned themselves with these commandos (Foltz, 1995, pp. 21–22). Insecurity reigned, and arms trafficking to Chad from Sudan continued on a 'large scale'. In 1984, when President Kolingba and his convoy arrived in the north-west to survey the situation, armed men fired on them for several hours.¹²⁰

Academic literature on Chad has it that by 1985–86 there were some 15,000 Codos. Jean R. Tartter, for example, enumerates five distinct commando groups, of which the most effective was known as the Red Codos and was under the command of Col. Alphonse Kotiga.¹²¹ According to Tartter, Kotiga was able to persuade most of these rebels either to join the FANT or to accept some compensation and return to civilian life (Tartter, 1990, p. 220). Others, however, have questioned Kotiga's leadership and influence.¹²² In any event, only around 1,500 were able to take advantage of the opportunity to join the armed forces loyal to Habré (Tartter, 1990, pp. 194–95). Many of those who did not join the military turned their attention (and their weapons) to engaging in banditry along the roads of north-western CAR, and are known as Zaraguinas or *coupeurs de routes*. Today, for many Central Africans, the terms Codos, Zaraguinas, and *coupeurs de routes* are interchangeable.

The situation deteriorated further in the 1990s, when the Chadian Armed Forces went through a process of significant downsizing as part of a World Bank-initiated SSR programme. By the end of 1997 27,000 soldiers had been demobilized (Bel, Vitali, and Hunwanou, 2004, p. 6). A pilot reintegration

project aimed at reaching 2,800 of the demobilized soldiers was interrupted in 2000, and planned future programmes have been sidelined. Thousands of people found themselves essentially unemployed, without skills or the opportunity to transition successfully into civilian life; an estimated 3,000–4,000 took up arms again. Many Central Africans believe the problem with Zaragui-nas (*coupeurs de routes*) along CAR's roads escalated sharply as a direct result of weapons and armed personnel crossing from Chad into CAR in search of livelihoods.

Even Chadian soldiers *with* jobs have contributed to the growing problem of small arms proliferation in CAR. Members of the Chadian Armed Forces reportedly sold some of their weapons while transiting CAR after having served in the DRC. Chadian President Idriss Déby, who seized power from Habré in December 1990, made available some 2,000 troops to assist DRC President Kabila in 1998. Pursuant to the Sirte Agreement of April 1999, the Chadians withdrew from the DRC in May and June 1999. Gen. (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, the MINURCA Force Commander, acknowledged that there had been rumours of some Chadian soldiers selling their weapons, but he said this did not occur from the point at which they crossed into CAR territory until the town of Damara, some 76 km north of the capital, at which point the UN peacekeeping force ceased monitoring the situation closely.¹²³

Frustration among the Chadian soldiers ran very high as they had suffered many casualties in the DRC from combat and disease. Though Libya reportedly promised support, it did not materialize. They encamped for more than a week in Kaga Bondoro, the capital of Gribingui prefecture, while the Central African authorities met with Chadian officials to try to find a way to assuage the soldiers' pent-up grievances. Paying the troops defused tensions. It is understood, though, that some of the 2,000-plus soldiers sold or traded an unknown number of firearms to Central Africans while in CAR.

Sudan

Sudanese government troops have long been active in CAR, but throughout Khartoum's long civil war against the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), there were no reports of their contributing to the proliferation of small arms in the country:

this has apparently changed. Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF) government launched operations against the SPLA in western Bahr el Gazal state from inside CAR in the early 1990s (*Africa Confidential*, 2002). It is not known, however, whether troops lost or sold any weapons while in the country. Nor were there any reports that any of the weapons belonging to the 50 or so Sudanese troops that joined the Community of Sahel-Sahara States (CEN-SAD) peace-keeping force were lost or sold.¹²⁴ In 2006, however, it appears that Sudan took to arming groups active in CAR, as discussed in the Epilogue.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army, however, has been a sustained source of small arms in CAR. Thousands of soldiers with the SPLA are believed to have crossed into CAR in the 1980s looking for food and security (during periods of drought and Sudanese military offensives). Demafouth noted that in 1985 perhaps 10,000–15,000 Sudanese sought refuge in CAR. He added that, according to the Central African police commissioner at the time, combatants made up approximately 50 per cent of this number, and estimated that they had brought around 5,000 weapons with them. It was not uncommon for SPLA members to trade or sell their weapons.¹²⁵ During the mid-1990s, when the number of refugees in CAR peaked at about 36,000 (UNHCR, 2006), a Kalashnikov could sell for as little as FCFA 3,000 (USD 6); ammunition, however, was often harder to locate.¹²⁶ The SPLA controlled the southern two-thirds of their common border and was known to be occupying villages as far as 200 km into CAR territory through 2003 (UN OCHA, 2004c).

In December 2002 the Office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) decided to close its office at the Mboki refugee camp in Haut-Mbomou prefecture because of the widespread availability of small arms and the government's limited presence and inability to provide for the security of its staff.¹²⁷ Most of the Sudanese refugees remained (farming the 2.5 acres allotted each family by the CAR government—USCRI, 2004) and UNHCR has received reports that SPLA has recruited soldiers in the area.¹²⁸ UNHCR reopened the camp in 2004, and by 2006 a more extensive and representative governance structure had brought increased stability.¹²⁹

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire)

In 1997 and 1999 fighting in Zaire resulted in large numbers of armed men crossing into CAR. The first wave came in the first half of 1997, when mem-



MLC soldier under Congolese rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba patrols with a rocket-launcher north of Bangui, 2002.

© Desirey Minkoh/AFP

bers of President Mobutu's presidential guard, police, and gendarmerie and the Forces armées zaïroises (Zairian Armed Forces, FAZ) retreated across the border to escape Kabila's advancing Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (Democratic Alliance Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, AFDL).¹³⁰ Kabila's forces swept westward through the provinces of Haut-Zaire (now Orientale), Equateur, and Bandundu, eventually seizing the capital in May 1997. A similar exodus occurred in 1999, when forces loyal to Kabila fled across the frontier with CAR to evade Bemba's MLC and the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Upward of 10,000 soldiers and other police and security forces of the central government in Kinshasa were involved. In the case of Mobutu's forces, by one account there were thought to be around 30,000 armed personnel in Haut-Zaire and Equateur provinces. It has been estimated that one-third would have entered CAR with the rest crossing into the RoC and the Sudan, or remaining in Zaire/DRC—either alive or dead.¹³¹ According to a FAZ officer who had been based in Gbadolite, about 4,500 Zairian troops crossed from Gbadolite to Mobaye in April 1997. In May, a much smaller group of Zairian



soldiers, numbering in the hundreds, crossed over from Zongo to Bangui.¹³² UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, informed by MINURCA peacekeepers on the ground, wrote that about 5,000 FAC had crossed into CAR in the vicinity of Mobaye after Gbadolite fell to the MLC in July 1999 (UNSC, 1999a, para. 26). The MINURCA Force Commander, reflecting on the period, believed the number of FAC to have been closer to 6,000.¹³³

These troops appear to have brought more than 10,000 weapons into CAR. Conversations with former members of FAC and FAZ who now reside in CAR

revealed that they and their compatriots traversed the Ubangui River with numerous types of small arms, but few heavy weapons. Weaponry included a large number of pistols (mostly Belgian 9 mm models), sub-machine guns (largely Israeli Uzis, plus some Egyptian Port Saids), assault rifles (Belgian FN-FALs, German G-3s, Israeli Galils, US M-16s, and Kalashnikovs manufactured in the Soviet Union and elsewhere), and anti-tank weapons (Soviet RPG-7s). As for crew-served weapons, only 60 mm mortars were taken into CAR, and not in vast quantities. Larger mortars and heavy machine guns were too heavy or bulky to transport across the river in dugouts.¹³⁴ Most of these weapons have not been accounted for. Mutinous FACA soldiers seized many of them; the government also procured thousands.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan originally reported that many weapons taken from FAC had been jointly guarded by Congolese and Central African troops (UNSC, 1999a, para. 26). Later, however, he acknowledged ‘persistent reports that some of [these] weapons . . . had not been surrendered but clandestinely sold’. He added that ‘only a few of the weapons could be recovered’ (UNSC, 1999b, para. 38).

Libya provided transport aircraft to fly many Congolese troops back to Kinshasa, but without their weapons (UNSC, 1999b, para. 36). The Central African government admitted keeping 3,328 light arms belonging to FAC in safe storage until the war in the DRC was resolved (UNSC, 2000, para. 26). Of the 3,250 light arms that the Central African government collected from Congolese soldiers via MINURCA, the central authorities destroyed some 500 in 2000. Of the remaining 2,750 or so weapons, Demafouth said that approxi-

Box 3 Mutinous FACA soldiers’ seizure of weapons and return of 5.56 mm rifles

Anicet Saulet, a leader of the mutinous FACA soldiers back in 1997, tells how he and his men patrolled part of the Ubangui River and seized weapons from Zairians fleeing Zongo and other Zairian towns as they crossed into CAR. Saulet explains that many of these weapons did not enter CAR, however—at least not at that time. Some weapons, such as M16 and Galil assault rifles, were of little use to Saulet and his fellow mutineers because 5.56 mm ammunition was in short supply. They sold or bartered these captured weapons in Zaire where the demand—and price—were far greater than in CAR.¹³⁵

mately 300 were M-16s, 200 were Galils, and 100 were Uzis. Most of the others were Kalashnikovs.¹³⁶

Though there is some confusion as to what exactly happened to these weapons, there is apparently consensus that they were never returned to Kinshasa. The Central African Minister of Defence, Maurice Regonessa, claimed that the continuance of war in DRC had prevented his government from returning the weapons collected.¹³⁷ According to the Central African Minister Delegate for Security and Disarmament, Col. Jules-Bernard Ouandé, these weapons were taken from their storage site to arm supporters of Patassé after the October 2002 coup attempt.¹³⁸

In an unusual move, in June 2001 Bemba dispatched 700 MLC soldiers to protect President Patassé from a coup attempt in CAR.¹³⁹ Within a month the MLC troops had returned to the DRC.¹⁴⁰ When President Patassé's government came under attack again on 25 October 2002, Bemba sent some 2,000 soldiers.¹⁴¹ This time they remained behind after the immediate threat of rebellion had subsided. Bemba received considerable weaponry, presumably from Libya, in connection with this undertaking. Several Libyan military transport aircraft landed in Gbadolite, DRC, the site of the MLC's headquarters, between 26 October and 3 November 2002. The aircraft, which did not belong to the MLC, included AN-26s and IL-76s. Bemba denied the UN access to the airport, so it is very difficult to know what exactly was delivered.¹⁴²

It is not known how much, if any, of this equipment went directly to the CAR government. Patassé had to close the airport in Bangui briefly when the capital came under attack, and so a retransfer of *matériel* via the Libyan-supplied MLC would have been very timely. However, the deliveries to the MLC occurred just after the UPDF had withdrawn from Equateur province after the September 2002 Luanda agreement whereby Uganda agreed to leave DRC. The UPDF did not leave behind appreciable quantities of *matériel* for the MLC.¹⁴³ The MLC, therefore, may well have chosen to squirrel away some arms, not to mention the equipment its troops would themselves have used in CAR. In less doubt, though, is that MLC cadres transferred weapons to Central African citizens. Bemba did not provide his troops in CAR with a per diem, food, or lodging.¹⁴⁴ As a result, MLC rebels looted properties and committed gross human rights violations. MLC troops allegedly sold excess small arms to anyone willing to purchase them.¹⁴⁵

Republic of the Congo

Geographical, political, and developmental considerations all suggest that relatively few combatants from the internal conflicts in the Republic of the Congo have crossed that nation's border with CAR. The frontier between the two countries along the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve is very remote. Eastward, along the southern border of CAR's Lobaye prefecture, the movement of goods and people is greater.

There is evidence that Rwandan refugees and ex-FAZ, having crossed into RoC from DRC, have subsequently continued overland into Lobaye.¹⁴⁶ Members of armed militia groups active in RoC's various internal struggles could undertake a similar trek. Since the victor in RoC's last war, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, had broad support in the northern part of the country, it is unlikely that the fleeing defeated fighters (soldiers supporting former President Pascal Lissouba and Brazzaville Mayor Bernard Kolélas' militia) would have retreated towards CAR. Some combatants, however, may have travelled north by pirogue up the Ubangui River. Conflict in RoC since 1997 has centred on the Pool region, south of the country's capital, far away from CAR.¹⁴⁷ Overall, the frontier has remained quiet, in contrast to CAR's borders with Chad, the DRC, and Sudan.

Although significant numbers of combatants did not cross into CAR from the Republic of the Congo, small arms and ammunition circulating in CAR are known to have originated in the state. Richard Carroll of WWF (US) noted that, between 1997 and 1998, there were indications that Kalashnikovs had come across the border with the Republic of the Congo after its six-month civil war ended in October 1997. He cautioned, however, that home-made hunting rifles and old Soviet 12-gauge shotguns—popular with expatriate hunters temporarily based in the country—remain by far the most common weapons found in the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve.¹⁴⁸ Many of the safari hunters do not take their weapons with them when they leave the country.¹⁴⁹

Allard Blom adds that, while most guns confiscated during anti-poaching initiatives were old Baikal shotguns (with a few German Mausers also known to be circulating), some new ones, including Kalashnikovs, have cropped up, suggesting that this trade continues.¹⁵⁰ The weapons are most often used for poaching.¹⁵¹ A popular 12-gauge shell used in the Baikal and other shotguns

in Sangha-Mbaéré prefecture are reportedly produced in RoC and marketed.¹⁵² These shotgun shells, reportedly manufactured in a facility in Pointe Noire, have appeared as far away as Vakaga prefecture. It is believed they are transported by boat to Bangui and then conveyed overland throughout the country.¹⁵³

Rwanda

Several thousand Rwandans entered CAR between 1994 and 1997. An unknown number arrived on French military aircraft during Opération Turquoise, the UN-authorized multinational force that was operational in eastern Zaire and Rwanda during June–August 1994. Most of these people did not remain in CAR, but continued on to West Africa and Europe.¹⁵⁴ It is not believed that many Rwandans entered CAR during 1995 and 1996.

The situation changed in 1997, following the emptying of Rwandan refugee and military camps in eastern Zaire after Kabila instigated his rebellion. UNHCR estimated that some 3,000 Rwandans crossed into CAR during the first half of 1997. Many (more than 1,000) would have been members of the *Interahamwe* militia and former members of the Forces armées rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces, FAR).¹⁵⁵

The majority of Rwandans entering CAR had no weapons. A former Rwandan soldier who entered Bangui from Zongo said that many armed Rwandans (like armed Zairians) sold their weapons while in Zaire or had their firearms confiscated by the Central African authorities.¹⁵⁶ According to UNHCR, 1,280 Rwandans were registered at a UNHCR-run camp in Bouca, and officials were in the process of interviewing them to determine their status. None was believed to have small arms or light weapons in the camp.¹⁵⁷

Most Rwandans have since left CAR.¹⁵⁸ The UNHCR camp in Bouca was closed in 1998. Demonstrations in Bouca began the day after the 2 August rebellion, and the Rwandans' demands to leave CAR became increasingly strident. The Central African government had long sought another country to host the Rwandans staying in Bouca, which DRC agreed to do in September 1998. More than 800 Rwandans from Bouca left CAR for DRC later that month.¹⁵⁹ Many of the 1,000-plus Rwandans believed to have crossed into CAR who did not register at the camp in Bouca are believed to have continued on to other parts of Africa.

Weapons generated within CAR

Indigenous production

CAR does have a state-run military company, but it does not manufacture arms (*Frères d'Armes*, 2000, p. 27). The Manufacture militaire centrafricain (Central African Military Manufacture, MAMICA) plant, based in the capital, began operations in 1981. Its nine divisions specialize in the manufacture of men's and women's clothing, woodworking, shoe production, iron-smithing, leather work, basket making, wood sculpture, quilt making, and knitting. In 2001 it employed 70 civilian and military personnel (*Frères d'Armes*, 2000, p. 27).

Artisans fabricate many weapons, however. It is difficult to obtain information on the number of people involved in such activities. Occasional references in published reports indicate that rudimentary hunting rifles are the main, if not the only, product. These weapons number in the tens of thousands (Mogba and Freudenberg, 1998, p. 118). Locals in the prefecture of Sangha-Mbaéré reportedly call these home-made rifles *yarenga* (Mogba and Freudenberg, 1998, p. 118)—which means 'doesn't last' in the local dialect.¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere people refer to them as 'fusils poupou', a reference to the sound their shots emit.¹⁶¹ In 1962 the French military recorded that 24,000 craft weapons circulated throughout the Central African Republic (SHAT, 1963). Park guards in Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve have seized and destroyed large numbers of these locally made weapons over the years.¹⁶²

Seizures from government forces

Mutinies have also served as an important domestic source of weaponry. Perhaps the most significant case of seizure and redistribution of weapons occurred in 1996, when Central African soldiers emptied the arms depot at Kassai barracks. According to the government, more than 2,500 small arms and light weapons were taken. During 2001 and 2002 Gen. Bozizé's forces (while retreating north from the capital toward CAR's border with Chad) captured weapons from gendarme depots, at which police armaments also were kept. After the failed coup attempt of 2002, additional depositories were ransacked.¹⁶³ According to Demafouth, Bozizé's men also seized 1,200 Chinese small arms during October 2001, while still in Bangui.¹⁶⁴ Bozizé's March 2003

coup similarly initiated the looting of local police depots, down to the last uniforms, particularly those of the Judicial Police and the Border and Aviation Police (MCE, n.d.). The gendarmerie suffered similar losses during this period, with many of their depots ransacked.

Corruption and ill-discipline among state security agents have also been a source of *matériel*. A native of Haut-Mbomou prefecture relates how it is sometimes possible for people to buy ammunition from FACA soldiers who have not been paid.¹⁶⁵ Given the persistent and widespread salary arrears, what is surprising is not that soldiers, gendarmes, or police should on occasion sell some of their weapons and ammunition, or accept a bribe, but that it is not more commonplace.

Weapons lost by African peacekeeping forces

CAR has hosted more distinct armed peacekeeping missions (four since January 1997) than any other country or conflict zone since the late 1990s.¹⁶⁶ (See Table 10.) When one takes into account troop rotations, it is likely that more than 5,000 personnel have entered and left CAR since 1997.

The first mission, MISAB, included contingents from six African countries and had a combined strength of more than 800 troops. The authorized strength of MINURCA, the UN operation that replaced MISAB, stood at 1,350, which included contingents from nine countries. MINURCA withdrew in February

Table 10
**Peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic,
as of December 2006**

Name of mission	Dates deployed	Greatest strength	Troop-contributing countries	
MISAB	02.97–04.98	820	6	Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal, Togo
MINURCA	04.98–02.00	1,350	10	Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Gabon, Mali, Senegal, Togo
CEN-SAD	12.01–01.03	300	3	Djibouti, Libya, Sudan
FOMUC	01.03 to date	380	4	Chad, Equatorial Guinea, RoC, Gabon

2000 after having overseen the September 1999 presidential elections. The Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)¹⁶⁷ authorized a peacekeeping operation for CAR in December 2001. Some 300 troops from three countries served in Bangui for about a year before another African regional organization, CEMAC, replaced that mission with a slightly larger force.

The four peacekeeping operations have supplied mutinous soldiers or rampaging citizens with only a few weapons. In June 1997 mutinous troops attacked a Burkinabe squad stationed in N'Garagba. The mutineers seized around a dozen personal weapons.¹⁶⁸ Other people unfamiliar with the incident, but knowledgeable about the mission and force protection issues, surmise that a few crew-served weapons would also have been left behind during the hasty retreat, including light machine guns and mortars. According to Gen. (Ret.) Ratanga, the MINURCA Force Commander, no peacekeepers in MINURCA lost their personal weapons or any crew-served weapons.¹⁶⁹

Central African and UN officials and foreign diplomats who worked in Bangui during the CEN-SAD peacekeeping mission describe the troops as well disciplined and knew of no instances of weapons being reported lost. During the March 2003 coup, CEMAC lost a pistol, some rifles, and two heavy machine guns, as well as other non-lethal equipment. The rifles have since been returned.¹⁷⁰ Some believe that the government reclaimed the two 12.7 mm machine guns, but, as of June 2003, it had not handed them back to CEMAC. The pistol has not been reclaimed, either. ■

Child holding spent cartridges at a
rebel camp in north-eastern CAR.

© Pierre Holtz/UNICEF



PART III

Effects and Impacts of Small Arms

Until the mid-1990s, small arms violence occurred rarely in CAR. Coups had involved little force, and peaceful political protest marked the populace's growing frustration with poor governance (Melly, 2002, p. 7). Since the late 1990s, however, the situation has dramatically deteriorated. The country's population clusters in the riverine area around Bangui, with large areas extremely sparsely populated. This is particularly the case in eastern CAR, along the border with Sudan.¹⁷¹ 'The state stops at PK-12' (i.e. the state has no presence beyond 12 km from Bangui) is a common saying in CAR (Bierschenk and de Sardan, 1997, p. 441). The expression exaggerates, but evokes the limited administrative and bureaucratic capacity of the central government. The paucity of record keeping and the restrictions on travel due to the general level of heightened insecurity in recent years have made it difficult to document exhaustively the effects of small arms use on Central African society. The compromised mobility itself suggests that such effects are widespread.¹⁷²

Direct consequences, such as firearm-related deaths and injuries, are not systematically recorded, and even if they were the figures would not be particularly revealing, for reasons highlighted below. Considerably more is known about the impact that small arms (and light weapons) have had on the country's wildlife. The indirect ramifications of small arms use and availability are profound but even more difficult to document, although significant progress has been made towards understanding the very real socio-economic repercussions of small arms proliferation for CAR (Small Arms Survey, 2003, pp. 125–67). The few examples of indirect results of armed robberies and roadblocks, although anecdotal, illustrate the range of effects of small arms on Central Africans—95 per cent of whom live on less than one US dollar a day (UN OCHA, 2005a).



Villagers fleeing their homes and villages to protect themselves from the FACA, Kaga Bandora area, December 2006.

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Death and injury

Medical records suggest that small arms use is not responsible for a large number of casualties in the capital, but these statistics are misleading. Interviews conducted in 2003 with the directors of two of the four main hospitals in Bangui indicate that, even during periods of heightened insecurity and violence, such as coup attempts, very few people were admitted to hospital because of gunshot wounds. For example, fewer than 50 people were registered at the community hospital following the failed coup of May 2001, and a similar number were documented after the unsuccessful coup attempt of October 2002—six died of their wounds.¹⁷³ These figures likely understate the gravity of the matter. The Director of Hôpital de l'Amitié, Cecile Koyangbanda, points out that such statistics are of limited utility in analysing gun-related violence and deaths, as many people bury the dead without taking the body, or reporting the case, to the hospital.¹⁷⁴ Documentation by human rights groups supports her assertion. Amnesty International (2004), for instance, reported that in November 2002 25 men accused of loyalty to then-insurgent

Gen. Bozizé were shot by forces under Miskine. Fifteen of the men were shot at PK-12, where the local chief buried the bodies in a mass grave.

During periods of insecurity, civilians often face the choice of caring for injured relatives or saving their own lives by fleeing. Fierce fighting during the coup attempt of 28 May 2001, for instance, lasted for a month. Many people died during that time because their families were forced to abandon them. Even those brought to a hospital must have relatives to cook and care for them during their treatment, a burden many find too heavy during such upheavals.¹⁷⁵

The cost of medical care is prohibitive for many Central Africans. Following the termination of an emergency programme subsidizing health care costs run by Association des œuvres médicales des églises pour la santé en Centrafrique (ASSOMESCA), patient visits at Sibut Hospital decreased by 50 per cent, according to an attendant medical assistant (UN OCHA, 2004b). Not only are the deceased rarely brought to the hospital, but many people with gunshot wounds go untreated. In addition, some Central African observers have accused the military of blocking civilian access to the hospitals during periods of insecurity (FODEM, 2005). Other victims die en route to Cameroon, whose hospitals are more accessible for those living in western parts of the country.¹⁷⁶

Anecdotal reports suggest that the high incidence of gunshot injury is a significant problem. A doctor who operates an NGO-subsidized clinic—the only such facility in the north-west part of the country to remain open during the insecurity of 2002–03—reports that she regularly sees patients with gunshot wounds, often due to cross-border conflict with armed groups and highway bandits from Chad.¹⁷⁷ In November 2002, at Ngola Market just outside of Bangui, 120 cattle herders, largely ethnically Chadian, and many more cattle were killed by government troops and MLC fighters as punishment for their suspected support for Bozizé, whose fighters' ranks drew from the northern border region of their origin (UN OCHA, 2003g).¹⁷⁸

Poaching

Central Africa's wildlife has also suffered greatly because of firearm use. Poaching has been conducted in CAR for as long as people can remember. It was not deemed to be a significant problem, however, when hunters used

traditional devices including spears, traps, home-made rifles, and the occasional commercial shotgun. The introduction of modern assault rifles and machine guns has had devastating consequences. Richard Carroll of WWF, who worked in northern CAR in the 1970s and early 1980s, says that poaching was always a problem in the area. Indeed, some estimate that 80 per cent of CAR's elephant herds were killed in the 1970s (Decalo, 1989, p. 173, n. 29).

Things are known to have changed dramatically, however, around 1982, when there was an influx of assault rifles and the Kalashnikov replaced the more traditional spear.¹⁷⁹ Sudanese poaching parties do not rely only on Kalashnikovs, but also utilize machine guns and RPGs (Lowy, 2002). According to conservationists Allard Blom and Jean Yamindou, the size of the Central African elephant population fell from 50,000 in the 1970s to around 5,000 by the mid-1990s. The black rhinoceros in CAR fared even worse. Thought to number some 10,000 around 1970, this species no longer exists in the country (Blom and Yamindou, 2001, p. 14). Sudanese poachers also kill large numbers of buffaloes, giraffes, hippopotami, various species of antelopes, and giant elands, though their primary targets are elephants.¹⁸⁰ The Sudanese poachers operate in bands of approximately 20 men; at the front of the column the hunters ride on horseback and carry automatic weapons, while their followers lead don-



Game wardens patrol Dzanga-Ndoki National Park, on the lookout for poachers. © Martin Harvey/Corbis

keys used to transport the prey. Some are engaged in diamond mining and smuggling as well.¹⁸¹ The effects of these incursions have been profound. Safari hunters, representing an industry generating considerable revenue for CAR, explain that as recently as 1998 their concessions spread throughout the country's territory, but all camps have since become circumscribed to the north-east, around Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, because wildlife has become too scarce elsewhere in the country.¹⁸²

The trade in bush meat is another major factor in CAR's dwindling wildlife.¹⁸³ To a certain extent, this practice is cultural. For example, the Ba'aka, a tribe largely composed of hunter-gatherers living primarily in the Sangha-Mbaéré prefecture, has long killed wild animals for their sustenance. But the number of people depending on this meat in recent years extends far beyond the Ba'aka. Migrant workers who have settled in Sangha-Mbaéré to work for logging concerns have resorted to hunting, especially when they have not been paid for long periods—a routine occurrence. It is not uncommon for people to procure shotgun shells to 'pay' trackers and hunters to go into the bush for meat on the understanding that they can use one or more of the shells to hunt for themselves.¹⁸⁴

Duckworth describes the exponential growth of the bush-meat trade in and around the Dzanga-Sangha reserve as out of control. During 2000–01 he studied the wildlife products being sold in a central market in Bayanga and deduced that about 50 animals a day (or 18,000 a year) were being killed. The actual number would likely be considerably higher as his calculation did not take into account meat sold along the side of the road or transported for sale in Bangui.¹⁸⁵ In other parts of the country many people who customarily did not hunt animals have begun to engage in the bush-meat trade. Facing penury, they are taking advantage of the increased demand and higher prices for bush-meat in urban centres.¹⁸⁶ To a lesser extent, animals in the country are hunted for sport and are killed because of religious and mystical beliefs.

Mutinies and coup attempts

Army mutinies and coup attempts result in much more than loss of life and political turmoil. They invariably involve massive displacement of populations,

and a slew of other problems that remain long after the situation is reported to be 'calm' and even after those who fled have returned home.

This was certainly the case with respect to the three mutinies of 1996 and the ensuing unrest throughout the first half of 1997 in the capital (see Box 4). Similar problems, though, manifested themselves following the shorter upheavals associated with the May 2001 and October 2002 coup attempts. For example, Amnesty International (2004) found the crime of rape to be widespread, with hundreds of women sexually assaulted at gunpoint by MLC members as well as by Central African fighters between October 2002 and March 2003. An NGO operating an emergency clinic in Bangui in October–November 2003 treated 400 civilians, of whom 40 per cent had gunshot wounds. Thirteen per cent had been injured by shrapnel. Of the patients treated, 70 per cent arrived after Bozizé's fighters had retreated north (FIDH, 2003, p. 13).

Children, too, have been drawn into the violence surrounding the mutinies and coup attempts. Though not utilized to the notorious extent of some other conflict areas, children associated with fighting forces (CAFF) have served on both the government and the insurgent sides in CAR. A mercenary close to Patassé was reported to have recruited street children to back up the MLC in support of the president in February 2003. Bozizé also recruited young people aged 15 years or older for his rebel group, some of whom were subsequently integrated into the FACA. Lack of training and authority meant that many young fighters pillaged and abused the civilian population (CSC, 2004).

Small arms use during periods of unrest has also had repercussions for people's livelihoods. The livestock sector, which according to the Association of Livestock Farmers is responsible for generating 35 per cent of rural earnings, was especially hard hit. The association estimated that its members lost as much as 50 per cent of their cattle during the fighting of October 2002–March 2003 between pro- and anti-government forces (UN OCHA, 2003g). The insecurity, whether surrounding coup attempts or the daily challenges posed by *coupeurs de route*, is largely to blame for the fact that in 2001 CAR ceased to be a net meat exporter, relying instead on meat imported from elsewhere in the region.¹⁸⁷

Cotton farming also suffered during that period. Fighters loyal to Bozizé looted the country's sole cotton processing plant, taking all the equipment

Box 4 **Impacts of the 1996 mutinies on the Central African economy and civil society**

'The mutinies in the CAR resulted in 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 130 destroyed industries and businesses, and 3,000 lost jobs resulting from the closing of industries and commercial enterprises. According to sources at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, in 1996, these conflicts increased inflation by 3 per cent, decreased per capita income by 3 per cent, decreased exports by 16 per cent, decreased imports by 23 per cent, and decreased state revenues by 33.6 per cent. These changes caused a dramatic increase in external debt, a decrease in overall security in the country because of the breakdown of law and order and spread of military weapons, a serious decrease in medical services, and shortages of even basic medical supplies. In a country that already had extremely limited medical services, at least three health centers were destroyed during the mutinies. Funeral services were limited during this time, and people were buried in backyards, causing serious health hazards. Finally, very little schooling occurred during the period (1996 and 1997).

'Embassies and international organizations closed, leading to the suspension or permanent closure of projects, such as those concerned with the AIDS campaign [. . .], primary health [. . .], and blood transfusions [. . .]. The offices of at least 12 donor-financed projects were ransacked or completely destroyed [. . .]. Of these, some closed down permanently, while others had to start from scratch and relocate to new offices in Bangui once the situation returned to normal.'

Source: Blom and Yamindou (2001, pp. 13–14)

with them to Chad and burning many homes along the way. Farmers were thus unable to sell their harvests in 2002 and 2003. In 2004 the government acknowledged their plight and pledged to rehabilitate the factories in Bossangoa and Bambari, but farmers said that two years without income had already taken a toll (UN OCHA, 2004b).

During the mutinies of 1996–97, the formal economy and manufacturing sector of Bangui was shattered and has yet to recover. According to one analyst, this was:

partly because many long-term expatriate business residents concluded that the CAR was too unsafe and opted to rebuild their businesses elsewhere. This has cost hundreds or possibly thousands of jobs, leaving the formal employment market even more dependent than before on a public sector with a disastrous record of failing to pay salaries on time or at all. (Melly, 2002, p. 7)

Even the house of the country director of the World Bank was looted during the insecurity (Melly, 2002, p. 6).

Armed robbery and armed attacks

Criminals routinely use firearms. Several interlocutors spoke of ‘five or six’ armed robberies committed on an average night in Bangui after the October 2002 coup attempt. The prevalence of armed robbery is believed to be much greater than reported. A sense of futility, rather than fear of retaliation, explains why many armed robberies go unreported.¹⁸⁸ In Begoua, a small village just beyond the checkpoint at PK-12, which oversees traffic along the main road connecting the capital to the rest of the country, the pervasive sense of insecurity among the villagers has persisted. People return to their dwellings at dusk and do not venture out again until daybreak. Such previously routine activities as children going to school or women going to market to purchase food are now undertaken at great risk, or abandoned altogether.¹⁸⁹ The deployment of FACA troops along the Ngola River, which surrounds the area, has not brought a sense of security to residents, but rather impeded their commute to the cassava plantations that lie just beyond, causing the price of the tuber, Central Africans’ staple starch, to double in 2003–04 (Panapress, 2004). The PK-12 area was also the site of unrest in April 2004 when Chadian fighters who had helped Bozizé take power protested over insufficient pay; state forces killed eight of these ex-liberators before they were transported north (US DOS, 2005).

Interestingly, in the city of Bangui *fear* of armed robbery has a stronger impact on the community than its *incidence*. Even if statistics showing a decline in the number of armed robberies could be trusted, there is reason to believe that stress related to insecurity in Bangui—specifically the fear of armed robbery—remains widespread throughout the populace. The director of an NGO working in CAR noted that staff members were clearly operating well below capacity. He attributed the decline to fear of armed robbery, and noted that events surrounding the coup of March 2003 had exacerbated the situation. People were on edge, not listening, and making careless mistakes.¹⁹⁰

Outside of the capital highway robbery remains widespread. Residents of the countryside have reported an increase in recent years, particularly after the 2003 coup, when many of the fighters who helped Bozizé claim power, now well armed, scattered northward. The region around the Cameroon–Chad–CAR border has been especially affected, notably the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham Pendé, and Nana Gribizi. In the north-east as well, Vakaga

and Haute Kotto prefectures, the robbers are organized into armed groups. These highway robbers have been known to coordinate operations using sophisticated equipment like satellite phones and automatic weapons (Gbeyoro, 2005, p. 2). In 2004 armed men attacked the only humanitarian agency operating in the region (other NGOs stayed away due to the insecurity), forcing the organization to abandon its relief programmes there (FIDH, 2005, p. 8).

The M'bororo, a nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnic group straddling the CAR-Cameroon border, are often the target of a particular type of intimidation and robbery by armed men: kidnapping. Largely herders and business-people, many M'bororo enjoy a more comfortable economic situation than subsistence farmers, and thus make good targets for this type of extortion. The German-based advocacy group Society for Threatened Peoples estimates that 1,000 children were abducted in this manner in 2005, with sums of between FCFA 500,000 and FCFA three million (USD 911–USD 5,466) demanded for their release. Payment of a sum this large necessitated the sale of some families' entire herd of cattle (US DOS, 2006).

Armed Sudanese poachers and pastoralists in CAR have regularly clashed with Central Africans. In mid-2002 armed men, allegedly from Sudan, attacked and burned a number of villages near the town of Gordil, some 1,100 km north-east of Bangui. The bursts of fighting resulted in the opening of a dialogue between Patassé and his Sudanese counterpart, Omar al-Bashir, on cross-border security in September of that year (UN OCHA, 2003h). After assuming power Bozizé met with al-Bashir and reconfirmed his commitment to a Border Protection Accord signed in 1982 (AFP, 2004b). Earlier in the year, as one of the first leaders to reach out to Bozizé following his coup, al-Bashir had given the CAR government military vehicles and equipment with which to patrol the Central African side of the border (UN OCHA, 2003h). Central African soldiers were thus able to reach Bangouti (a town on the south-east border of CAR, also spelled Bambouti), which had been occupied by SPLA fighters for the past two years (UN OCHA, 2004c).

Roadblocks

Armed roadblocks impede transport throughout the country, causing the price of goods to rise, posing a danger to drivers, and reducing hunting safari tour-

ism, which generates considerable revenues for the state and local communities (see Box 5). Besides lamenting the dismal state of repair of the country's roads, the head of a transportation company in CAR detailed the prevalence of roadblocks throughout the country. He said that, on all of the main arteries, there are roadblocks every 20–40 km. At each blockade his drivers are habitually asked to pay bribes of FCFA 500–3,000 (USD 1–6). The people demanding money—often those employed by the state, such as police officers or soldiers—are frequently armed with Kalashnikovs and RPGs. They are more dangerous and unpredictable when they have been drinking. One of the company's drivers was shot while transporting a load for UNHCR in 2003.¹⁹¹

An economic analysis undertaken by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) yields empirical evidence that the persistent salary arrears of civil servants (and the army in particular) and declining terms of trade the Central African Republic has faced since independence have been a key factor underlying political instability (Ghura and Mercereau, 2004). The years of fighting and

Box 5 Revenues lost from the downturn in hunting safaris in 2003

By all accounts, safari hunting enthusiasts are not easily dissuaded from pursuing their hobby. Political tensions in the capital often have little bearing on their decisions, as tour operators frequently go to great lengths to ensure the safety of their clients. Private planes and first-class treatment can mitigate or circumvent many of the usual annoyances and inconveniences. But they come at a price: a typical two-week safari costs in excess of USD 20,000–30,000 per person.

Revenues generated from safari hunting in CAR are not inconsequential, and represent a significant income stream for communities in very remote locations far from Bangui and other major towns and cities. 'Trophy fees'—rates that governments charge hunters for the animals they kill or injure—can range from a few hundred to several thousand US dollars per animal. Various supplemental charges are based on trophy fees, such as a taxidermy and trackers tax, and a community development tax, each typically a ten per cent surcharge. Additional costs include daily game park and veterinary fees. This is far from a complete list.

Mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that monies generated from this activity benefit the local communities surrounding the wildlife reserves. These funds finance development projects and pay the salaries of government workers who otherwise would go unremunerated. These government workers also organize local patrol forces to provide anti-poaching services and general surveillance of the country's territory.

In 2003, however, the armed conflict made it very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to resupply the lodges in many of the country's wildlife reserves. The result was a sharp downturn in safari hunting tourism.

related unrest have also taken a toll on the educational system: 'Following the 2003 coup, approximately three-quarters of the country's schools were destroyed. . .' (US DOS, 2006). Real per capita gross domestic product has declined steadily since independence. Within such a dire status quo, quantifying the effects of small arms' use becomes difficult as some believe that small arms exacerbate existing problems rather than instigate negative effects. A chart prepared by international donors lists 32 factors, from illiteracy to youth unemployment, as all concurrently acting on each other to produce insecurity in CAR. Nevertheless, many Central Africans see small arms as a challenge at the crux of many of the setbacks they face and are working to reduce the number currently circulating in the country.¹⁹² ■



FOMUC soldiers from Chad patrol
the streets in Birao, 2006.
© Francesco Fontemaggi/AFP

PART IV

Arms Recovery and Disarmament Efforts

Since 1997 there have been numerous initiatives to recover weapons in the Central African Republic. Government forces, such as the police and forest rangers, have recovered hundreds of weapons. Many more weapons have been retrieved through internationally supported programmes. The one thing all these initiatives have in common is that relatively few of the weapons collected have been destroyed.

Unilateral national initiatives

Prior to the 1996 mutinies, arms recovered by the Central African government were largely limited to weapons the police seized in the course of their normal duties. The state usually retained these weapons rather than destroy them. In some instances, however, impounded weapons reportedly have been returned to their owners. Richard Carroll of the World Wildlife Fund (US), who was active in the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve, has written about pervasive corruption among the police in Sangha-Mbaéré prefecture. He notes that park rangers regularly confiscate guns from poachers that the police had already confiscated (Carroll, 1998, p. 201). The prevalence of gun use for poaching or banditry throughout the country, the failure of the state to pay or appropriately arm the police, and an under-financed judicial system all provide reason to believe that such actions are commonplace.

The OCRB, the police unit in charge of combating banditry, has routinely seized weapons. Before 1996 it used to recover largely pistols and locally crafted hunting rifles. In recent years, however, it has seized rifles, machine guns, and even the occasional mortar. By late December 2003 the OCRB had recovered 51 small arms and 14 grenades.¹⁹³ (See Table 11.) These numbers, which are slightly elevated in comparison with previous years, belie the changing scope of the problem. The police service believes that bandits are



An armed rebel from UFDR wears good-luck charms, April 2007. © Pierre Holtz/UNICEF

more numerous and better armed than before. At the same time, the strength of the OCRB has been substantially reduced. Whereas it had 130 police officers in February 2003,¹⁹⁴ the number had fallen to 45 by December—with only one vehicle to pursue robbers.¹⁹⁵ Thanks to French technical assistance, by

Table 11
Weapons recovered by the OCRB, 1 January–19 December 2003

Sub-machine guns		Assault rifles		Other rifles		Miscellaneous	
6	MAT-49s	27	Kalashnikovs	9	MAS-36s	10	Defensive grenades
1	Unknown (9 mm)	3	SKSs	3	Hunting rifles	4	Offensive grenades
		1	Galil				
		1	FAMAS				

Source: Interview with Police Superintendent Yves-Valentine Gbeyoro, Director, DOCRB, 19 December 2003, Bangui.

2006 OCRB had become somewhat less logistically constrained, having taken possession of additional vehicles, but its means remained limited in relation to its tasks.

The Government of CAR has recovered thousands of weapons along its international borders at times of heightened alert (using ad hoc patrols and deployments). President Patassé's presidential guard allegedly confiscated weapons from more than 4,000 FAZ troops who crossed into Mobaye in April 1997.¹⁹⁶ In 1999 alone, for instance, President Patassé acknowledged recovering 3,328 weapons from FAC personnel (UNSC, 2000, para. 26). Given the much larger quantities of weapons that are likely to have been transferred across the border, and the disincentive for national authorities to provide a full and accurate account, the true number of armaments seized is likely to be significantly higher.

These weapons were never returned to the government in Kinshasa but were rather stored at Camp Béal in Bangui. In October 2002 President Patassé's supporters took them to defend the capital following the launch of Gen. Bozizé's coup attempt. The weapons were not returned.¹⁹⁷

In 2001, the year between the internationally supported arms recovery programmes of 1997–2000 and 2002 (described below), the government recovered relatively few arms. According to the Central African government, after MINURCA financial constraints limited its disarmament efforts. During 2001 it collected a single heavy weapon, 100 light weapons, 15,193 rounds of ammunition of various calibres, and 848 examples of ordnance (CAR, 2003a, p. 3). The government also collected an unspecified number of weapons and ammunition from Kolingba's residence and forces after the May 2001 coup attempt.

The Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation, et réinsertion (CNDDR) is responsible for managing small arms and light weapons as they pertain to DDR programmes. President Bozizé created the Commission on 14 September 2004. He tasked CNDDR with carrying out the recommendations of the 2001 UN Small Arms Conference as they pertain to DDR, and to do so with the assistance of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (CAR, 2004). With this commitment Bangui pledged to undertake as part of any DDR initiatives 'effective collection, control, storage and destruction of small arms and light weapons' with certain caveats (UNGA, 2001, section II, para. 21).

Internationally assisted initiatives

Anti-poaching efforts

Foreign-funded anti-poaching projects have established various kinds of working relationship with the government vis-à-vis the recovery of small arms and light weapons. For example, the Programme de développement de la région nord (Programme for the Development of the Northern Region, PDRN) operated under an arrangement whereby it kept commercially manufactured weapons that it seized from foreign poachers, but returned any arms collected from Central Africans to the national authorities. Home-made firearms, regardless of ownership, were destroyed.

WWF, working with the Ministry of the Environment, Water, Forest, Hunting and Fishing of the CAR and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), operated a similar programme in the Dzanga-Sanga Dense Forest Special Reserve beginning in 1989. In the project's first ten years organizers trained 30 rangers, who collected more than 150 guns. Most of these were shotguns (nearly a third hand-crafted), but also some large-calibre elephant guns and one Kalashnikov. During the same period the programme collected 44,000 wire snares, suggest-



CAR soldier displays ammunition used by poachers. © Chris Anderson/Aurora/Getty Images

ing that they remain the most accessible hunting tool for most Central Africans. The craft weapons and snares were destroyed in a public ceremony (Blom, 1999).

The PDRN's successor, the Programme de développement des zones cynégétiques villageoises (Programme for the Development of Village Hunting Zones, PDZCV), operating under the EU-funded Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des écosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique centrale (Conservation and Rational Forest Ecosystem Management, ECOFAC) programme, adheres to the same rules.¹⁹⁸ ECOFAC's privately funded successor, the Association pour la protection de la faune Centrafricaine (Association for the Protection of Central African Fauna, APFC), which has operated in CAR since 2005, returns the weapons it collects to the Central African Ministry of Defence, keeping only those necessary for its guards' operations.¹⁹⁹

Eco-guards in the Ngotto Forest have confiscated more than 200 long guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition since 1997 (see Table 12). Approximately 60 per cent of them are hand-crafted. Factory-produced 12-gauge shotguns include French, Russian, Belgian, and Italian models. German Mauser rifles, including .375 and .458 models, have also been recovered.²⁰⁰

Table 12
Weapons and ammunition recovered by EU-funded eco-guards in the Ngotto Forest, 1997–2003

Year	Rifles			Cartridges
	Hand-crafted	Manufactured	Totals	
1997	10	12	22	N/A
1998	33	23	56	N/A
1999	18	18	36	N/A
2000	37	17	54	179+
2001	9	3	12	702
2002	18	13	31	471
2003	31	11	42	509
Totals	156	97	253	1,861+

Source: Interview with Alain Penelon, Head, Ngotto Forest component, Central African Republic Office, ECOFAC, 19 December 2003, Bangui, and written correspondence, 16 January 2004.

Hand-crafted weapons recovered by ECOFAC in the Ngotto Forest are destroyed. Manufactured weapons are returned to the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing.²⁰¹

Officials have also recovered weapons from other protected areas. According to the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing, weapons were also recovered from one of ECOFAC's Village-run Hunting Zones, and a national park. During 2001–02 the 'Sangba' ZCV in Bamingui-Bangoran yielded 380 weapons (55 manufactured and 325 hand-crafted) and 2,563 rounds of ammunition (2,048 for 'armes de guerre', 434 for manufactured hunting rifles, and 81 for hand-crafted weapons). During the 2002–03 hunting season, 2 manufactured weapons and 15 hand-crafted weapons along with 82 rounds of ammunition (31 for one of the seized Kalashnikovs and 51 for a manufactured hunting rifle) were seized in the Bamingui-Bangoran National Park (Bonanneé, 2003).

MISAB and MINURCA programmes

In 1997 the CAR government initiated a concerted arms collection programme with international assistance. As part of the agreement concluded between the government and the army mutineers in January 1997, MISAB was to undertake



United Nations peacekeepers from Mali, part of a contingent of MINURCA, 1998. © Evan Schneider/UN Photo

Table 13

Remuneration offered to individuals submitting weapons and ammunition under official disarmament programmes, 1997–2002 (in FCFA / USD)

Type of weapon/ ammunition	Good condition	Fair condition	Poor condition
Pistol or revolver	8,000 / 12.56	4,000 / 6.28	1,500 / 2.36
Bolt-action rifle	8,000 / 12.56	3,000 / 4.71	1,500 / 2.36
Sub-machine gun	8,000 / 12.56	4,000 / 6.28	1,500 / 2.36
Assault rifle	8,000 / 12.56	5,000 / 7.85	2,000 / 3.14
Shoulder-fired anti-tank weapon	15,000 / 23.60	7,500 / 11.78	5,000 / 7.85
Light machine gun (5.56 mm–7.62 mm)	15,000 / 23.60	7,500 / 11.78	5,000 / 7.85
Heavy machine gun (12.7 mm–14.5 mm)	30,000 / 47.10	20,000 / 31.40	10,000 / 15.70
60 mm mortar (complete)	30,000 / 47.10	20,000 / 31.40	10,000 / 15.70
81 mm mortar (complete)	45,000 / 70.65	30,000 / 47.10	20,000 / 31.40
120 mm mortar (complete)	75,000 / 117.75	40,000 / 62.80	30,000 / 47.10
Grenades (offensive and defensive)	500 / 0.79	N/A	N/A
12.7 mm or 14.5 mm ammunition	50 / 0.08	N/A	N/A
5.56 mm, 7.5 mm, 7.62 mm, or 9 mm ammunition	25 / 0.04	N/A	N/A
Rocket	700 / 1.10	N/A	N/A
60 mm shell	700 / 1.10	N/A	N/A
81/82 mm or 120 mm shell	1,000 / 1.57	N/A	N/A
Magazine	300 / 0.47	N/A	N/A

Note: The exchange rate used in this table is based on an average of 0.00157 FCFA to the USD for the period 1997–2002.

Source: CTD (2002)

Table 14
Weapons recovered during MISAB

	Type of weapon	Surrendered by:										Arms taken from Kassai depot
		18.08 1997	01.09 1997	15.09 1997	29.09 1997	13.10 1997	27.10 1997	04.12 1997	02.01 1998	02.02 1998	10.03 1998	
Small Arms	Handguns	2	7	7	11	15	16	16	16	N/A	N/A	111
	Sub-machine guns	209	209	221	281	297	299	299	304	N/A	N/A	459
	Assault rifles	150	178	198	241	256	261	261	265	N/A	N/A	541
	Bolt-action rifles	349	420	489	608	650	651	651	662	N/A	N/A	1,181
	Lt. machine guns	38	45	47	51	52	52	52	52	N/A	N/A	80
	.30 ca. machine guns	13	13	13	13	15	15	15	15	N/A	N/A	17
Light Weapons	Sub-totals	761	872	975	1,205	1,285	1,294	1,294	1,314	1,356	1,373	2,389
	RPG-7s	4	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	N/A	N/A	11
	73 mm A-T weapons	62	63	64	66	66	66	66	66	N/A	N/A	67
	75 mm recoilless guns	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	2
	12.7 mm machine guns	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	3
	14.5 mm machine guns	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	N/A	N/A	6
	60 mm mortars	7	9	9	12	13	13	14	14	N/A	N/A	19
	81/82 mm mortars	4	7	7	9	13	13	13	15	N/A	N/A	15
	120 mm mortars	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	N/A	N/A	4
	Sub-totals	87	94	97	106	111	111	112	116	117	118	127

Sources: Security Council Documents (para.) – S/1997/652(20); S/1997/684(14); S/1997/716(22); S/1997/759(25); S/1997/795(12); S/1997/828(12); S/1997/954(15); S/1998/3(16); S/1998/86(11); S/1998/221(14)

Table 15

Ordnance recovered during MISAB, as of 31 December 1997

Ammunition		Explosives (and detonators)	
Designation	Quantity	Designation	Quantity
5.56 mm rounds	69,092	37 mm fragmentation hand grenades	1,858
7.5 mm SLC rounds	14,000	Fragmentation hand grenades (China)	3,174
7.5 mm S/B rounds	123,954	GR FLG AP34 rifle grenades (France)	16
7.5 mm X rounds	34,719	RPG-7 rockets	1,172
7.5 mm X S/B rounds	135	73 mm anti-tank rocket launchers	9
7.62 x 25 mm (Tokarev) rounds	2,811	37 mm stun hand grenades	1,047
7.62 x 39 mm (Kalashnikov) rounds	42,060	FL LAC F4 hand grenades	1,305
7.62 x 51 mm (NATO) rounds	15,962	F4 hand grenades	316
7.62 x 54 mm (rimmed) rounds	121,261	Russian grenades	3
9 mm Parabellum rounds	5,546	60 mm mortar shells	1,821
12 gauge riot control rounds	731	81 mm mortar shells	852
12.7 mm (.50 calibre) rounds	3,191	120 mm mortar shells	211
14.5 mm rounds	15,855	75 mm recoilless rifle rounds (US)	168
		75 mm recoilless rifle rounds (China)	223
		M79/M203 40 mm rounds (US)	6,060
		Time fuses (inactive)	2,325
		7.5 mm grenade (blank) cartridges	755
		Pyro detonators	6,100
Total:	449,317	Total:	26,659

Note: The author would like to thank James Gebhardt for clarifying inconsistencies and correcting inaccuracies in the original text on which this chart is based. However, no changes were made to the figures given. The total number of explosives does not correspond to the sum of the individual explosives listed.

Sources: Data based on figures provided in UN Document S/1998/3, para. 17, and James Gebhardt

a major arms recovery effort. A small financial incentive was offered to individuals to entice them into relinquishing their weapons with no questions asked (UNSC, 1997b, paras. 7–10). Inducements ranged between USD 13 for a pistol, sub-machine gun, or rifle and USD 123 for a 120 mm mortar system, assuming that the weapons were in good condition.²⁰² Smaller sums were offered for *matériel* handed over in a mediocre or poor state (see Table 13).

As further encouragement to participate in disarmament, those who failed to turn in their weapons within a stipulated (short) amount of time were to be pursued through the courts. MISAB's last report to the UN Security Council stated that 1,373 small arms and nearly 118 light weapons were recovered (UNSC, 1998b, para. 14).²⁰³ (See Table 14.) MISAB also stated that it had collected 464,604 munitions rounds and 26,714 explosives and detonators (UNSC, 1998b, para. 14) (see Table 15). It is likely that the final numbers were somewhat higher, given that MISAB continued to patrol Bangui for an additional five weeks before MINURCA replaced it.

Undoubtedly, the recovery of so many arms, along with the equally important political dialogue that accompanied the initiative, helped to stabilize an explosive situation that had resulted in significant loss of life. Tensions remained high in the capital after the signing of the Bangui Accords in January 1997, and many people died in major flare-ups in late June 1997 (US DOS, 1998).²⁰⁴ The significance of the recovery programme, however, has been consistently misrepresented. Claims that more than 90 per cent of heavy weapons and more than 50 per cent of light weapons were retrieved during the MISAB operation are routinely made. But these percentages are based on a comparison of the total number of weapons recovered and the number seized from Kassai barracks. Yet this was just one component, albeit an important one, of the disarmament programme. President Patassé's government had every interest in promoting this viewpoint, as it removed the pressure on the government to account for weapons that it had provided to the militias. MISAB, meanwhile, may have been motivated to highlight an 'uncontested' success when other aspects of the peace accords were not going so well. Whatever the underlying factors, one thing is certain: such a characterization is at best inappropriate and at worst disingenuous. Worryingly, the UN has perpetuated this myth.²⁰⁵

The disarmament effort was implemented selectively and not in the spirit of the Accords, focusing primarily on the *arrondissements* home to the mutineers. Faltas (2001, p. 90) reports that ‘while weapon collection took illegal arms off the streets, it increased the bitterness, frustration and insecurity of the population in the rebels’ quarters by disarming the mutineers, but not their adversaries’. Moreover, a leading (pro-mutineer) disarmament official alleged that some of the weapons collected had been diverted on their way to being stored and bought illegally by supporters of the government.

To explain the relatively low rate of recovery of light weapons, MISAB emphasized the ease with which small arms could be transported out of Bangui or successfully hidden. Furthermore, it acknowledged that a demand for these weapons still existed, complicating recovery efforts. It hypothesized that rebels may have hastily discarded an unknown quantity of armaments in the forest or the Ubangui River following encounters with MISAB during the June 1997 armed confrontations. Finally, it reported that some 130 rebels never returned to their barracks and were believed to have absconded with their small arms, many to another country (UNSC, 1997b, para. 13).

No weapons collected during MISAB’s tour of duty were destroyed. The arms collected were transferred to the UN mission in April 1998.²⁰⁶

Weapons collection continued under MINURCA, but on a limited scale. Although its mandate did not contain an explicit reference to weapons collection (UNSC, 1998c), UN peacekeepers did pursue leads on weapon caches. According to MINURCA Force Commander Gen. (Ret.) Ratanga, they retrieved weapons from throughout the capital—the force did not concern itself with whether a particular *quartier* was perceived as pro- or anti-government.²⁰⁷ According to the UN, MINURCA recovered 128 small arms, 21,724 rounds of ammunition, and 243 explosives between December 1998 and early October 1999 (UNSC, 1999b, para. 38). Regardless of the question of the mandate, this appears to have been a missed opportunity. The mutineers’ enthusiasm for disarmament had diminished once the programme through which they received monetary compensation for relinquishing their arms ended. MINURCA, however, had the capability to seize weapons from the mutineers, and doing so would have helped defuse the unrest of the ensuing years.

Of those weapons MINURCA did collect, very few were taken out of service and made inoperable. MINURCA destroyed some obsolete ammunition, and in a public ceremony on 16 July 1999 burnt 158 obsolete small arms (Faltas, 2001, p. 90). A second public ceremony took place on 11 January 2000, during which the remaining 'unserviceable' arms collected by MISAB and MINURCA were laid waste (UNSC, 2000, para. 26). It was not possible to determine the exact number of weapons involved, but Demafouth said that most were MAS-36 bolt-action rifles, plus a few Kalashnikovs.²⁰⁸ The remainder of the recovered armaments had been transferred to the CAR government the previous week (UNSC, 2000, para. 25). The small number of weapons destroyed suggests that most of those collected were in good condition.

National Programme for Disarmament and Reintegration

In February 2002 the CAR government launched a new programme to recover arms and to provide marketable skills (UNDP, 2002). The principal objectives of the Programme national de désarmement et de réinsertion (National Programme for Disarmament and Reintegration, PNDR) were to recover around 10,000 small arms and light weapons and to offer livelihoods training to 2,000 individuals who opted to participate (UNDP, 2003a, p. 1). Political and military developments in CAR, however, made it difficult to implement the programme as planned. The failed coup attempt of October 2002, the heightened instability that followed in its wake, and the successful coup of March 2003 greatly complicated matters. Despite—or perhaps because of—these challenges, by January 2003 PNDR had secured funding from several countries, although contributions still fell short of projected needs.²⁰⁹

Three components—disarmament, training, and reinsertion—were created to implement the PNDR. A central Comité technique de désarmement (Technical Disarmament Committee, CTD) together with Comités locaux de désarmement (Local Disarmament Committees, CLDs) were to assume primary responsibility for disarmament. A Comité technique de réinsertion (Technical Reintegration Committee, CTR) would assume primary responsibility for training and reinsertion. To that end, the CTR would employ a micro-credit scheme to be known as Mutuelles d'épargne et de crédit en appui à la réinsertion (Mutual Savings and Credit to Support Reintegration, MECAR).

The seven-member CTD consisted of representatives of the FACA, gendarmerie, police, UNDP, and Bureau d'appui des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en Republique Centrafricaine (BONUCA), as the UN Peace-Building Office in CAR is known. The Ministry of Plans and International Cooperation headed the CTR, which comprised officials from six other ministries within the government, UNDP, BONUCA, PNDR, and international funders associated with the programme (UNDP, 2003a).

In the end 29 CLDs were created, of which 22 became operational. Offices were established in the capital and in 10 of CAR's 16 prefectures. Eighteen were established in Bangui's eight *arrondissements*. Two offices were opened just outside Bangui, in Begoua and Bimbo, the capital of Ombella-Mpoko prefecture. An office was established in the capitals of nine other prefectures: Basse-Kotto, Mobaye; Haut-Mbomou, Obo; Lobaye, Mbaïki; Mbaéré-Kadéï, Berbérati; Mbomou, Bangassou; Nana-Mbaéré, Bouar; Ouham, Bossangoa; Ouham-Pendé, Bozoum; and Sangha-Mbaéré, Nola.

The attempted coup in October 2002 and its aftermath effectively derailed the CTD's plans. Though the offices had recruited staff and initiated efforts to sensitize people to the threat that small arms and light weapons pose to their security, nine of them never recovered any weapons. While all 18 CLDs in Bangui became operational, only four offices outside the capital functioned as envisioned: those in Begoua and Bimbo, a few kilometres from Bangui, and those in Bangassou and Mobaye. Plans to establish offices in Bamingui-Bangoran (Ndélé), Nana-Grébizi (Kaga Bondoro), Haute-Kotto (Bria), Kémo-Gribingui (Sibut), Ouaka (Bambari), and Vakaga (Bira) never came to fruition.²¹⁰

The PNDR recovered a little more than 1,000 weapons (see Table 16). The data includes so many inconsistencies that it is impossible to determine with any certainty what actually occurred. Reports of the PNDR, UNDP, and the UN Secretary General contain different figures. Of these three sources, the PNDR, which bears primary responsibility for implementing the project, is considered authoritative as it has the most details. Within the reports of the PNDR, the figures believed to be most accurate come from its detailed accounts of individual weapons recovered. Based on PNDR data, in an early report the CAR government enumerated 891 small arms and 14 light weapons collected between 23 January and 31 May 2002, supplying serial numbers

Table 16

**Weapons recovered by PNDR, 23 January–31 May 2002,
and 15 June 2002–14 May 2003**

	Weapon type			Weapons recovered		
	Category	Model	Calibre	23 January– 31 May 2002	15 June 2002– 14 May 2003	Total
Small arms	Pistols & revolvers	Total		19	2	21
	Sub-machine guns	MAT-49	9 mm	58	10	68
		Uzi	9 mm	17	8	25
		Total		75	18	93
	Rifles	Misc. hunting	n.a.	0	2	2
		Mousqueton	8 mm	4	0	4
		FAMAS	5.56 mm	0	2	2
		Galil	5.56 mm	38	4	42
		Vektor R5	5.56 mm	23	0	23
		SAR 80	5.56 mm	0	2	2
		M16	5.56 mm	24	1	25
		MAS-36	7.5 mm	105	27	132
		M1949/56 (FSA)	7.5 mm	7	3	10
		FAL	7.62 mm	21	6	27
		G3	7.62 mm	0	4	4
		Kalashnikov/ Type 56	7.62 mm	558	60	618
		SKS	7.62 mm	0	0	0
		Total		780	111	891
		Light machine guns	AA-52	7.5 mm	5	1
	DKN		7.62 mm	3	0	3
	RPK		7.62 mm	9	1	10
	Total		17	2	19	
	Totals for small arms			891	133	1,024

Light Weapons	Heavy machine guns	12.7 mm machine gun	0	0	0
		14.5 mm machine gun	0	0	0
		<i>Total</i>	0	0	0
	Shoulder-launched and anti-tank weapons	RPG-7s	7	1	8
		LRACs	7	1	8
		<i>Total</i>	14	2	16
	Mortars	60 mm	0	0	0
		81/82 mm	0	0	0
		120 mm	0	0	0
		<i>Total</i>	0	0	0
	Totals for light weapons		14	2	16
	Totals for all weapons		905	135	1,040

Note: The total figures do not include 84 weapons collected from Bangassou and Mobaye for which no specific information is available. It was not possible to obtain information on weapons collected during the period 1–14 June 2002.

Sources: CTD and PNDR.

when possible (CTD, 2002, pp. 2–21). In a May 2003 document the PNDR similarly listed additional firearms collected since the first destruction ceremony on 15 June 2002 (see below): 133 small arms and 2 light weapons (PNDR, 2003a, sec. VI). Eighty-four weapons collected in Bangassou and Mobaye were not included, as they were to be destroyed on site for security reasons (secs. IV and VI). The total number, therefore, is 219. Only 59 of these 84 additional weapons are mentioned in the May 2003 document and not in the same level of detail as the other 135 (sec. IV). Apparently, 25 of these 84 weapons were transferred to Bangui separately.²¹¹

Information on ammunition collected under the PNDR is even more difficult to acquire with any confidence. The PNDR reported that it recovered 134,829 rounds of ammunition and 1,443 explosives. In addition, more than 1,700 magazines were turned in. Other *matériel* received included binoculars, uniforms, and communications equipment (PNDR, 2003a, sec. VI).

Part of the confusion arises from the fact that some of the weapons the government seized during the failed coup attempts of May 2001 and October

Table 17

Ordnance recovered by PNDR, 23 January 2002–14 May 2003

Ordnance type and accessories		Matériel recovered		
Category	Calibre/Type	23 January–31 May 2002	15 June 2002–14 May 2003	Total
Ammunition	5.56 mm	1,500	128	1,628
	7.5 mm	31,458	3,342	34,800
	7.62 mm	56,651	25,685	82,336
	8 mm	0	0	0
	9 mm	2,530	872	3,402
	12.7 mm	325	220	545
	14.5 mm	0	2	2
	Total	92,464	30,249	134,829*
	*The total figure for ammunition includes 12,116 rounds for which no specific information is available (6,380 recovered in Bangassou and Mobaye, and 5,736 apparently recovered during the first two weeks of June 2002).			
Explosives	Grenades	1,041	69	1,110
	60 mm mortar shells	6	36	42
	81/82 mm mortar shells	0	0	0
	120 mm mortar shells	2	2	4
	RPG rockets	37	7	44
	LRAC rockets	0	0	0
	Anti-personnel mines	0	1	1
	Total	1,086	115	1,443**
	** The total figure for explosives includes 239 grenades, 2 RPG rockets, and 1 LRAC rocket that apparently were recovered in the first two weeks of June 2002. In one place in the report, mention is made of three 82 mm mortar shells having been recovered after 14 June 2002, but this inconsistency (and many others) is not included in the interest of consistency.			

Magazines	MAT-49	150	358	508
	Uzi	0	18	18
	FAMAS	0	4	4
	Galil	100	18	118
	SAR 80	0	15	15
	M16	0	2	2
	FSA	0	2	2
	FAL	50	0	50
	G3	0	5	5
	Kalashnikov	560	352	912
	Total	860	774	1,714***
*** The total figure for magazines includes 80 for which no specific information is available, and which were recovered in Bangassou and Mobaye. Nor is any information available for the period 1–14 June 2002.				

Sources: CTD and PNDR

2002 appear to have been added to PNDR statistics. There is considerable disagreement between the CTD and PNDR officials as to the origin of the weapons stored in the three containers at Camp Béal, in Bangui. Three officials extremely familiar with the programme provided very different accounts of what took place.²¹² It does not seem plausible that the PNDR collected 135,000 rounds of ammunition from fewer than 1,000 people. Rather, it seems that most of the ammunition recovered from the two mutinies has been grouped with the weapons recovered by the PNDR, calling into question the programme's record-keeping.

Two hundred and twenty individuals who participated in the project (UN OCHA, 2003i) were selected to receive training.²¹³ The amount of money that a recipient received for relinquished weapons and ammunition determined eligibility. The minimum was FCFA 8,000 (USD 14). The rationale behind this figure was that it would reward those who gave up weapons in good condition. No one who turned in a weapon in an average or poor state would reach

this threshold.²¹⁴ There is no indication that former combatants—the programme’s target—received the lion’s share of the training.

Instruction was offered in a number of skills over a four-month period. Training began in August 2003 and lasted until December 2003. Skills were provided to those seeking employment as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, and tailors, as well as in other trades and professions. Each trainee received a reintegration package, including tools appropriate for their chosen occupation, valued at up to USD 500 (UN OCHA, 2003i). The project concluded on 31 January 2004 (UN OCHA, 2004a).

Two arms-destruction ceremonies took place under the PNDR. The first was held on 15 June 2002, during which 705 small arms and 9 light weapons were set ablaze (PNDR, 2003a, sec. I). No ammunition or explosives were destroyed because of the inability of the PNDR to dispose of them safely. A second ceremony was convened on 25 July 2003 (PNDR, 2003b). The PNDR reported that it destroyed 209 small arms and 3 light weapons, as well as 134,352 rounds of ammunition, 1,361 grenades, 27 mortar shells, 54 rockets, and 1 anti-personnel landmine (PNDR, 2003b, p. 3). The PNDR also stated that, during this time, it destroyed 11 additional small arms (eight Kalash-

Table 18
Ordnance destroyed by PNDR, 22 July–2 August 2003

Date	Cartridges	Shells	Rockets	Grenades
22 July	14,928	7	5	104
25 July	14,900	8	10	161
28 July	14,028	9	10	154
29 July	29,984	15	20	315
30 July	15,178	8	9	154
31 July	15,078	7	9	156
1 August	14,953	7	9	156
2 August	15,303	8	11	166
Totals	134,352	69	83	1,366

Source: PNDR

nikovs, two MAT-49s, and one MAS-36), 41 canon and mortar shells (eight 107 mm canon shells and 22 60 mm, two 81 mm, and nine 82 mm mortar shells), and 1,582 rounds of 7.5 mm, 7.62 mm, 9 mm, and 12.7 mm ammunition, among other military equipment (PNDR, 2003b, p. 3). For the reasons discussed above, there is cause to question this breakdown. Of the many possible explanations for the discrepancies between the number of weapons reportedly recovered and those subsequently destroyed, the most plausible is that the government would have sought to keep collected *matériel* that was in good working order.

Forces multinationales de la CEMAC (FOMUC) operations

CEMAC agreed to establish a peacekeeping mission in CAR to replace the troops from CEN-SAD at its regional summit in Libreville in October 2002. The first elements of the force were deployed in December that same year. In the wake of the successful March 2003 coup d'état, the mandate for FOMUC, as the mission came to be known, was expanded to include helping to improve the security situation in the country, assisting with the electoral process, and helping to restructure the FACA. The 380-strong force, under the command of Gabon,²¹⁵ benefits from French financial, *matériel*, and logistical assistance, which includes French troops stationed at the airport in Bangui as part of Opération Boali (*Frères d'Armes*, 2006, p. 22).

While FOMUC's mandate does not include an explicit tasking to undertake disarmament,²¹⁶ its peacekeepers nevertheless have recovered arms in carrying out their activities. Since the coup d'état in March 2003, FOMUC has undertaken a number of operations with the goal of securing Bangui and the surrounding area. For example, between 23 May and 15 June 2003 FOMUC peacekeepers arrested and disarmed a couple of hundred fighters who had taken part in the March coup d'état and transported them to Chad (FOMUC, 2004).

It is unclear, however, what happened to the weapons FOMUC recovered in its early post-coup operations. According to CEMAC, the force had recovered more than 100 weapons, many in good condition. They consisted of rocket-propelled grenade launchers, machine guns, sub-machine guns, bolt-action rifles, and assault rifles (FOMUC, 2003a). However, according to the peacekeeping force, by mid-December 2003, recovered weapons and muni-

Table 19

Matériel recovered by FOMUC, to 17 December 2003

Type	Quantity (totals)
Firearms	
Simonov (SKS Carbine)	21
Kalashnikov (rifle, unspecified)	7
M-79 (grenade launcher)	1
RPK (machine gun)	1
Pistol (unspecified)	1
Carbine 9 mm, English (unspecified)	1
Carbine 22 (mm) American (unspecified)	2
Totals	34
Ammunition	
7.62 mm short (7.62 x 39)	355
7.62 mm long (7.62 x 54)	570
5.56 mm	136
9 mm	15
Totals	1,076
Grenades	
Rifle grenade, Model M203	13
Hand grenade, Soviet model	7
Hand grenade, French model	3
Smoke grenade	1
Totals	24
Magazines	
Kalashnikov	31
FAMAS	6
English 9 mm carbine	3
Totals	40

Source: FOMUC (2003b)

tions in FOMUC's possession included 34 (different) firearms, a little more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition, and a few dozen grenades and magazines (FOMUC, 2003b) (see Table 19).

Other

Chadian soldiers supported Bozizé's takeover of power in March 2003. Four hundred Chadian soldiers, led by Deputy Chief Staff of the Chadian Armed Forces Col. Daoud Soumain Khalil, entered Bangui on 19 March to help restore calm to the city and environs, which had descended into looting and chaos following Patassé's ouster. Within the first week of their operations, they had reportedly recovered some 1,300 firearms and 270 stolen vehicles. In an interview with IRIN News, Col. Khalil estimated that 90 per cent of the people they disarmed were Bozizé's supporters. When possible, they disarmed Patassé's supporters as well, but 'most avoided this because they keep their arms at home' (UN OCHA, 2003b).

The Chadian ambassador, Maitile Djoumbe, handed over the weapons to Bozizé's Chief of Staff, Antoine Gambi (UN OCHA, 2003a), in a ceremony on 25 March. The Chadians subsequently recovered some 200 more weapons, which they also handed over to Bozizé. The ultimate fate of the weapons, which do not appear to be registered in government stockpiles, is unconfirmed, though they may have been destroyed or sent to N'Djamena. Alternatively, it is also widely believed in the country that coup victors reward their inner circles who helped them take power with weapons, which they keep at their homes. This may explain the confusion as to the weapons' whereabouts.²¹⁷ Indeed, when Col. Danzoumi Yalo, until then Bozizé's right-hand man and head of the USP, was arrested in December 2003, he was found to possess large quantities of armaments at his home (*Afrique Express*, 2004). ■

Families fleeing the Vakaga region, April 2007.

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Conclusion

Between 1996 and 2003 a series of events significantly transformed Central African society. The government itself was responsible for some, but over others it had no control. The state's ability to regulate weapons among civilians is essentially non-existent. The massive influx of arms into many parts of the country represents a threat to national security and to law and order. Successive coup attempts have led to greater insecurity, and the belief that a weapon is necessary for self-defence has become widespread among civilians.

The successful coup in March 2003 both clarified and obscured information about small-arms holdings in CAR. Bozizé, eager to initiate foreign-funded disarmament, has produced some data on the strengths of armed groups and their holdings. On the other hand, stockpile management remains opaque, to the extent that the ultimate fate of some of the weapons collected during disarmament operations (such as the 1,300 firearms allegedly collected by Chadian soldiers in the week following the coup) is unknown.

CAR today is a tinderbox, but there is still hope that tensions can be defused. The country has enjoyed a mostly peaceful history—independence from France came without an armed struggle—and small arms were not prevalent among civilians until 1982. Recent years have not been so kind to the country, with a succession of mutinies and coup attempts unsettling the nation, and conflicts in various neighbouring states spilling across their common borders. These developments have contributed to a lack of security in CAR. The continuing conflict in Darfur, which borders CAR's north-east corner, and armed conflict in Chad indicate that conflict will continue to dominate news from the region. Zaraguinas roam the roads with seeming impunity outside of the capital, and armed robberies occur frequently in Bangui and elsewhere. Kidnapping for ransom, too, has become widespread outside of Bangui, with cattle herders largely the victims. Insecurity in the north, around the town of Paoua, has caused tens of thousands to flee to Chad. Even greater numbers have fled their homes and live in the bush.



Seized weapons at Camp de Roux, 2003. © Desirey Minkoh/AFP

The various peacekeeping missions in CAR have not been a significant source of weaponry for the population. Disarmament efforts to date have been largely a waste of money, as evidenced by the recirculation rather than the removal of arms. The few arms that were recovered were largely in poor condition. In some ways, disarmament initiatives exacerbated tensions within the population, because the apparent selectivity with which schemes were implemented hardened differences between groups. These experiences suggest that the focus of any future programme should lie in broad-based arms recuperation rather than strictly in DDR. Weapons and ammunition collected will likely recirculate unless they are destroyed.

It is hoped that the study's findings will aid policy-makers in devising new security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes, both in CAR and in other places. The problems that ail the Central African Republic—a weak central government, regional conflicts, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, to name but a few—are, unfortunately, not unique to CAR. 🇷🇺



Abdoulaye Miskine, rebel leader of the Union Democratic Forces for the Rally (UFDR), attends the signing of a peace treaty between the UFDR and the CAR government in Sirte, Libya, February 2007.

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Epilogue

By Louisa N. Lombard

Introduction

The years since Gen. François Bozizé's assumption of power in March 2003 have not restored calm across the country's territory. The list of security threats Central Africans face have, if anything, mounted. Among the elements compromising citizens' security are former combatants, whether 'reintegrated' through disarmament assistance or not; highway bandits in the areas outside the capital, particularly along the borders with Chad and Cameroon; and gangs of poachers armed with automatic weapons. Actors in the conflicts in Chad and south-western Sudan have drawn on CAR territory to further their struggles. Several armed groups aiming to unseat Bozizé have emerged since 2006. The steps taken towards improving security and quelling the proliferation of small arms, described below, have only scratched the surface of these problems. Addressing the root issues will require greater resources, better planning, and a regional approach.

Central African citizens approved a new constitution in a referendum in December 2004. Five months later presidential elections confirmed Bozizé's position as commander in chief. The return to constitutional democracy prompted the African Union to welcome CAR back into membership. The elections also paved the way for negotiations with the IMF and other international lenders, a course intended to break the cycle of economic and political instability into which the country has fallen. Nevertheless, persistent salary arrears (even after aid from France and China earmarked for that purpose) frequently trigger paralyzing civil service strikes. A government-wide civil service census in April 2006 aimed at culling their numbers led to additional unrest as people feared losing their positions.

Despite his popularity at the polls, Bozizé faces multiple armed rebellions in the north, and early battles between these armed insurgents and govern-

ment forces reveal the latter to be outgunned, undertrained, and unmotivated. Much of the countryside remains prey to road-blockers, highway bandits, and kidnappers, many of whom are armed with automatic weapons.

The Central African Republic faces a long list of challenges, and small arms and light weapons play into many of them, from rising food prices due to armed highway bandits to militia intimidation during elections. The country has indeed become a tinderbox, awash with weapons, a situation that appears to be worsening together with the conflicts in Chad and Sudan.

The security situation in CAR

Bangui

Armed robbery has become relatively rare in Bangui. Inhabitants attribute much of the remaining crime to actions by inebriated members of the state security forces. Though assessing the incidence of burglaries across the city is difficult given that most are not reported, or take place beyond the areas the police regularly patrol, several recent developments have contributed to the reduction in general lawlessness.

Members of the FACA have reportedly intimidated city residents with their weapons in order to extort money or other goods from them, but such incidents appear to be declining. Some see the downturn in crime as a result of a crackdown by military commanders on such offences, with offending soldiers receiving harsh sanctions or expulsion.²¹⁸

France's donation of vehicles to the gendarmerie and police has improved these entities' capacity for surveillance and response to calls. On the neighbourhood level, many communities have organized local defence groups to patrol the streets at night. Those suspected robbers the Office central de répression du banditisme (Central Office for Crime Suppression, OCRB) captures have at times received severe, extra-judicial punishment, perhaps deterring other potential criminals. The OCRB regularly transports apprehended suspects to Cattin, 5 km south-west of Bangui, for punishment. These apprehended suspects have been found shot and killed, their bodies placed in open-air jeeps for the drive back to the city centre as a warning to those who might be tempted by thievery (US DOS, 2006).

Even with less crime in the capital, however, life has become increasingly difficult for Central Africans in a number of ways. With transportation both risky and expensive on CAR's unpoliced and washed-out roads, prices for basic goods have risen. For instance, the price of a bag of cassava (Central Africans' staple starch) doubled, from 12,000 FCFA (USD 23) to 24,000 FCFA (USD 46), between 2004 and June 2005, according to a labour union leader in Bangui (UN OCHA, 2005b).²¹⁹ Civil servants, who are among the minority of the population with formal employment, have persistently gone unpaid, despite recurring budget assistance for salary bills from France, China, and the European Union.

The Republican Guard has been accused of harassment and intimidation, including during the 2005 presidential campaign and election. Some observers alleged they arrested opposition candidates, assaulted election officials, and harassed voters.²²⁰ Peaceful demonstrations by supporters of legislative opposition candidate Nicolas Tiangaye in the fourth *arrondissement* brought the Republican Guard to the scene; they fired their guns in the air to disperse those assembled, and at least two civilians were killed (FODEM, 2005; US DOS, 2006). The French ambassador in Bangui chastised the Republican Guard for their transgressions and expressed hope that it would be reorganized.²²¹ However, others with knowledge of the events claimed that only two members of the Republican Guard had caused and disruption. They also claimed that Bozizés opponents had exploited the propaganda effects of these incidents to the full.²²²

The Republican Guard's comportment in other instances, however, suggests that they are indeed heavy-handed. When in June 2006 Prime Minister Elie Doté travelled to Paoua, 500 km north of Bangui in Ouham-Pendé, to survey the security situation, residents marched in the streets. Their leader proffered a list of grievances. The extortion and harassment perpetrated by the Republican Guard soldiers who had been dispatched to the region (based at Bossangoa) in January to quell armed violence occupied the top of the list. These soldiers, together with other members of the FACA, accused the population of supporting forces aiming to unseat President Bozizé and perpetrated exactions that observers have called excessive and indiscriminate (RFI, 2006).

Coupeurs de routes/Kidnappers

The few aid groups in the country find themselves facing deteriorating conditions. Their efforts to reach the areas outside the capital have long been frustrated by roadblocks, both north of the capital and in the south-east. Now the unrest surrounding the armed rebellions that have arisen since 2006 also impede their endeavours. Some NGO staff refer to the area around Bossangoa, Kaga Bandoro, and Batangafo as the 'triangle of death', a moniker attributable to both the perceived risks of travel there and the plight of the isolated area's residents.²²³ The escalating conflict has drawn some attention from the international community, but aid levels remain well below that which the UN assesses the emergency to require.

Whereas armed actors previously allowed humanitarian vehicles such as those of Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders, MSF) to pass untouched, that discipline has become unreliable. (Some of the *coupeurs* do not speak Sangho, the common language spoken in CAR, indicating that they come from outside the country's borders.) In early 2004 one MSF vehicle came under fire, taking four shots to the cab and next to the gas tank. The *coupeurs* allowed it to pass when they learned it carried only doctors and medical supplies.²²⁴

More recent attacks have been deadly. In April 2006 in the north-western town of Yaloké, a vehicle donated by UNICEF to the Ministry of Health came under fire. The two doctors in the vehicle died of the gunshots they sustained, and two of the FOMUC soldiers who responded to the attack were wounded as well (UN OCHA, 2006b). Armed men shot and killed a French MSF volunteer in Ngaoundai in June 2007. The previous month, two Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) staff members had been abducted in Bozoum (UN OCHA, 2007b). COOPI subsequently suspended its operations in the north-west.

Instability created by bands of robbers and the remnants of former armed groups has taken hold in northern CAR, along the Cameroonian and Chadian borders. Describing the situation, area residents distinguish between highway bandits, who hold up unsuspecting travellers for quick monetary gain, and 'heavily armed groups, often in military uniforms who, in addition to committing atrocities and robbery, supposedly have political demands and enlist people by force'. The former are particularly prevalent along the border with Cameroon, where the relatively well-off M'Bororo herdsmen make good targets.

The latter largely conduct their operations along the border with Chad (AUPSC, 2005, paras. 9, 10).

Ex-combatants

The armed rebels who helped Bozizé seize power are now generally referred to as either ‘liberators’ or ‘patriots’. In his November 2003 letter to the World Bank appealing for funding for disarmament and demobilization, Bozizé estimated their ranks to number 1,640, of whom 540 had already been integrated into the FACA. He expected an additional 150 to be integrated shortly (CAR, 2003b). The liberators initially consisted of Bozizé’s fellow-dispossessed Gbaya soldiers. When Bozizé was chased northward in the autumn of 2002, he found additional recruits among the northern pastoralist communities, who were being persecuted by Miskine’s pro-Patassé men. In addition, at least several hundred Chadians joined Bozizé’s cause (Boisbouvier, 2004). Chadian soldiers also accompanied Bozizé and his men as they took the capital.²²⁵

After the successful coup, many of the fighters roamed the countryside, harassing and abusing the population. Some blame the increases in highway banditry and kidnappings for ransom since 2006 on these armed men (Refugees International, 2004).

The Chadian ex-liberators claimed their leader had promised them FCFA 10 million (approximately USD 10,800) each for their efforts.²²⁶ In April 2004 they refused to wait any longer for their payment. About 280 (AFP, 2004a) of them looted approximately 75 homes in Bangui and engaged in combat with presidential security forces some 500 metres from Bozizé’s residence. Eight liberators and one presidential guard died during the fighting. At the end of April, with trucks and logistical support from FOMUC, the fighters were transported home to Chad (US DOS, 2005; FOMUC, 2004). In a ceremony in the Chadian town of Goré that included both Central African and Chadian military officials, each ex-fighter was paid FCFA 1 million (approximately USD 1,800).²²⁷

On 22 May 2007 the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno-Ocampo, announced the Court’s decision to open an investigation into crimes committed in CAR since 1 July 2002. The ICC is particularly concerned with abuses by Jean-Pierre Bemba’s MLC forces in 2002–03, but its

jurisdiction also covers those by Patassé's men, including Abdulaye Miskine's armed group, and those by forces loyal to Bozizé. Human rights organizations such as Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH) and Amnesty International (2004) have documented MLC fighters' abuses of civilians, with MLC cadres allegedly commonly committing rape at gunpoint. This investigation marks the first undertaken by the ICC in which sexual crimes far outnumber fatalities (UN OCHA, 2007a). The ICC was to establish an office in Bangui to facilitate the investigation.

Rebellion in the north

The armed conflicts currently manifesting in the CAR occur along two primary axes, the north-west and the north-east.

The conflict in the north-west, primarily centring on the town of Paoua and its environs, dates to the second half of 2005. Armed men bearing light weapons launched five attacks on border communities in CAR during the period June–December 2005. Initially, villagers explained the attacks as the start of a campaign by Patassé to reclaim power (AUPSC, 2005, paras. 11, 12). When on 12 March 2003 the office of President Bozizé acknowledged the attacks as the work of armed groups rather than simply banditry, as the government had previously averred, they, too, placed the blame on Patassé. The president claimed that former president Patassé was the rebellion's leader and that he had established a training camp on the Chad border for his MLPC fighters²²⁸ (UN OCHA, 2006a).

The conflict that has subsequently unfolded should not be viewed as solely a political dispute, however. Civilian–military tensions run high as well; in one confrontation in 2005 an armed gang attacked a truck loaded with cigarettes, under guard by the FACA, and stole its cargo. The soldiers responded with reprisals against the locals, including burning homes, further alienating the population from the central state's embrace.²²⁹ In November 2006 President Déby sent 150 soldiers to the border town of Goré to support the FACA's operations.

The UNSC identified four main rebel groups in the region in its report of 27 June 2006 (2006a, para. 25). In late 2006 two of them, both led by defectors from the FACA, appeared to represent the strongest presence on the ground:



An APRD rebel walks through the bush in Boya, July 2007. © Lionel Healing/AFP

the Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD), whose spokesperson, Jean-Jacques Larmassoum ('Lieutenant Larma', a long-time associate of Patassé), was arrested in Bangui and sentenced to life in prison on 18 August 2006; and the Union des Forces Républicaines (UFR), led by Lieut. Florian Ndjadder, the son of a general (now deceased) who was close to Patassé.

These groups consist of a small core of fighters (one informed source placed their permanent strength at only 15 men each in late 2006) who draw recruits from local populations as and when required to carry out operations. The number of locals expressing loyalty to the groups has swollen as government soldiers' reprisals have spread. The groups' leaders retain control of weaponry, which includes grenades and automatic weapons.²³⁰ Among civilians locally-made hunting rifles are widespread.

The main effects on the population have been fear and massive displacement. Entire villages flee into the bush when they hear the sound of approaching vehicles, whether belonging to rebels or to state forces. By January 2007 UNHCR estimated that 70,000 had fled the country's borders, with 48,000 living in the

Gondjé, Amboko, and Yaroungou camps near the Chadian town of Goré, and another 2,000 dispersed along the Chadian side of the border. Another 20,000 live in Cameroon (UNHCR, 2007). A nine-year-old Central African boy reported to a journalist, 'We were in the field when we heard gunshots. We joined other people who were running toward Chad. We had only some utensils we use for our meals in the field. We abandoned our fields, and our houses containing the little we own' (UN OCHA, 2005d). The number of internally displaced persons is even greater, at 150,000, with 60,000 in the Paoua-area prefectures of Ouham and Ouham-Pendé alone (UNHCR, 2007).

Humanitarian relief from Médecins sans Frontières (Spain, Holland, and France branches), Cooperazione Internazionale, and the International Committee of the Red Cross have palliated the health effects of the crisis, but the international response falls short of civilians' needs. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee estimated in 2006 that more than 30,000 Central Africans 'from the subprefectures of Paoua, Markounda, Batangafo and Kabo are in need of emergency assistance in the form of basic health care, food, water and sanitation, as well as protection' (UNSC, 2006a, para. 12). Many villages have been burned to the ground by either government forces or armed group fighters, with wells and other critical infrastructure destroyed (MSF, 2006).²³¹

Abdulaye Miskine, the Patassé era militia leader and highway bandit, has figured in the recent insecurity in the north-west. He met with Bozizé in Sirte, Libya, in January 2007 and signed a peace agreement on behalf of the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (Democratic Front of the Central African People, FDPC). The FDPC was based in the area around Kabo, in north-central CAR.

In the north-east the unrest bears a more overt relationship to the power struggles in Chad and Sudan. Rebels opposing the government of Chadian president Déby have used CAR's territory as a staging ground since at least April 2006. The group that led a coup attempt on the Déby government in April 2006, the Front uni pour le changement démocratique (United Front for Democratic Change, FUC), has operated in CAR, receiving support from Khartoum (though its base remains in Darfur) (ICG, 2006). Twenty pick-up trucks loaded with FUC fighters crossed through CAR territory, a short-cut from Sudan to Chad, in early April 2006. On 25 and 26 April an Antonov

cargo plane that had in the past been under contract to the UN in Sierra Leone flew in from the east (Sudan) and commandeered the airstrip in the town of Tiringoulou.²³² On the first day it unloaded some 50 armed, well-equipped men in combat gear who then disappeared into the countryside.²³³ On the second day more military equipment was offloaded (FIDH, 2006, p. 58).²³⁴ The CAR government responded by closing its border with Sudan, but 'there is every indication that armed individuals have established a foothold in the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic' (UNSC, 2006a, para. 27). Given the greater resources of the Chadian and Sudanese governments, the security situation in CAR depends to a great extent on the relationship between its northern neighbours.

At the end of June 2006 clashes between FACA soldiers, FOMUC peacekeepers, and rebels in the north-eastern town of Gordil left more than 33 combatants dead, among them FACA and FOMUC soldiers, and rebels. Civilians, too, were caught in the crossfire (UN OCHA, 2006c).

Before dawn on 30 October 2006, 50–60 armed men seized the town of Birao, facing little opposition from the 60 FACA posted there, who fled alongside the civilian population. The insurgents had timed their advance to follow two weeks after a troop rotation brought fresh soldiers to the town. The combatants took nine vehicles that the FACA had left behind, including two pickups mounted with 12.7 mm heavy machine guns. They also recuperated two kinds of mortars, a light machine gun, and a PKM machine gun.²³⁵ They seized all of the stockpile's ammunition as well.²³⁶

In the following weeks the armed men, whose on-the-ground spokesperson 'Captain Yao' identified them as the Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR), took control of the towns of Ouanda Djallé and Sam Ouadda, and briefly occupied others, such as Ndélé. Their fighters reached as far south as the town of Mouka. In addition to the FACA stockpiles at Birao, they claimed all the armament at Ouanda Djallé and Ndélé except the small arms held by the fleeing soldiers.²³⁷

President Bozizé called on France for help. Benefiting from Mirage aerial support, French soldiers and FACA retook Birao on 27 November and the other towns in the following days. French soldiers had been dispatched to larger towns in advance of the rebels' potential arrival for purposes of secu-

ritization and reconnaissance, including to Bria and Ndélé.²³⁸ Several months of relative calm ensued, only to break into open conflict again on 3–4 March 2007, with clashes between the UFDR and soldiers posted at Birao. Seven hundred and thirty-six civilian homes were destroyed, with both sides bearing some culpability.²³⁹

According to rebel spokespeople, UFDR is an umbrella term for several armed groups based in the region, including Chadian rebels. Among the leadership with CAR-directed ambitions is, at the political level, Abakar Sabone, a Chadian ‘ex-liberator’ jailed in Cotonou, Benin.²⁴⁰ Another Chadian ex-liberator headed the level of military strategy: Faki Ahmat (‘Col. Marabout’). Col. Marabout’s current whereabouts are not certain, but some reports place him in Khartoum. For military operations on the ground, ‘Capt. Yao’ and Damane Zakaria, an associate of Patassé who was the mayor of Tiringoulou, were among the leaders. Yao was the main communicator with the press during the rebels’ advance. Damane was believed killed during the French/FACA operations but has subsequently re-emerged to enter into negotiations, including with UNICEF over the handover of child soldiers.²⁴¹

These recent developments reveal the ease with which armed groups can take CAR towns, for use as a rear base for Chadian and Sudanese fighters as well as to destabilize the government in Bangui. The FACA’s stockpiles have proven similarly vulnerable. The active intervention of the French has temporarily returned stability to the north-east, but the armed rebels remain, better equipped than before.

Efforts to improve the security situation

Faced with a daunting range of security challenges, the Central African government is endeavouring to calm the situation. International donors have supported security sector reform and disarmament. Additional programmes are planned. The conflicts in the country’s northern regions have underscored the importance of an accountable and effective state force to protect the population. Some of the steps taken towards this still far-off goal are elaborated below.

Security sector reform

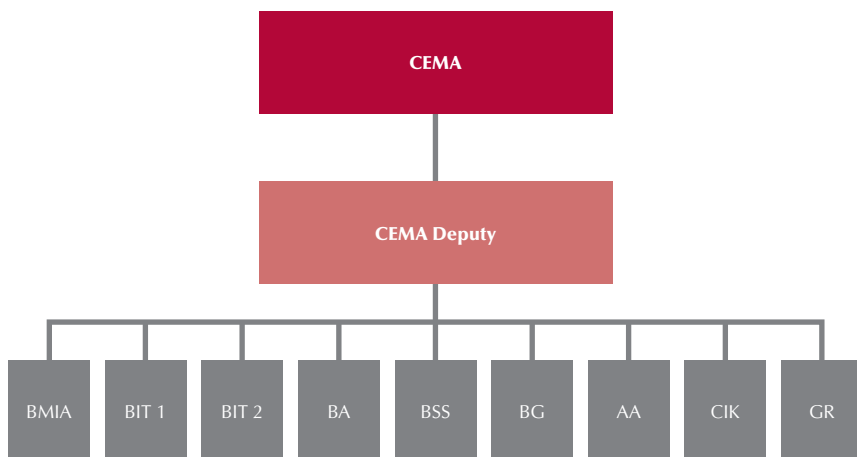
At the end of 2003 the CAR government began restructuring the FACA, with technical assistance provided by France. French military cooperation in 2004 and 2005 included the training of three FACA battalions. Whereas previously the FACA had been divided into various divisions that each reported to a particular leader, by October 2005 all the units reported directly to the military chief of staff and his deputy (see Figure 5). There were eight such divisions: bataillon mixte d'intervention et d'appui; bataillon d'infanterie territoriale no. 1; bataillon d'infanterie territoriale no. 2; bataillon amphibie; bataillon des services et du soutien ; bataillon du génie; armée de l'air; centre d'instruction de Kassai.²⁴² In addition, the Republican Guard became part of the FACA.



FACA soldiers patrol Markunda in Ouham prefecture, July 2008. © Reuters/Emmanuel Braun

Figure 5

Organizational chart of the Forces Armées Centrafricaines, as of October 2005



Notes:

CEMA: Chef d'état major des Armées (Joint Chiefs of Staff)

BMIA: Bataillon mixte d'intervention et d'appui (Mixed Intervention Support Battalion)

BIT 1: Bataillon d'infanterie territoriale no. 1 (Territorial Infantry Battalion 1)

BIT 2: Bataillon d'infanterie territoriale no. 2 (Territorial Infantry Battalion 2)

BA: Bataillon amphibie (Amphibious Battalion)

BSS: Bataillon des services et du soutien (Services and Support Battalion)

BG: Bataillon du génie (Field Regiment)

AA: Armée de l'air (Air Force)

CIK: Centre d'instruction de Kassai (Kassai Training Centre)

GR: Garde Républicaine (Republican Guard)

Sources: Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.

With the exception of the Republican Guard, which contains some 1,200 members, the largest FACA division is the bataillon mixte d'intervention et d'appui, with 650 soldiers. Together with the bataillon d'infanterie territoriale no. 1 and no. 2, which each have 450 soldiers, it forms the bulk of the FACA's operational effectiveness. The other divisions are smaller and are hardly operational. The FACA's total strength stands at approximately 5,000 (*Frères d'Armes*, 2006, p. 19).

By the end of June 2006, three FACA battalions had been restructured, and a fourth was undergoing training. Despite such progress, the FACA remains incapable of securing the country's territory (UNSC, 2006a, para. 29).

France has also provided material assistance to the CAR military, but the assistance has not included small arms. In July 2006 the CAR ministry of defence announced it would receive a C130 Transall cargo plane for the transport of heavy equipment to the northern part of the country. French troops and fighter jets would also arrive to aid the FACA in its efforts (Radio Centrafrique, 2006). French air support was also given earlier in the year, for a FACA and FOMUC campaign in the north in January 2006.

BONUCA has also assisted in the FACA's reform. The Military Section has arranged 'training courses for battalion command post observers and officers, auto mechanics and small-calibre weapons technicians'. The Civilian Police Section has also organized targeted skills courses, which 158 police officers and 98 gendarmes have completed (UNSC, 2005, paras. 22, 23).

President Bozizé officially designated the Republican Guard a part of the FACA. The Republican Guard consists of three battalions: the battalion d'honneur; the battalion provincial; and the battalion de protection et de sécurité des institutions (BPSI). The bataillon d'honneur and the bataillon provincial report to the chief of staff of the armed forces, while the BPSI reports directly to the president.²⁴³ The bataillon d'honneur counts 150 members among its ranks, and the bataillon provincial has 300. The BPSI is by far the largest battalion in the Republican Guard, with 750 members.²⁴⁴

In contrast to President Patassé's tenure, when members of the Republican Guard could be identified by the weapons they carried, under President Bozizé their armament has dropped to significantly less than one firearm per member of the Republican Guard.²⁴⁵ However, they remain the government entity with the greatest power.

The gendarmerie has also benefited from reform. France, through a military assistance programme, trained one mobile squadron as well as 200 new recruits in 2004. Active recruitment and training have increased the force's size, with the goal of an expected effective strength of 1,800 to be achieved by the first trimester of 2007 (*Frères d'Armes*, 2006, p. 26). France also donated 2,500 uniforms, 140 vehicles (light vehicles, tactically-equipped pick-ups, and motorcycles), and radios (Embassy of France in CAR, 2003b; *Frères d'Armes*, 2006, p. 32). The programme had been carried out by October 2005, and no changes to the structure of the gendarmerie have been envisioned.²⁴⁶

Though France's support for the state security sector has been the most extensive, other countries have contributed as well. Morocco also donated uniforms and vehicles to the gendarmerie shortly after Bozizé took power (MCE, n.d.). In November 2005 Antoine Gambi, then chief of the general staff of the CAR, travelled to China. While there, he met with the Chinese minister of defence, Cao Gangchuan, and the pair pledged enhanced military cooperation on behalf of their respective countries (Xinhua, 2005). Some members of the state security forces bear Chinese-made Kalashnikovs, believed to be a gift from China.²⁴⁷

The South African defence minister visited Bangui in December 2006 in the aftermath of the UFDR's arrested advance. At the conclusion of his trip he announced his country would support the CAR government by launching training for the FACA in the coming weeks. He also noted the material needs of the state security sector and promised to discuss further military aid with the cabinet (Pienaar, 2006).

Perhaps to a greater extent than his predecessors, Bozizé endeavoured to establish full control over the security sector. He himself holds the position of Minister of Defence, and his son, Francis Bozizé, serves as his second in command as the Director of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Defence. Rifts within the military became evident in 2006, however. A government-wide census of employees undertaken to cull their numbers left those soldiers downsized aggrieved. In May, the *Batallion mixte d'intervention et appui* (Mixed Battalion for Intervention and Support, BMIA, deployed to the north-east, left their posts, and began marching towards Bangui upon hearing of plans for their dismissal. Bozizé himself, in military uniform, travelled to intercept them and negotiate their return to his side.

Following an armed group's surprise attack on Gordil in late June 2006, Bozizé named his close associate Col. Jules-Bernard Ouandé the head of the FACA (*Frères d'Armes*, 2006, p. 18). The ease with which rebels took several north-eastern towns in November 2006 points to the continuing lack of motivation and poor training of the FACA, however.

Donors have picked up on the continuing lack. Increased efforts, benefiting from greater involvement and coordination, have been planned for late 2007.

Forces Multinationales de la CEMAC (FOMUC)

Throughout 2003 and 2004 FOMUC conducted patrols to help secure the capital and the main roads leading from it. When 'liberators' who were upset over lack of payment for their participation in the March 2003 coup stormed the president's residence on 17 April 2004, FOMUC responded by disarming the 410 men and transporting them to Chad. The peacekeepers collected a total of 58 weapons in this operation (FOMUC, 2004).

Following the extension of its mandate to the full CAR territory in June 2005, the force has also undertaken missions to help restore calm to rural areas of the country and facilitate commerce. FOMUC subsequently opened bases at Bria and Bozoum, both sites from which its soldiers can patrol on multiple axes. Some 70 peacekeepers arrived in Bria (600 km north-east of Bangui) in October 2005 to provide security for the region's artisanal diamond miners, who are often victimized by coupeurs de route with automatic rifles (AFP, 2005b).

The 80-strong Bozoum unit was deployed in mid-August 2005 (AFP, 2006a). Members of the FACA and gendarmerie accompanied the FOMUC soldiers, and French air support was provided in January 2006. After six months of patrols, the unit's commander, Congolese Col. Guy-Blaise Kakinda Hellebaut, declared the efforts to make the region secure a success, with no major highway bandit activity. However, local residents remained fearful that FOMUC's eventual handover of control to the FACA would result in a return to criminality, as they accuse members of the FACA of harassment and failure to pursue robbers (AFP, 2006a).

In December 2006 FOMUC was in the process of constructing an additional base at Kaga Bando. All three bases were to be handed over to the FACA by April 2007.²⁴⁸

Towards a national strategy for small arms control

During President Bozizé's tenure, the Central African government has placed an emphasis on controlling the proliferation of small arms. Through a presidential decree, Bozizé created the Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion (National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, CNDDR) on 14 September 2004. The CNDDR

was charged with carrying out the recommendations established through the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001 (CAR, 2004).

Programme for Reintegration and Assistance to Communities (PRAC)
The CNDDR managed its first programme to control small arms proliferation jointly with UNDP. Together, they launched the USD 13 million Programme de réinsertion et d'appui aux communautés (Programme for Reintegration and Assistance to Communities, PRAC), with funding from the World Bank. The PRAC began on a trial basis in December 2004 and expanded to other areas of the country the following June (UN OCHA, 2005c). Initially, based on lists of fighters provided by the government, the PRAC aimed to demobilize 7,565 ex-combatants. After programme staff scrutinized the lists, cross-checking tallies given by the CNDDR, the leaders of the armed groups, and the prefecture and *arrondissement*-level disarmament committees, they reduced this number to 5,447 in February 2006.²⁴⁹ In the end, though, 7,556 disarmed. The programme covered Bangui and its environs, as well as the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Grébizi, and Kemo through its field offices in Sibut, Bozoum, and Bossangoa (PRAC, 2006b). Rather than offering cash for weapons relinquished, the PRAC's staff distributed a kit of household goods to ex-combatants and followed up with training, primarily in agriculture and building, and micro-credit initiatives. Some community-wide development projects were to be undertaken as well (PRAC, 2005).

By the end of July 2005 a total of 868 ex-combatants had been demobilized. Of these 282 were women. The former fighters handed in 235 weapons and 21,823 pieces of ordnance. The small number of arms collected reflects the fact that many of the ex-combatants had already been disarmed by the FACA, one of the several peacekeeping missions in CAR, or Chadian soldiers who assisted Bozizé following the March 2003 coup. People not on the lists of ex-combatants also arrived with weapons at the disarmament sites, hoping to benefit from the training and micro-credit offered in exchange for weapons. Their eagerness to give up their arms—even in prefectures home to insecurity (Ouham and Ouham-Pendé, for instance)—in exchange for material assistance suggests that broader-based arms recuperation efforts, such an arms for development project, could be successful in CAR (PRAC, 2005).

Table 20

Ex-combatants demobilized, by location, as of December 2006

Location	Number
Bangui	
First <i>arrondissement</i>	383
Second <i>arrondissement</i>	748
Third <i>arrondissement</i>	648
Fourth <i>arrondissement</i>	568
Fifth <i>arrondissement</i>	818
Sixth <i>arrondissement</i>	718
Seventh <i>arrondissement</i>	819
Eighth <i>arrondissement</i>	685
Bégoua (just outside Bangui)	1,147
Bimbo (capital of Ombella-M'poko prefecture)	332
Ouham Prefecture	212
Ouham-Pendé Prefecture	191
Kémo-Gribingui Prefecture	140
Nana-Grébizi Prefecture	147
Total	7,556

Source: PRAC (2006b)

By the completion of the disarmament and demobilization phases at the end of 2006, 7,556 ex-combatants had been demobilized (see Table 20). These former fighters turned in a total of 419 small arms (see Table 21). Most of these arms and munitions were voluntarily turned in by the civilian population, not the ex-combatants (PRAC, 2007). In all, very few weapons were collected for the cost of the project. The recuperated arms represent but a small fraction of the arms currently circulating in CAR.

There remains a discrepancy between the list of ex-combatants the PRAC verified as eligible for the programme and those ex-combatants actually demobilized. Even with the extensive efforts made in the verification process,

Table 21

Weapons collected by the PRAC, 30 June–31 December 2005

Site	Arms	Cartridges	Grenades	Mortar shells	Mines	Rockets	Other effects*
Bangui & environs	371	65,579	1,376	565	5	5	537
Bossangoa & Bozoum	28	4,526	39	0	0	6	89
Sibut & Kaga-Bandoro	20	2,574	14	2	1	2	1
Total	419	72,679	1,429	567	6	13	627

Notes:

Some variation exists in the final tallies for arms collected by the PRAC. The figures given here are as of February 2007.

* Chargers, uniforms, or pieces of weapons.

Source: PRAC (2007)

these eventual differences illustrate how difficult it is to disarm and demobilize armed groups that have long been inactive. Much of the collected armament came from those who had not taken part in any armed group. Some of the armed groups targeted by the PRAC, such as the pro-Patassé militias, were more loose networks than formal entities, and a decade has passed since their creation, during which time they effectively disbanded.²⁵⁰ The PRAC's emphasis on these ex-combatants as beneficiaries, and the apparently few weapons they had to relinquish, prevented some of the people holding arms who lack an affiliation with a defunct armed group from turning in their weapons. The rise of armed groups outside of Bangui at the same time as the PRAC carried out its operations underscores the scope of the weapons proliferation that the programme left unaddressed.

By June 2006 some ex-combatants had launched protests against the PRAC, arguing that the programme was poorly run and that the reintegration assistance they had been promised had fallen far short of expectations. They also accused the programme of an ethnic bias in favour of the Gbaya, Bozizé's affiliation (*Le Confident*, 2006b). Protests occurred throughout the rest of 2006, with ex-combatants massing outside the PRAC's offices. Programme officials explained the unrest as a consequence of the slow disbursal of funds from World

Bank headquarters, leading to delays in provision of reintegration assistance. Whatever the case, it is clear that communication between the various partners in the programme was poor.

Commission Against the Proliferation of Small Arms, for Disarmament and Reintegration (CNPDR)

The CNDDR also aimed to articulate a national strategy for small arms control that would place particular emphasis on civilian armament. With that goal in mind, the CNDDR and UNDP co-organized a National Workshop on the Proliferation of Small Arms in CAR. The workshop took place between 18 and 22 October 2005. The workshop enabled representatives of various ministries and other public sector representatives to create institutional mechanisms for coordinating measures against small arms trafficking. Participants also worked to name the various factors influencing the proliferation of small arms in CAR, the principal actors involved in the trade, and the major axes of a national strategy for small arms control (CNDDR, 2005).

The workshop identified the five main areas that should define the national strategy on small arms:

- the restoration of confidence and security, as well as the reinforcement of the reconciliation process, especially through the professionalization of the defence and security forces;
- the reinforcement of the legislative, regulatory, and institutional aspects of small arms;
- the reinforcement of mechanisms for internal control of small arms, with particular emphasis on the governance of state stockpiles;
- the reduction of the number of small arms in circulation by encouraging civilians to relinquish their weapons, which would then be destroyed; and
- the reinforcement of cooperation mechanisms at the subregional, regional, and international levels.

To coordinate these activities, the workshop recommended the creation of a Commission nationale contre la prolifération des armes légères et de petit calibre, pour le désarmement et la réinsertion (National Commission Against the Proliferation of Small Arms, for Disarmament and Reintegration, CNPDR),

which would replace the former CNDDR with a broader mandate. The new CNPDR will formulate a plan of action taking into account the recommendations of the workshop, as well as the underlying causes of small arms proliferation. It will also design various initiatives under the rubric of 'arms for development' whereby civilians will trade arms for development assistance. The presidential decree creating the CNPDR was finalized in September 2006.²⁵¹

Tripartite Commission (CAR, Cameroon, Chad) on Cross-Border Security

On 25–26 August 2005, representatives of the governments of CAR, Cameroon, and Chad met in Yaoundé to discuss the causes of cross-border insecurity and develop a plan for improving the situation. The meeting resulted in a number of recommendations, including:

- 'Careful deployment of units along high-risk highways and areas;
- Strengthening the capacity of the defence and security forces on the ground (number of men, transport facilities, signals and information);
- Involving the local administrative and traditional authorities in informing and creating awareness among the people;
- Intensifying information exchange on security;
- Notifying one another before carrying out planned operations in the border areas, with the possibility of exchanging liaison officers, using air facilities for observation, and conducting joint operations' (AUPSC, 2005, para. 17).

To ensure that these measures will be fully carried out, the delegates at the meeting recommended that a Tripartite Commission on Cross-Border Security be established. The commission's members would be drawn from defence and security forces in the three countries, as well as local administrative officials (AUPSC, 2005, para. 19).

The Commission's resolutions were quickly implemented. The measure enabling the three countries' security forces to cross their common borders in pursuit of armed groups and other criminals initially helped prevent any of the armed groups currently operating in CAR from establishing long-term bases (UNSC, 2006a, para. 26). Chadian soldiers currently patrol the cross-border area around Goré, for instance. However, beginning in 2006, north-

eastern-based rebels operated from bases in the Gordil–Tiringoulou area. This deterioration shows how patrolling such a vast, sparsely populated terrain remains far beyond the state security sector’s capabilities, even given the regional coordination.

Conclusion

Between 1996 and 2003 a series of events profoundly transformed Central African society, and the years since have shown the depth of the challenges that transformation brought about. The government at the time bears responsibility for some of those events, but others were outside of its control. The capacity of the state to regulate the possession and circulation of small arms among civilians dissolved, to become virtually non-existent. The CNPDR began its effort in that regard essentially from scratch. The influx of small arms in large parts of the country represents a huge challenge for national security and the maintenance of public order. The eagerness of the population to relinquish their weapons in exchange for some form of economic assistance is a sign that a concerted effort could improve the situation, however.



People gather at a hospital in Kabo, December 2007. © Spencer Platt/ Getty Images

The UNSC has recognized that the 'conflicts in Chad, Darfur and CAR are increasingly interlinked' (2006b, para. 53), and is considering the deployment of UN blue helmets to Birao, in north-east CAR. Such a presence could help control the porous border and contribute to securing the full measure of the country's terrain. Steps taken thus far to control the proliferation of small arms have achieved modest progress in some areas. But, somewhat paradoxically, such programmes have perhaps mainly served to draw attention to how the path to security across CAR's territory appears ever-lengthening. ■

ANNEX

Chronology of Key Events in CAR's History

1894

France declares the region now known as CAR the 'Ubangi-Shari dependency'.

1910

Ubangi-Shari becomes part of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa.

1946

France grants the territory a national assembly and representation in the French parliament; Barthélemy Boganda becomes the first Central African to serve in the French parliament.

1 December 1958

France grants the territory self-government within French Equatorial Africa; Boganda assumes the position of prime minister.

29 March 1959

Boganda dies in a plane crash.

13 August 1960

France grants CAR independence; David Dacko assumes the presidency.

1962

Creation of the FACA.

5 January 1964

Dacko wins presidential election in which he is the only candidate.

31 December 1965

Bokassa leads the ambush and assassination of the commander of the gendarmerie, Jean Izamo.

1 January 1966

The FACA take control of Bangui and Bokassa assumes power.

10 November 1967

A French paratrooper detachment (the 11th Intervention Division) is sent to Bangui at Bokassa's request; France describes the move as a 'tropical country acclimatization exercise'.

11–12 April 1969

Arrest and execution of Lt. Col. Alexandre Banza, accused of a plot against the president's life.

4 March 1972

The CAR government names Bokassa president for life.

20 May 1974

Bokassa pronounces himself a marshal.

3 February 1976

The commander of the air force (Bokassa's son-in-law), his brother, and another officer attempt to assassinate Bokassa at the airport in Bangui. All three are killed in the ensuing violent crackdown.

November 1976

Military officers again attempt to assassinate Bokassa.

4 December 1977

Bokassa declares himself emperor of the 'Central African Empire' in a lavish ceremony.

19–22 January 1979

Students and unemployed youth demonstrate in Bangui. The government responds with violent repression, backed up by 300 Zairian paratroopers sent by Mugabe to support his CAR ally.

18–19 April 1979

Some 100 children aged 8–16 rounded up and killed, some by Bokassa himself. Amnesty International makes the massacre known to the world in a report issued a few weeks later.

17 August 1979

France, bowing to international pressure, stops all but humanitarian aid to CAR.

20–21 September 1979

French soldiers, facing little resistance, take over the airport and city of Bangui while Bokassa visits Tripoli.

27 September 1979

David Dacko forms a government of which he is the head.

19–24 December 1980

Bokassa condemned to death *in absentia* by a Bangui court.

9 January 1981

320 French troops dispatched to Bangui to support the struggling president.

21 July 1981

Marshal law declared.

1 September 1981

Under pressure from Col. Manton, Dacko cedes power, naming Chief of Staff André Kolingba president.

2 September 1981

Kolingba forms the CMRN.

3 March 1982

Minister of Information François Bozizé announces on the state radio that there has been a coup and that Ange-Félix Patassé is the new president.

4 March 1982

The Presidential Guard, led by Col. Manton, represses the attempted coup.

January 1985

24 poachers arrested and elephant hunting is formally forbidden by law.

19 September 1993

Kolingba loses presidential election to Ange-Félix Patassé, a prime minister under Bokassa.

18 April 1996

200–300 FACA soldiers mutiny in protest at salary arrears; payment from France brings an uncertain calm to the situation.

18 May 1996

For a second time, FACA mutiny in protest at salary arrears, this time drawing in some 700 disgruntled soldiers to their cause.

26 May 1996

The rebellion ends with peace accords granting amnesty to the mutineers and allowing them to retain their weapons, signed in Bangui.

15 November 1996

Third FACA mutiny; some 800 soldiers join the cause.

26 November 1996

Mutineers demand that Patassé cede the presidency.

4 January 1997

Two French soldiers killed by mutineers; French troops launch violent reprisal.

25 January 1997

Signing of the Bangui Accords, providing for an inter-African peacekeeping force in CAR.

12 February 1997

MISAB peacekeeping force dispatched to CAR; disarmament initiative starts.

20–22 June 1997

Confrontations between mutineers and MISAB peacekeepers leave 100–200 dead, but bring political calm for a time.

15 April 1998

MISAB replaced by MINURCA; weapons collection programmes continue and MINURCA remains until February 2000. As part of a major reduction in the French military presence in Africa, the final contingent of French troops leaves CAR.

November 2000

180,000 civil servants strike in protest at the 29 months' salary arrears they are owed. The strike lasts nearly five months.

December 2001

CEN-SAD peacekeepers arrive.

27–28 May 2001

Coup attempt by Kolingba and supporters; Libyan soldiers, with MLC fighters, help keep Patassé in power.

7 June 2001

Combat ends in Bangui.

26 October 2001

François Bozizé fired from his position as Chief of Staff of the armed forces, accused of involvement in the May coup attempt.

3–8 November 2001

Fighting breaks out in Bangui between soldiers loyal to Bozizé and those loyal to Patassé; with the help of 180 Libyan soldiers, Patassé chases Bozizé and his supporters northward out of the city and calm returns to the capital.

23 January 2002

PNDR commences.

October 2002

Unsuccessful coup attempt by armed forces Chief of Staff François Bozizé; he retreats north to regroup and assemble more fighters and weapons.

October 2002

Bemba and MLC fighters return, committing rape, looting, and murder with impunity.

January 2003

CEN-SAD replaced by CEMAC.

15 February 2003

Chadian President Idriss Deby visits Bangui, which the public perceives as a visit of reconciliation; the same day MLC troops start pulling out of CAR.

15 March 2003

Patassé ousted in successful coup by Bozizé.

September–October 2003

National Truth and Reconciliation Commission holds hearings; former leaders apologize for their past mistakes, but Patassé is not invited.

4 December 2004

New constitution approved with 90 per cent of the vote in a referendum.

December 2004

PNDR ends.

24 May 2005

Bozizé declared the winner of 8 May presidential elections.

June 2005

PRAC begins.

25–26 April 2006

An Antonov cargo plane, originating from Sudan, commandeers an airstrip at the northern CAR town of Tiringoulou, offloading armed men and military equipment.

26–27 June 2006

Members of the FACA and FOMUC clash with rebels in the town of Gordil, leaving at least 33 dead.

September 2006

CNDDR becomes CNPDR.

30 October–November 2006

Rebels seize Birao and other towns in north-east.

27 November 2006

French soldiers and FACA retake Birao; other rebel-held towns return to the state in following days.

Chronology sources: Kalck (1992; 2005); Balencie and de la Grange (2001); various IRIN news articles

Endnotes

- 1 The term 'small arms' encompasses the following weapons: revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, and light machine guns. Light weapons are defined as heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of less than 100 mm calibre (UNGA, 1997). The *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects* highlights a wide range of negative consequences associated with the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons. These include: increasing the intensity of contemporary conflicts; diminishing the security of vulnerable groups such as women and children or refugees and internally displaced persons; increasing the violence associated with large-scale criminal activity (and the concomitant burden on the criminal justice system); eroding development gains and the prospects for socio-economic development; threatening humanitarian relief operations and workers; and increasing the public health burden associated with firearms violence (UNGA, 2001).
- 2 Bozizé was one of the authors of an unsuccessful coup against the Kolingba regime in March 1982, which aimed to install Patassé as president (Kalck, 1992, p. 33). After failing in his bid for the presidency in 1993, he became Patassé's chief of staff of the armed forces. Throughout the army mutinies of the 1990s, he was known as a loyal supporter of Patassé (Jones, 2003; Kalck, 2005, p. 33).
- 3 The name Ubangi-Shari (also written as Oubangui-Chari) comes from the name of the river that represents much of the territory's southern border, the Ubangui, and headwaters of the Shari river, which empties into Lake Chad and originates in the town of the same name in the northern prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran.
- 4 Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjou, was only the second head of state on the continent to voluntarily relinquish power (the first having been Senegal's Leopold Senghor, who stepped down in 1981). Ahidjou had a change of heart and led a coup attempt the following year, but it was quickly put down.
- 5 Elements of the army mutinied on three separate occasions in 1996: in April, May, and November (McFarlane and Malan, 1998, pp. 49–51).
- 6 Author interviews with knowledgeable sources, Bangui, June and December 2003.
- 7 Barthélemy Boganda, universally recognized as the 'father' of the country even though he was killed in a mysterious plane crash a year prior to independence, was also an Ngbaka (from Bobangui). Both Dacko and Bokassa claimed to be related to Boganda, although some have questioned Dacko's ties.
- 8 The brutal methods employed by government forces during the Bokassa era may have deterred opponents from taking up arms.
- 9 One group, the Mouvement centrafricain de libération nationale (MCLN), was created in 1979, but initially received training and equipment outside of CAR. It was quickly uprooted

and neutralized after an attack in Bangui in 1981. The Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain (MLPC), a CAR-based political party, began to receive arms after the 1981 general election (in which it failed in its bid to capture the presidency). See Part II.

- 10 The acronym 'AK-47' refers explicitly to the Kalashnikov AK-47. Because the term is often used to refer to a variety of weapons that are derived from the basic AK-47 design, the term 'Kalashnikov' is used here to refer to these derivatives and not to a specific model or country of origin.
- 11 The number of French troops stationed in CAR was believed to be some 8,000 by the end of the 1980s (Decalo, 1989, p. 171), up from a little more than 1,000 earlier in the decade (Keegan, 1983, p. 100).
- 12 Security Council resolution 1159 authorized MINURCA on 27 March 1998 to be established on 15 April 1998 (UNSC, 1998c). The French troops stationed at the bases were withdrawn and preparations for the closing of the bases made during the month-long Operation Cigogne (stork), in preparation for the official handover of the bases to the CAR authorities by 6 April 1998 (Kalck, 2005, p. liv). French troops participated in MINURCA, which benefited from supplemental French military support not part of the mission (see, for example, UNSC 1998d; 1998e).
- 13 The figures for the air force come from *Frères d'Armes* (2000), p. 28. The strength of the navy comes from an author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 14 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported in 2001 that 1,250 former FACA troops crossed into the DRC after the failed coup (UNHCR, 2001b). Around 80 per cent went to a town some 100 kilometres from Zongo, across the Ubangui River from Bangui. The other 20 per cent or so remained in Congolese villages along the river (UNHCR, 2001a).
- 15 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 3 September 2003.
- 16 The resident French diplomatic adviser, in place since Operation Barracuda in 1979, was Col. Jean-Claude Manton. He instigated Kolingba's ascent to power in 1981 without consulting his government in Paris, and, as head of the Presidential Guard, suppressed the attempted coup in 1982. He and the French ambassador were pulled from the country in 1993 following civilian unrest due to disgruntlement with the Kolingba government, a move that paved the way for a return to democracy (Milburn, 2004; Kalck, 2005, p. 128). While he served in Bangui, some observers dubbed Col. Manton the 'President of Kolingba' for his broad reach over the government's operations, including at times negotiating on its behalf (Decalo, 1989, p. 169). Other sobriquets included 'the Viceroy' and 'Clint Eastwood' (Kalck, 2005, p. 128).
- 17 Interview by Nicolas Florquin with well-informed source, Geneva, September 2004.
- 18 Interview by Louisa Lombard with well-informed source, Bangui, December 2006.
- 19 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 9 April 2003.
- 20 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 3 September 2003.

- 21 Author interview with Ernest Latakpi, General Director, Police Administration, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 19 December 2003. There are plans to create two additional '*directions*': Direction des études (DE) and Direction de la surveillance territoire (DST).
- 22 Author interview with Ernest Latakpi, General Director, Police Administration, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 23 Author interview with Ernest Latakpi, General Director, Police Administration, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 24 Author interview with Louis Mazangue, Director, OCRB, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 18 February 2003.
- 25 Author interview with Ernest Latakpi, General Director, Police Administration, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 26 Author interview with Ernest Latakpi, General Director, Police Administration, Ministry of Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 27 The Gardes forestiers, Gardes chasse, and Personnels des circonscriptions minières de diamant, respectively.
- 28 Author interview with Michel Bonannée, water and forest engineer, head of mission, Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing, Government of CAR, Bangui, 17 December 2003.
- 29 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Jean-Yves Socart, Director, Powers Security Company, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 30 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 3 September 2003.
- 31 Author interview with knowledgeable source by telephone, 5 April 2005.
- 32 In January 1979 the government used deadly force in response to protests against Bokassa's orders for students to wear school uniforms, which had also led to some looting. Some 200 civilians were killed. In a separate altercation in April 1979, security forces rounded up elementary and high-school students, which resulted in the massacre of more than 100 young people. Bokassa was widely believed to have participated in the killings (O'Toole, 1986, pp. 53–54).
- 33 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 34 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, World Wildlife Fund (US), 6 August 2003, by telephone.
- 35 Interview by Louisa Lombard with knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 36 On 15 March 1981 Dacko won the presidency with a majority of less than 0.25% in an election marked by widespread fraud. Violence erupted in Bangui over the result, and the country remained instable in the following months (Kalck, 1992, pp. xl–xli).
- 37 Interview with Jean-Pierre Waboe, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Health, Government of CAR, Bangui, 26 June 2003, courtesy of Louisa Lombard.
- 38 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Tom Zoellner, 7 August 2006, by telephone.
- 39 Written correspondence with knowledgeable source, 2003.
- 40 Capt. Serge Kolingba and former FACA lieutenant Antoine Bodo were the suspected leaders of a plot to create a Yakoma militia. Bodo was murdered at his home on the night of 18–19 November 1999, along with four suspected witnesses, and their bodies were dumped beside the road. Press reports and human rights groups alleged that the killers were members of FORSDIR (US DOS, 2000).

- 41 'Oscar Leaba' posits Kolingba did not instigate the coup, but rather was a front man doing others' bidding. See Leaba (pseudonym), 2001, p. 170.
- 42 Author interview with Joseph Ngozo, translator, Embassy of the United States in CAR, June 2003.
- 43 Most of these smaller neighbourhoods have a historic link to a particular region or ethnic group in the country. There are no laws or physical boundaries (other than streets) separating *quartiers*, but people have tended to settle among family members, and over time the ethnic character of these areas has made them distinct. This is so even though intermarriage is not uncommon. Patrilineal descent is prevalent throughout the society.
- 44 Interview by Nicolas Florquin and Louisa Lombard with informed source, Bangui, August 2004.
- 45 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 46 The SCPS provided security for logging companies, diamond mining interests, and those responsible for sensitive deliveries, such as those of money. Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 3 September 2003.
- 47 Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, 31 March 2005.
- 48 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 16 June 2003.
- 49 In fact, Miskine's father was Chadian and his mother was Central African, and he grew up in Chad. Interview by Louisa Lombard with Marielle Debos, Ph.D. candidate in political science, Sciences-Po, New York, 9 January 2007.
- 50 Author interviews with knowledgeable sources, Bangui, February and June 2003.
- 51 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 3 September 2003.
- 52 Under an October 2002 agreement, Bangui and N'Djamena committed themselves to ensuring that Bozizé would leave Chad for France and that Miskine would leave CAR for Togo. See UN OCHA (2002a).
- 53 Allegations were made in 2005 that Miskine was the head of a rebel group in northern CAR, the Forces pour la démocratie du peuple centrafricain (FDPC). This group took responsibility for clashes with the FACA near the town of Débora in June 2005 (Alwidha, 2005). Miskine has subsequently adopted the name 'Brahim Moustapha' and heads an armed group perpetrating continued attacks in the north (see Epilogue) (UNSC, 2006a, para. 25; *Le Confident*, 2006a).
- 54 Author interview with well-informed source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 55 Interview with Maj. Anicet Saulet, Officer in Charge of Special Duties, Ministry of Territorial Administration, Government of CAR, Bangui, 20 December 2003.
- 56 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and Jean-Pierre Perez, Military Advisor to the President, Central African Republic, 22 October 2005; Interview by Louisa Lombard with Alain Pietrantoni, Security Officer, World Food Programme (WFP), Bangui, 17 December 2006.

- 57 *Quartier* residents, who had formed their self-defence group at the initiative of Col. Nambou André Marie of the Ministry of Water and Forests (ID+, 2003).
- 58 Author interview with Thierry Arthur Mokonou, security guard, King Security Service, Bangui, 16 December 2003.
- 59 It did not prove possible to locate or meet with Golf and Secuveille representatives during a December 2003 visit to Bangui.
- 60 Author interviews with Ghislain Bandakouma, General Director, Boxer (Security Company), and Joachim Coles Daouda, Director for Administration and Finances, Bureau centrafricain de gardiennage et de surveillance (BCAGS), Bangui, 17 and 18 December 2003, respectively.
- 61 Author interview with Dina Aziali, secretary, AGIP (Agence de gardiennage d'intervention de protection et de sécurité privée)-Cobra, Bangui, 16 December 2003.
- 62 As of December 2006 only Fox still equipped its guards with blank-firing pistols; BCAGS and Cobra no longer used the weapons, and the latter had at most a few employees. Interview by Louisa Lombard with Jean-Yves Socart, Director, Powers Security, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 63 Author interview with Roger Dibert-Kongba, inspector, Fox sécurité privée, Bangui, 18 December 2003.
- 64 Author interview with Dina Aziali, secretary, AGIP-Cobra, Bangui, 16 December 2003.
- 65 See Blom, Prins, and Yamindou (2004).
- 66 Bangui was discussing conservation projects in the Bangassou forest and the Chinko Basin.
- 67 Author interview with Michel Bonannée, water and forest engineer, head of mission, Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing, Government of CAR, Bangui, 17 December 2003.
- 68 Author interview with Michel Bonannée, water and forest engineer, head of mission, Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing, Government of CAR, Bangui, 17 December 2003.
- 69 Author interviews with: Raymond Mbitikon, head, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Bangui, 18 December 2003; Gérard Motkin, administrative and financial director, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Bangui, 18 December 2003; and Alain Penelon, head, Ngotto Forest component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 70 Written correspondence with Olivier Feneteau, technical adviser, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, 7 August 2003.
- 71 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, World Wildlife Fund (US), 6 August 2003, by telephone.
- 72 These figures are based on the ratios 886:555 and 61:315, respectively. It is assumed that the weapons of French personnel attached to these services were included in the totals (68 French nationals were attached to the gendarmerie and 7 to the police). If these French personnel kept their weapons separately, the ratios for the Central African gendarmerie and police would rise to 1.82 and 0.20, respectively. The ratios for the Republican Guard and the army were nearly identical: 1.35 (907:672), and 1.34 (1,017:761), respectively. The ratio for the Republican Guard would not change if the two French personnel attached to the service had kept their weapons outside of the state armouries; but if this were true for the 110 French personnel attached to the army, that service's multiplier would rise to 1.56 (SHAT, 1963, pp. 34, 38, 49, 57, 62).

- 73 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 11 December 2003.
- 74 Interview by Nicolas Florquin with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, 23 March 2005, by telephone (courtesy of Nicolas Florquin).
- 75 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, 23 March 2005, by telephone.
- 76 Author interview with Lucy Jones, former Reuters correspondent, 5 August 2003, by telephone.
- 77 Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, 22 March 2005.
- 78 Author interviews with knowledgeable sources, Bangui, February and June 2003.
- 79 For more information on the Dominion of Melchizedek and a copy of the letter dated 3 June 1993 apparently on CAR government stationery and signed by Kolingba that recognizes the Dominion's sovereignty and calls for a 'mutually beneficial relationship between our two countries', see <<http://www.melchizedek.com/images/centralafrican.jpg>>. Written correspondence between the author and Sir Richard James McDonald, President of the Dominion of Melchizedek, 1 August 2007.
- 80 According to UN Comtrade, Bangui has reported to have received small arms, parts, and ammunition from 14 countries: Belgium, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, France, Germany (both the former Federal Republic of Germany and the current unified Germany), Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. An equal number of countries have reported transferring such *matériel* to Bangui, according to UN Comtrade: Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (both the former Federal Republic and the present unified Germany), Lebanon, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Spain, and Switzerland. CAR's reported imports often differ significantly from supplier countries' reported exports to CAR. Courtesy of research undertaken by NISAT/PRIO. Written correspondence with Nic Marsh, 11 August 2006.
- 81 In 1995 Romania supplied USD 1.125 million worth of light weapons and larger ammunition (930690). This category has 86 sub-categories and includes light weapons as well as larger conventional weapons. For more on this category see Glatz (2006, p. 72).
- 82 France was concerned that President Bokassa was prepared to grant Libya a military base in CAR, as well as access to uranium deposits, in exchange for financial and military aid, and that Libyan President Moammar Qadhafi appeared amenable to such a deal. France viewed such a strategic relationship as a threat to its access to uranium deposits in CAR (Moose, 1985, p. 81).
- 83 Also important to the maintenance of stability was Col. Jean-Claude Manton, a French military adviser in Bangui, whose reach across the government was broad; he "takes key decisions, is responsible for security and issues passports. No change in the country can take place without his approval . . . Emperors and generals may come and go, but the French presence remains" (Decalo, 1989, p. 171, quoting an *Africa Confidential* report).
- 84 This is not to suggest that France was responsible for its ineffectiveness. Indeed, only France provided military and financial assistance to the force. Reports of Chinese and German assistance are inaccurate. Both countries pledged aid, but this assistance had yet to be disbursed by the time of the March 2003 coup.

- 85 Author interview with Col. Patrice Sartre, military adviser, Secretary General of National Defence, Office of the Prime Minister, Paris, 18 June 2003.
- 86 Interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister, Ministry of Defence, Central African government, 9 April 2003, Geneva.
- 87 Interview with Lt.-Col. Daniel Taes, Defense Attaché, French Embassy to the Central African Republic, 18 February 2003, Bangui.
- 88 Qadhafi offered training in Libya to several hundred members of the MCLN, headed by Rudolphe Iddi Lala. In 1979 Qadhafi sent MCLN cadres to Chad to fight on behalf of his ally, Goukkoni Weddeye. Iddi Lala eventually made his way back to CAR, where he orchestrated the July 1981 bombing of a Bangui cinema. The MCLN was rooted out and shortly after the blast ceased to be a coherent force or threat. Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 89 One of the reasons given for France's decision to support Bokassa's overthrow, besides his regime's gross human rights abuses, was Bokassa's close ties to Tripoli.
- 90 Written correspondence with Siemon Wezeman, researcher, Arms Transfers Project, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2 June 2003.
- 91 O'Toole notes that Kolingba's interest in re-engaging Tripoli might best be explained as a calculated move to win greater assistance from France. Dacko had previously severed diplomatic relations with Libya in January 1980 (O'Toole, 1986, pp.137–38).
- 92 Patassé had returned from exile in Togo to his birthplace, Paoua. He was still smarting over the March 1981 national elections, which he—and many others including impartial observers—believed Dacko had rigged, thereby denying Patassé victory. Ironically, a year later Bozizé, then Minister of Information, announced a coup d'état in support of Patassé. However, the announcement turned out to be premature as the Presidential Guard, under French command, successfully intervened in support of Kolingba (Kalck, 1992, p. xlii).
- 93 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003. The area of this activity lay south of Sahr and Doba, the capitals of the southern Chadian prefectures of Moyen-Chari and Logone Orientale, respectively, and north of the Central African towns of Paoua and Bazoua in Ouham-Pendé and Ouham prefectures, respectively.
- 94 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Washington, DC, 2003.
- 95 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Washington, DC, 2003.
- 96 Some analysts value the *matériel* at more than USD 1 billion (see Foltz, 1995, p. 29). Iraq purportedly benefited most from this windfall. Author interview with William J. Foltz, H.J. Heinz Professor of African Studies and Political Science, Yale University, 25 August 2003, by telephone.
- 97 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, February 2003.
- 98 Author interview with Maj. Nambo Kette, cabinet chief of the head of the general staff, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 99 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, February 2003.
- 100 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, February 2003.
- 101 Indeed, Bangui denies having used or possessed mines (UN OCHA, 2002b). CAR signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use Stockpiling Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction on 8 November 2002.

- 102 In this regard CAR is not alone: many poor African countries frequently switch diplomatic relations between China and Taiwan. Examples include Chad and Liberia.
- 103 CAR would have taken notice of China's lack of enthusiasm for the proposed UN peacekeeping mission in Guatemala. China originally vetoed the resolution—Guatemala maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan. China subsequently relented and approved the mission, but ensured that it would be small in scale and in existence for a short period.
- 104 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 9 April 2003.
- 105 Interview by Louisa Lombard with knowledgeable source, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 106 In addition to disbursing development assistance and establishing business interests (see Decter, 1977, pp. 36–37), Israel created and trained the *Jeunesse pionnière nationale* (National Youth Service), a youth corps designed to inculcate civic pride and national identity. The trainers tended to be military officers. A 1963 document in the French military archives detailing arms holdings with the armed forces, gendarmerie, and police did not mention any Israeli weapons or provision of weapons from Israel (SHAT, 1963).
- 107 In his extensive review of Israeli arms transfers, Aaron Klieman states only that Israel is 'regarded' as having provided military assistance to CAR, but offers no further information (1985, p. 139).
- 108 Written correspondence between Louisa Lombard and Allard Blom, Senior Programme Officer, WWF, 2 August 2006.
- 109 Bokassa's relationship with Romania was notorious for another reason. He became besotted with a Romanian dancer renowned for her beauty, and brought her back to Bangui in 1975, against her will, to join a harem that would eventually number eight wives and more than 30 mistresses of many nationalities. She was killed before the decade was out, allegedly by Bokassa himself (Decalo, 1989, p. 177 n. 91; author interviews).
- 110 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 9 April 2003.
- 111 According to Buijtenhuijs (1998, pp. 22–23), in Chad, the 'north' commonly refers to some three-quarters of the country's territory, while the 'south' comprises just the five southernmost prefectures. Citizens' relative adherence to Islam largely influences this definition. The populations of these two regions are roughly equal.
- 112 Fissures were apparent well beforehand, perhaps the most significant being when Habré broke ranks to join the Malloum government in 1978.
- 113 In 1981, for example, there were no fewer than 17 politico-military factions contending for power in Chad (Foltz, 1995, p. 17).
- 114 Goukouni succeeded the first head of the GUNT, Lol Mahamat Choua, who ruled briefly from April to November 1979.
- 115 The Comité permanent, a southern-led administration that paralleled the GUNT, sold its main export, cotton, through Cameroon and CAR (Buijtenhuijs, 1998, p. 25).
- 116 For background on the conflict, US and French military support for Habré, and Libyan assistance to Goukouni, see René Lemarchand (1985).
- 117 Kamougué had led the gendarmerie, whereas Djogo had been head of the army.

- 118 Samuel Decalo put the number of Kamougué's supporters that crossed into CAR with him
at 300–500 (1997, p. x, p. 66).
- 119 Written correspondence with knowledgeable source in Bangui, July 2006.
- 120 Kolingba responded by sending the FACA to Paoua, the most important town in the area. The
soldiers retaliated savagely against the population (Bigo, 1988, p. 280). Paoua, Patassé's birth-
place and his base of political support, was an area hostile to the Kolingba government.
- 121 Other Codos groups included Thunder Red Codos, Coconut Palms, Hope, and Green Eagles
(Tartter, 1990, p. 220).
- 122 Rita M. Byrnes, for example, describes the Codos as being 'nominally' united by Kotiga.
- 123 Author interview with Gen (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, Bangui.
- 124 The planned deployment of an additional 1,500 Sudanese soldiers did not take place.
- 125 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of
CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 126 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Alexis Mbolinani, 19 December 2006.
- 127 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, December 2003. In anticipation of the peace
accord to be signed by the NIF and the SPLM, UNHCR officials reopened the Mboki office in
February 2004, hoping to organize the voluntary repatriation of some of the estimated 37,000
Sudanese citizens living in CAR (UN OCHA, 2004c).
- 128 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, February 2003.
- 129 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Augustino Attilio, Chairman, Sudanese Refugee Com-
mittee of Mboki, 15 December 2006.
- 130 This was not the first time Mobutu's troops had come to CAR. In 1979, when Bokassa faced
rioting by unpaid civil servants, students, and unemployed youth that reportedly left 100 mem-
bers of the Imperial Guard dead, Mobutu dispatched 300 soldiers, carrying machine guns
and mortars that they used against the population, to assist his ally (Decalo, 1989, p. 162).
- 131 Author interview with former FAZ soldier, Bangui, December 2003.
- 132 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, February 2003.
- 133 Author interview with Gen. (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, Bangui, 14 February 2003.
He added that an additional 6,000–7,000 family members and non-combatants accompanied
them.
- 134 Author interview with former FAZ and former FAC soldiers, Bangui, February and June 2003.
- 135 Author interview with Anicet Saulet, Officer in Charge of Special Duties, Ministry of Territo-
rial Administration, Government of CAR, Bangui, 20 December 2003.
- 136 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government
of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 137 Author interview with Maurice Regonnessa, Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Bangui,
11 February 2003.
- 138 Author interview with Col. Jules-Bernard Ouandé, Minister Delegate, Head of Security and
Disarmament, Ministry of the Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 20 December 2003.
- 139 Allegations that Bemba was using CAR territory for arms and diamond smuggling purposes
(Dietrich, 2003, p. 5) might help explain his interest in helping Patassé retain power.
- 140 The MLC troops were in CAR fewer than two weeks (UN OCHA, 2001).

- 141 The number of MLC troops sent to CAR has been reported to be as high as 3,000 (see UN OCHA, 2002b).
- 142 Author interview with peacekeepers, United Nations Mission de l'Organisation de Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo (Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUC), Mbandaka, February 2003.
- 143 Author interviews with MONUC officials, Kinshasa and Mbandaka, February 2003.
- 144 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Paris, 16 June 2003.
- 145 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 146 Author interview with Rwandan refugee and former Zairian soldiers, Bangui, February and June 2003. The number of ex-FAZ who entered CAR via the RoC is considerably less than those who crossed into CAR directly from Zaire/DRC.
- 147 For an analysis on the military strength and support for Lissouba's Cocoyes, Sassou-Nguesso's Cobras, and Kolélas's Ninjas, see Demetriou, Muggah, and Biddle (2002, p. 55).
- 148 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, World Wildlife Fund (US), 10 June 2003, by telephone.
- 149 Author interview with Olivier Feneteau, Technical Advisor, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Paris, 2 September 2003.
- 150 Written correspondence with Allard Blom, Head, Gabon Office, ECOFAC, 7 August 2003. Blom wishes it to be understood that he is writing in his personal capacity and not as a representative of ECOFAC.
- 151 Written correspondence with Allard Blom, Senior Programme Officer, WWF, 2 August 2006.
- 152 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, World Wildlife Fund (US), 10 June 2003, by telephone.
- 153 Author interview with Olivier Feneteau, Technical Advisor, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Paris, 2 September 2003. Feneteau has come across two 25-shell boxes in Vakaga.
- 154 Author interview with Rwandan refugee, Bangui, 18 December 2003.
- 155 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, February 2003.
- 156 Author interview with ex-FAR officer, Bangui, 16 December 2003.
- 157 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, December 2003.
- 158 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, December 2003.
- 159 Author interview with UNHCR official, Bangui, December 2003.
- 160 Roundtable discussion with members of the CTD and PNDR, Bangui, 28 June 2003.
- 161 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Alain Pietrantoni, Field Security Adviser, WFP, Bangui, 18 December 2006.
- 162 Written correspondence with Allard Blom, Senior Programme Officer, WWF, 2 August 2006.
- 163 Author interview with Maj. Namboro Kette, cabinet chief of the head of the general staff, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 164 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 9 April 2003.
- 165 Interview by Louisa Lombard with native of Haut-Mbomou prefecture, Bangui, June 2003, Bangui.

- 166 Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui (MISAB), 1997–98; La Mission des Nations Unies en République centrafricaine (MINURCA), 1998–2000; Peacekeeping force of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), 2001–03; Peacekeeping force of the Communauté économique et monétaire de l’Afrique centrale (CEMAC), 2003 to date.
- 167 The organization’s French acronym is COMESSA, for Communauté des états sahélo-sahariens. While this term is sometimes used in the literature, ‘CEN-SAD’ is much more common. It represents the first two Arabic letters of the organization’s name in Arabic. CEN-SAD is used in this study.
- 168 Author interview with Lieut.-Col. Dominique Kouerey, former Head of Plans, Headquarters, MISAB, Libreville, 22 June 2003.
- 169 Author interview with Gen. (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, Libreville, 19 June 2003.
- 170 Author interview with Rear-Admiral Martin Mavoungou Bayonne, Force Commander, CEMAC, Bangui, 26 June 2003.
- 171 Only slightly more than 5% of the country’s inhabitants live in Haut-Mbomou, Haute-Kotto, and Vakaga prefectures (UN OCHA, 2003c, p. 9). Jones (2002) reported, for example, that the citizens of Mboki, a town in Haut-Mbomou prefecture, had not received any mail since 1974.
- 172 Central Africans recall that through the 1970s travellers could traverse the country in saloon cars, unimaginable today when highway bandits and impassable roads predominate.
- 173 Interview by Louisa Lombard with official, community hospital, Bangui, June 2003. Statistics for the March 2003 coup were not available at the time of the interview.
- 174 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Cecile Koyangbanda, Director, Friendship Hospital, Bangui, 26 June 2003.
- 175 Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, June 2006.
- 176 Written correspondence with Allard Blom, Senior Programme Officer, WWF, 2 August 2006.
- 177 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Ione Bertocchi, Director, Ngaoundaye Hospital, Bangui, 27 August 2004 (used with the permission of UNDP, Bangui).
- 178 The massacre of the Chadian nationals became a pretext for Déby to dispatch Chadian soldiers to CAR to retaliate against Patassé. Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, June 2006.
- 179 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, WWF (US), 10 June 2003, by telephone.
- 180 Written correspondence with Fred Duckworth, professional hunter, Safaria, 12 September 2003.
- 181 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Mikhail Morchine, Director, APFC, 11 December 2006, Bangui.
- 182 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Andre Roux, professional hunter, Swanepol and Scandrol Safaris, 19 December 2006, Bangui.
- 183 To all intents and purposes, the distinction between ‘poaching’ and the ‘bush-meat trade’ is a question of political correctness. The term ‘poaching’ has a negative connotation, suggesting heartless people who prey on defenceless animals for crass commercial gain. Those trading in bush meat, meanwhile, are often viewed as impoverished, kind-hearted village folk trying to eke out a living. The difference, of course, is lost on the animals.

- 184 Author interview with Richard Carroll, Director, Africa and Madagascar Program, WWF (US), 10 June 2003, by telephone.
- 185 Written correspondence with Fred Duckworth, professional hunter, Safaria, 12 September 2003.
- 186 Interview by Louisa Lombard with knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 187 Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, June 2006.
- 188 Many victims of criminal activity, including armed robbery, choose not to file a report, as they believe that the police and the state are powerless to do anything about the problem. Interview by Louisa Lombard with knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 189 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Oryemba Gilles, scribe, Begoua village, Begoua, 26 June 2003.
- 190 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a knowledgeable source, Bangui, June 2003.
- 191 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Marc-André Cahlik, owner, transportation company, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 192 Interview by Louisa Lombard with civil society leader, Bangui, June 2003.
- 193 Author interview with police superintendent Yves-Valentine Gbeyoro, Director, OCRB, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 194 Author interview with Controller General Louis Mazangue, Director, OCRB, Ministry of the Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 18 February 2003.
- 195 Author interview with police superintendent Yves-Valentin Gbeyoro, Director, OCRB, Ministry of the Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 27 June 2003.
- 196 Author interview with Guy Guernas, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR, Bangui, 14 February 2003.
- 197 Author interview with Col. Jules Bernard Ouandé, Minister Delegate, Head of Security and Disarmament, Ministry of the Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 20 December 2003.
- 198 Author interview with Olivier Feneteau, Technical Advisor, Zones Cynégétiques Villageoises component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Paris, 2 September 2003.
- 199 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Mikhail Morchine, Director, APFC, 11 December 2006, Bangui.
- 200 Author interview with Alain Penelon, head, Ngotto Forest component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 201 Author interview with Alain Penelon, head, Ngotto Forest component, CAR Office, ECOFAC, Bangui, 19 December 2003.
- 202 'Taux de Recompense' courtesy of PNDR, Bangui, February 2003. The figures are based on an average value of the CFA Franc of 609.33 for July, August, and September 1997, the period when the vast majority of weapons were turned in.
- 203 The figures in the document are supplied as percentages of the weapons seized from Kassai barracks, provided in previous Security Council documents (UNSC, 1998a, p. 7).
- 204 A resumption of hostilities in late June resulted in some 500 deaths and 70,000 internally displaced persons (US DOS, 1998).
- 205 For example, Secretary General Annan wrote in 2001 that, '[t]o date, 95 per cent of the heavy weapons that have been in circulation since the mutinies of 1996 and 1997 have been recovered, compared with 65 per cent of light weapons' (UNSC, 2001, para. 23).

- 206 Author interview with Gen. (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, Libreville, 19 June 2003.
- 207 Author interview with Gen. (Ret.) Mouhammad Hachim Ratanga, Libreville, 19 June 2003.
- 208 Author interview with Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister of Defence, Government of CAR, Geneva, 8 April 2003.
- 209 In January 2003, USD 1.96 million had been secured from donor countries and the UN. Canada, Germany, Italy, and Norway together contributed more than half of this amount, with UNDP covering the rest. UNDP on behalf of PNDR was seeking an additional USD 3.2 million for the programme (UNDP, 2003b, p. 10).
- 210 Author interview with Col. Alphonse Mombeka, Coordinator of Disarmament, Sub-Ministry for Public Security and Disarmament, Ministry of the Interior, Government of CAR, Bangui, 15 December 2003.
- 211 Author interview with knowledgeable source, Bangui, December 2003.
- 212 Author interviews with knowledgeable sources, Bangui. February, June, and December 2003.
- 213 Author interview with Harouna Dan Malam, Chief Technical Assistant, PNDR, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Bangui, 15 December 2003. The PNDR had previously reported that, as of October 2002, 826 individuals had taken part in the programme (UNDP, 2003a, p. 4). The reason for the discrepancy is not clear, but it may be that records were lost during the October 2002 coup attempt.
- 214 Author interview with Harouna Dan Malam, Chief Technical Assistant, PNDR, UNOPS, Bangui, 15 December 2003.
- 215 Gabonese troops were the first to deploy. They were followed by contingents from Congo (Brazzaville) and Equatorial Guinea. Malabo withdrew its troops after the March 2003 coup d'état. Chad subsequently contributed troops to the mission.
- 216 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Commandant Aurélien Mboubi-Kouloubi, Officier Conduite, FOMUC, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 217 Written correspondence with Olivier Nyirubugara, former IRIN correspondent in Bangui, June 2006.
- 218 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 219 The 2004 price for cassava was itself more than double the 2003 price (Panapress, 2004).
- 220 Written correspondence between Louisa Lombard and Désiré Bango Sambia, Head Translator and Interpreter, Embassy of Nigeria in the Central African Republic, 1 June 2005.
- 221 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 222 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 223 Interview by Nicolas Florquin and Louisa Lombard with UN official, Bangui, 25 August 2004 (used with the permission of UNDP, Bangui).
- 224 Interview by Nicolas Florquin and Louisa Lombard with NGO official, Bangui, 26 August 2004 (used with the permission of UNDP, Bangui).
- 225 Written correspondence between Louisa Lombard and informed source, 23 June 2007.
- 226 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Marielle Debos, Ph.D. candidate in political science, Sciences-Po-Paris, New York, 10 January 2007.

- 227 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Marielle Debos, Ph.D. candidate in political science, Sciences-Po-Paris, New York, 9 January 2007.
- 228 Meeting in Bangui in July 2006, the members of the MLPC party named as their head Martin Ziguélé, a reform-minded prime minister under Patassé, to distance themselves from the former president. Ziguélé is a distant relative of Patassé (Melly, 2002, p. 7).
- 229 Interview with Alain Pietrantoni, Security Officer, WFP, Bangui, 17 December 2006.
- 230 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, 13 December 2006; interview with Nicholas Reader, Information Officer, IRIN, Mboki, CAR, 16 December 2006.
- 231 Though the recent insecurity has caused a surge in the number of Central Africans moving into Chad, this migration has been going on for years, during both war and peace, as Central Africans have sent their children to Chad to benefit from its education and health services, which their own government has neglected to provide (UN OCHA, 2005d). Armed Chadian herdsmen steering their cattle onto Central Africans' fields also force the farmers there northward across the border, local residents report (AUPSC, 2005, para. 13).
- 232 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Laurianne Comard, Political/Information Officer, European Union, Bangui, 17 December 2006.
- 233 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, December 2006.
- 234 Allegations have subsequently emerged that Sudan has used CAR territory to supply the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army as well (ICG, 2007, p. 8).
- 235 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 236 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, 11 December 2006.
- 237 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, 11 December 2006.
- 238 Interview by Louisa Lombard with informed source, Bangui, 20 December 2006.
- 239 Internal UN report (not for distribution), March 2007.
- 240 President Bozizé has requested his extradition to Bangui.
- 241 Interview by Louisa Lombard with a well-informed source, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 242 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 243 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 244 Telephone conversation between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 27 October 2005.
- 245 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 246 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and a well-informed source, Bangui, 22 October 2005.
- 247 Interview by Louisa Lombard with knowledgeable source, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 248 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Aurélien Mboubi-Kouloubi, Officier Conduite, FOMUC, Bangui, 13 December 2006.
- 249 Written correspondence between Nicolas Florquin and Fabrice Boussalem, Programme Specialist for Recovery, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), UNDP, 6 March 2006.

- 250 Interview by Nicolas Florquin and Louisa Lombard with ex-Karako militia members, Bangui, 26 August 2004 (used with the permission of UNDP, Bangui).
- 251 Interview by Louisa Lombard with Adama Dian-Barry, Chargée de l'Information et de la gestion des Connaissances – Prévention des Crises et Relèvement, UNDP, Bangui, 12 December 2006.

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