

# JoMUN XV

**Forum:** Disarmament Commission

**Issue:** Improving weapon and ammunition stockpile management in African countries

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## INTRODUCTION

The accidental detonation of an armoury in the city of Lagos, Nigeria, in 2002 burnt down a large section of Northern Lagos; taking the lives of 1,500 people, and displacing and injuring more than 20,000 others. Many of the deaths were of the families of soldiers that lived near the military cantonment containing high-calibre bombs and other explosives.

It is the duty of every state to ensure the protection of its civilians and combat internal or external threats to national security. This requires the military and police force to have a mass inventory of arms and ammunition to use. These stockpiles include small arms, light weapons, ammunition, and other conventional weapons, some of them being abandoned explosive ordnances prior to the nation's independence. However, the weapon inventories themselves present a great threat to civil security in many African states by unforeseen explosions resulting in the death of thousands. According to the Small Arms Survey, in the last three decades (between 1981 and 2016), there have been 80 explosions of ammunition depots in the continent of Africa alone, generating more than 2,500 fatalities and more than 4,200 injuries in total. The roots of the unpredictable explosions lie in a lack of surveillance on the deteriorating ammunition, inappropriate storage facilities, mismanagement or mishandling of arms, environmental effects, and poor security. These are preventable causes with solutions that essentially boil down to a constant evaluation of the state of the ammunition, improved quality of storage facilities, workshops on handling specific arms, considerations in the choice of location, and tighter security measures respectively. The issue in the implementation of these solutions lies in the necessitate for not only the political will for improvement, but expertise and capital. Non-high-income countries – which almost all African countries are classified as by the World Bank – face difficulties in implementing such measures due to economic disadvantages, and many governments lack the will to address this issue.

As the frequency of these unexpected explosions rise, certain states in Africa, such as Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have taken initiative in improving their weapons and ammunition management, however, it remains a prevalent issue today.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### **Surplus Stock**

An excess number of arms and ammunition compared to the number of arms in use.

### **Explosion**

A sudden release of energy resulting in a possible projection of fragments.

### **Armoury**

A place for the storage of weapons.

**Ammunition Stockpile**

A large accumulation of expendable weapons (e.g. grenades, missiles, bombs) and projectiles (bullets and warheads).

**Munitions**

Parts of a weapon system that contains explosives.

**Damaged Munitions**

Malfunctioning parts of a weapon system that contains explosives.

**Abandoned Explosive Ordnance (OXA)**

Arms and ammunition that have not been used in conflict and have been dumped, potentially being armed and prepared for use.

**Explosive Storage Area (ESA)**

A place for the storage of weapons where inspection, preparation, maintenance, and renovation also occurs to the munitions.

**Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)**

Weapons that were not detonated when employed and still contain the potential to explode.

**BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE**

Small arms, light weapons, and other conventional weapons accumulate over the years in a country, some dating before the nation’s independence. These weapons can fire thousands of rounds of ammunition in a short period of a few hours or days. The function of these ammunition stockpiles is to explode, and when neglected, unpredictable explosions occurring usually cause serious property damage and human death.

**MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

**Nigeria**

Since the 2002 explosion at a military cantonment in Lagos causing collateral damage and severe destruction of property, the government of Nigeria has been working with several international organizations, such as the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), to reduce the risk of unplanned explosions, having enhanced several storage facilities, secured thousands of weapons, and provided training for over a hundred military personnel.

**Libya**

Having had 9 unexpected explosions in the past 5 years, Libya has had a track record of having the most frequent explosions at munitions sites out of all the other African states. For this reason, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) are working to assist the state in constructing secure weapons and ammunition storage facilities.

**Somalia**

Through international assistance, Somalia has been noted by the United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to have made significant progress in aligning to the international

standards of weapons and ammunition management. This has been achieved through training workshops for Somali security forces on monitoring weapons and stockpile management to appropriately sited and constructed storage facilities.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

With their last armoury explosion in 2014, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) immediately took measurements to strengthen their security. In 2016, the government requested the UNIDIR to assess national provisions against international standards. This has led to a strategic plan in place to enhance the DRC's existing weapons and ammunition management, facilities programs, and procedures to meet international standards; the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS).

### **South Sudan**

Since becoming an independent state after its civil war, South Sudan has had minimal development in general, alongside an inheritance of high proliferation of arms and ammunition. The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) established a project funded by the German Foreign Office to aid the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control (CSSAC) in the south Sudanese ministry in their duty to improve the storage of weapons and ammunition.

### **Mozambique**

Previously, law enforcement agencies within Mozambique privately monitored the arms in their agency. The storage facilities for these weapons did not meet international standards and proved easy to raid, causing an increase in violent crimes using government-owned arms. Military stockpiles contained excessive amounts of explosives and proved detrimental to the security of neighbouring regions. To combat this, the government worked with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the 2008-2011 Programme, to quantify the lack of development and plan initiatives to begin the change.

### **Tanzania**

Since a series of explosions in 2011 displacing more than 4000 residents and burning down a school, the government of Tanzania has taken huge steps in destroying surplus stocks and requested financial and technical assistance to improve standards and procedures in management.

### **United National Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)**

UNREC provides support for initiatives and other efforts by the African member states to maintain peace, arms limitation, and disarmament.

### **United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)**

UNMAS collaborates with several different UN departments to secure an effective and proactive response to explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions.

### **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)**

UNIDIR creates initiatives and promote action for arms control and disarmament, the prevention of conflict and promotion of peace.

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

*The United Nations and its range of sub-departments, such as the UNMAS, play a significant role in the enhancement of the state of arms and ammunition stockpiles in the continent of Africa. Assistance is provided through a range of means; financial, technical, material, and human.*

### **Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Materials: South African Development Community, 2001**

Signatories – Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – comply with the objectives and initiatives enforced by the protocol on the regional standards on stockpile systems and structures.

### **Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control, and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa, and Bordering States: United Nations Programme of Action Implementation Support System, 2004**

Signatories – Burundi, DRC, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda – are required to “enhance their capacity to manage and maintain secure storage of state-owned small arms and light weapons”.

### **International Ammunition Technical Guidelines: United Nations SaferGuard Programme, 2011**

After receiving a request from the General Assembly, the United Nations has developed international guidelines for the whole lifecycle of safe and secure ammunition stockpile management to combat the destruction unforeseen explosions cause.

### **International Small Arms Control Standards: United Nations Programme of Action, 2012**

This treaty sets in place international standards on the effective control of small arms and light weapons, encompassing manufacturing, to storing, to destroying.

### **Small Arms and Light Weapons: United Nations Resolution 2117, September 26, 2013, Resolution 2117 (S/RES/2117)**

Recognises the misuse of small arms and light weapons and the damaging results of this, and looks to improved physical security measures and management of these arms to prevent further damage.

### **Small Arms and Light Weapons: United Nations Resolution 2220, May 22, 2015, Resolution 2220 (S/RES/2220)**

Newer provisions to solidifying UN cooperation on the issue and promotion of an effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

*The following organizations are effective in their work surrounding this issue, as they tackle it at a local level. While it is vital to persuade national authorities to direct their attention and increase funds towards secure ammunition stockpiles to reduce the number of fatalities, the immediate consequences of the lack of security requires urgent attention that can most effectively be provided by non-state actors. The following descriptions provide more details in how solutions are implemented and how successful they are.*

### **The Worldwide Counter Threat Solutions**

This organization is in place to provide training to military personnel of private agencies responsible for the security of their arms and ammunition. They provide training workshops on the disposal of explosive ordnances, biological and chemical weapons, and conventional weapons, as well as ammunition management. Known as the leading global provider for training and consultation on the lifecycle of stockpile management, their work is highly effective and utilised by military officials worldwide.

### **UNMAS Ammunition Safety Management Projects**

Stemming from the IATG protocol set in place by the UN SaferGuard Programme, UNMAS establishes themselves in 11 nation-states around the world – Haiti, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo, DRC, Libya, South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, and Seychelles – to provide “efficient, quick and safety-focused solutions for countries [to] develop and implement credible ammunition management practice”. Due to the support, they receive from the UN General Assembly, UNMAS’ work is highly reliable.

### **Mines Advisory Group (MAG)**

MAG is a non-governmental organization that’s a range of service to communities affected by unexpected explosions in the past, including Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and South Sudan. They have removed and destroyed 4.7 million UXOs and landmines, and afterwards ensured the reconstruction of schools and homes in the community.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

They provide risk education to all ages, and professional arms management and destruction training to national authorities. In the areas they operate in, they have proven to be very successful.

### **Mandatory Monitoring Committee**

An oversight committee that measures the standards of local arms and ammunition storage facilities and ammunition stockpile management by the several international standards and guidelines issued by the United Nations (IATG, ISACS, etc.). This creates a database of locations where safety is threatened by the insufficient standards, and specifies aspects of management that require improvement. This information can be public to the communities in that area to be able to volunteer human resources, or increase pressure on local authorities to address the issue immediately.

### **Educational Campaigns**

Inspired by MAG, the implementation of local educational initiatives to inform the local population living near ammunition stockpiles on crisis management in case of an unexpected explosion and guidelines on how to destroy UXOs. If the information is available to the community, they will be less dependent on local or foreign actors, and can take their safety into their own hands. This allows more people to respond in emergencies, and precautions to be taken more effectively.

### **Encouraging Disarmament**

As the previous Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said, “the world is over-armed, and peace is under-funded”. One of the biggest ways preventing an excessive accumulation of weapons is to encourage militaries to decrease manufacturing of newer arms and increase maintenance of the existing ones. A continual cycle of destroying, maintaining, and manufacturing weapons decreases harm and wasted ammunition, and produces a functioning collection of military resources.

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## APPENDIX OR APPENDICES

*These sources provide a detail and extensive overview of ammunition management in Africa specifically:*

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