

# NATIONALIST WAR OF LIBERATION, BORDER CONTROL AND TRACKING OF LIGHT WEAPONS IN CAMEROON A THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY (1955-1972)

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this historical study is to analyze the control of small arms and ammunition in Cameroon during the nationalist war of liberation between 1955 and 1972. This disarmament policy was not an easy task for the military authorities. The territory of Cameroon was divided into two territorial entities, one British and the other French, and it was therefore urgent to combat the illicit circulation of arms. All of this was done through an exploitation and critical analysis of two types of sources: primary sources (reports from the military, gendarmes, administrative authorities) available in the National Archives of Buea (NAB) and the National Archives of Yaoundé (ANY), and secondary sources (theses, memoirs, articles, official journals). It should be noted that: The issue of smuggling and counterfeiting of SALW was a matter of public security. The neighborhood with Nigeria, during the Biafran crisis between 1967 and 1970, made it difficult to control arms. However, the smuggling and counterfeiting of small arms and ammunition from Nigeria and the mobbing of the population have increased transnational crime. The defense and security forces, despite several daily seizures on both sides of the Mounjo River, had difficulty putting an end to this criminal economy. To this end, Cameroon, CAR, Nigeria and Chad must reduce the illegal circulation of arms and ammunition in Central Africa.*

**Keywords:** Cameroon, Nigerian-Biafran, small arms, ammunition, smuggling.

## 1. Introduction

The current situation with regard to border control and the illicit circulation of small arms and ammunition remains a worrying security issue for states and defense and security forces. These deadly devices cause enormous damage to communities, increase cross-border crime and the illegal possession of SALW. This is why it became important to regulate and even control the non-legal quantities of these weapons in circulation in Cameroon during the war of independence, by the two Franco-British colonial administrations. In a context, where the nationalist leaders of the Union of the People (UPC), had taken up arms to claim the independence and the reunification of Cameroon in 1955. The Cameroonian authorities were obliged to institute a control on the flow of arms and ammunition that circulated between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon. The danger came essentially from the neighboring territories that were subject to some security problems such as Nigeria. The porous border with the (British) colony, neighboring Nigeria, itself in the grip of a civil war (Biafra 1967-1970), did not make it easy for the gendarmerie and police of the creeks of Bamusso, Mamfé, Ekondo-Titi to get their hands on these smugglers and reduce the fraudulent stocks of SALW that were in transit from Nigeria to the former British rule in West Cameroon (1946-1961) This situation raises the issue of border control of arms and ammunition in the context of the war of independence in Cameroon. Better, it is a question of analyzing the question of the defense strategy and the protection of the territorial integrity of Cameroon against security threats in Cameroon between 1955 and 1972. This being said, what are the security threats that the Minister of the Armed Forces (MINFA) Sadou Daoudou, his counterpart Keeper of the Seals, Arouna Njoya through the army, the police and the national gendarmerie wanted to solve by instituting a border control on the SALW in Cameroon between 1955 and 1972? What is the

legal and legislative framework that framed this battle against the smuggling and counterfeiting of SALW in Cameroon? What are the different stocks seized, stored in the armories of the Gendarmerie Legion of Western Cameroon from 1966 onwards? Did the Nigerian-Biafran war of secession weaken the defense and security of Western Cameroon through the illicit dissemination of increased flows of SALW in Cameroon between 1967 and 1970? Two theoretical considerations are called upon to better analyze the question. The first is transnationalism or the "Copenhagen school", a theory defended by researchers such as Nina Click Schiller and Linda Basch. They analyze the mobility of rebel groups, mercenaries and warlords who export violence to all the states of the Chadian Basin in order to accentuate transnational crime, war crimes, the decimation of wildlife (Waza-Bouba Djida-Lobécké parks), the illicit exploitation of precious stones (CAR) and the smuggling of SALW (Chadian Basin). The second theory focuses on public security policies advocated by (Keith Kraus, Mvié Méka, Ole Waeve 1995, Thierry Balzac 2018, William 2011). These scholars argue for state responsibility in the process of securing states and gray areas against all security threats. It is important to note that many works have addressed the issue in one way or another. It is the place here to mention some of the authors who densely addressed (A.R. Sumo Tayo: 2017 and M. J. Danga: 2021). This study aims at three fundamental objectives : first, to show the strategies of the Cameroonian colonial army in collaboration with the French troops in the defense of the territorial integrity of Cameroon ; second, to analyze and evaluate the security threats in Cameroon in the midst of the nationalist war of liberation ; and finally, to bring out the Cameroonian doctrine of the fight against the Biafran secessionist conflict that took place in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 and its security repercussions in British Cameroon.

## **2. Cameroonian armed Forces and the Fight against the supply of Weapons on the Cameroonian coast**

The Cameroonian military and administrative authorities were setting up controls on the circulation of stocks of arms and ammunition in the context of armed dissidence. The aim was to reduce the stocks in circulation. From that moment on, the borders were under surveillance by the men of the Minister of the Armed Forces, Sadou Daoudou. This section analyzes the context of the implementation of this arms control in 1955, followed by the surveillance of the Wouri River estuary to put arms shipments from the British side out of harm's way from the Mounjo River.

### **2.1. The tutelary France formalized the control of SALW in Cameroon in 1955**

With a view to maintaining order and following the bloody events of 1955, several measures were adopted by the authorities in order to maintain peace and restrict the possession and circulation of weapons of various calibres, essentially through the marking and tracing of weapons (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955). This is the case of Order No. 159 of April 5, 1955, which establishes measures relating to security and control of arms stocks (ANY, Order signed by the Secretary General, Spinale in Yaoundé on April 5, 1955). And the circular n°2/163/CF/APA/2 of August 12, 1955 (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955).

In this circular n°2/163/CF/APA/2 of August 12, 1955 (ANY, 2AC1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955), the High Commissioner Pré took particular care in the control of firearms and their ammunition, in accordance with article 11 on weapons held by the civilian population. This fact justifies the following classification of these prohibited small arms by the circular of High Commissioner Pré. In this regard, the architecture of the regulated weapons was as follows: rifled shotguns of medium and large calibres, 5m/m long rifle, living room rifles, revolvers and automatic pistols (ANY, Confidential report of the chief of the Regional Brigade: 1955). A colonial desire to better control these weapons and ammunition.

It must be admitted that the agent placed in this circular a total embargo on the possibility for any individual to possess the above-mentioned weapon. In addition, the delicate

security context was marked by a nationalist crisis in Cameroon. This justified the nationalists' frustration with the French colonial administration, which considered it inconceivable to see the country fall into violence. It (the administrative authority) always wanted to keep its hold on Cameroon by the will of power. This new circular of the High Commissioner Roland Pré clearly showed the fear of seeing these hunting rifles, revolvers and automatic pistols fall into the hands of the nationalists (NAB, PC/i 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions, 1966-1971). France was afraid of experiencing the nightmare of its heavy defeat at Dien Bien Phu in French Indochina by General Giap's military and the challenge to its power in Algeria through a long war of independence that began in November 1954

The control of arms and ammunition became a secondary issue. The security situation in Cameroon was that of a territory marked by violence. This spiral of violence motivated the High Commissioner who imposed a particular restriction on the operations of providing various weapons and ammunition to civilians, former riflemen, or "rebels", all of them demobilized from the Second World War, who had returned and settled in Cameroon, ready to take up arms again to demand independence and the departure of the French. The rigorous surveillance of their weapons was a matter of public security at a time of nationalist demands. Disarmament was a practical necessity to prevent murderous violence, since small arms were at the root of all the killings orchestrated by the demonstrators. It was therefore necessary to stop this upsurge in violence caused by the weapons held by the rebels. To this end, Article 3 of the 1955 Circular on Firearms in Cameroon required "the withdrawal of authorizations to carry arms (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circular on Firearms Control 1955)" from undeserving people and to deposit them at the district office for a probable public auction. Public safety became a categorical imperative for the survival of French colonial authority. The nationalists decided to take on the French colonial army. On this subject, the Cameroonian historian Abwa maintains that: for the nationalists of the UPC, there is no doubt that they took up arms to wage a war for national liberation. These nationalists took up the objectives of their political party (UPC), independence, immediate reunification and the immediate departure of France from Cameroon, which they considered a military occupation force.

Nevertheless, the armament of these fighters should be put into perspective. Indeed, these small stocks of guns have the following characteristics: very heterogeneous, rudimentary and unsophisticated machetes, spears, daggers and shotguns. The balance of power in terms of weapons was totally in the disadvantage of the Cameroonian nationalists (Ibid.). The maintenance of order became a topical issue applicable to the entire Cameroonian territory. Advanced weapons were prohibited by decree n°159 of April 5, 1955, fixing measures relating to public security and the control of arms stocks (ANY, Journal officiel, n°1059, May 4, 1959, p. 689.). The colonial administration, through this decree of the High Commissioner Pré, neutralized the various sources of supply of firearms of Cameroonian trade unionists and politicians in order to proceed to their total disarmament, when they held various weapons and cartridges. Gunsmiths who had weapons storage facilities were required to comply with the following administrative maneuvers, such as putting these weapons temporarily out of immediate use. They should remove an essential part indispensable for their functioning and store them in a separate room not accessible to the public (ANY, Official Gazette, no. 1059, 04 May 1959, p. 689). The gunsmiths obeyed on pain of having their warehouses closed by the High Commissioner, Pré.

The fear of a civilian armed with a pistol by the French authorities led them to adopt subtle strategies to dismantle the guns and deny access to the nationalists. The warehouse owners obeyed the instructions of the hierarchy (Tamekamta Zozime Alphonse, 43, teacher-researcher, Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Université de Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, 28 June 2022), in an effort to preserve public tranquility. Faced with the demands of trade unionists and anti-state nationalists, the regulation of firearms and ammunition was in line with the requirements of this climate of insecurity. Faced with this regulation on the quotas of arms in Cameroon, the

central problem of the sources of supply of these SALW between Cameroon under British administration and French tutelage at the level of the Wouri River estuary. Fundamental.

## **2.2. The Wouri River estuary: the epicenter of stocks of arms and ammunition from Western Cameroon**

The question of the origin of arms and ammunition in Cameroon during the war of independence has been the subject of several works, some of which can be cited here (A. Mbembé: 1996 and Th. Deltombe: 2016). To better analyze this situation, it is important to identify the historical data shown on the following map. It certainly retraces the path followed by the arms and ammunition to reach the Cameroonian coast and to feed the fighters and accentuate the cracking of the guns.

This observation shows a high degree of porosity between the land and maritime borders of the two banks of the Moungo. This border permeability allows us to conclude that the shipments came from Western Cameroon, entering via Bonabéri, the two banks of the Moungo, Sodiko, to end up in the estuary of the Wouri River, the Bassa area in the French part of the tutelage. These supplies of arms passed through the Moungo, transported via Bonabéri. The rest was carried by boat to enter Douala (Masso Ndong, 2011: p.52). These were essentially five routes for the transport of arms. This document deserves to be questioned, however, when we know that these weapons did not always cross the river to the territory of French Cameroon, essentially to Douala. This was not a reality, because transportation at the time was not cheap, especially when one observes the small makeshift pirogues that could hardly carry heavy cargoes of goods (Koufan Menkéné: 2021). The next mission of the Cameroonian army was to combat the illicit entry of arms and ammunition into Western Cameroon in the face of the ongoing secession war in Nigeria.

## **3. Border Zone: Biafran Secession and smuggling of Arms and Ammunition across the nigerian-cameroonian border**

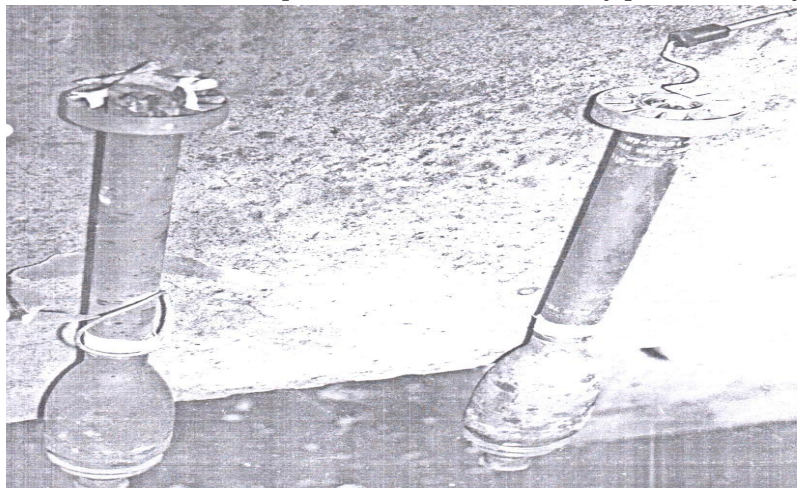
The context of the independence war in the Biafran region of Nigeria will have notable consequences for defense and security in Western Cameroon on the one hand and in Cameroon as a whole on the other (Interview with Ndoum Simeon, about 55 years old, Yaoundé, June 26, 2022). From that moment on, considerable flows were channeled into Cameroon by Biafrans in collusion with crooked Cameroonians. The gendarmerie was forced to organize daily patrols to seize and store quotas of weapons, ammunition as evidence and the fruits of smuggling and counterfeiting.

### **3.1. West Cameroon's maritime creeks as gateways for arms and explosives**

The fraudulent circulation between the maritime and land borders of Cameroon and Nigeria was a problem that the Ahmadou Ahidjo regime had to face. All in all, the Biafran war of secession accentuated cross-border crime between the two neighbouring states, and the Nigerians were the driving force behind this traffic, which was fuelled by Cameroonians: customs officers, gendarmes, traders, farmers and hunters, all of whom were crooked and driven by a taste for easy gain. This series linked to the Biafran secession war in Nigeria ended with the discovery of explosives 24 kilometers from Victoria in 1971 and later, two bombs found in the village of Batoké about 12 kilometers from the city of Victoria

The country's maritime borders became exposed to incursions by ex-combatants, Ibo and Ibibio secessionists who retreated to Cameroon to escape the firepower of the regular Nigerian army, which was determined to fight the Biafran insurgency (Akono Samuel, 48 years old, Gendarmerie Chief Warrant Officer, Yaoundé, June 20, 2002). These two explosives exposed the inability of Cameroonian customs to effectively stop maritime piracy and arms smuggling on the Cameroonian coast. To this end, these next two explosives found in the waters off Bakoté, near Victoria, show how these deadly devices were transiting from Nigeria to Cameroon.

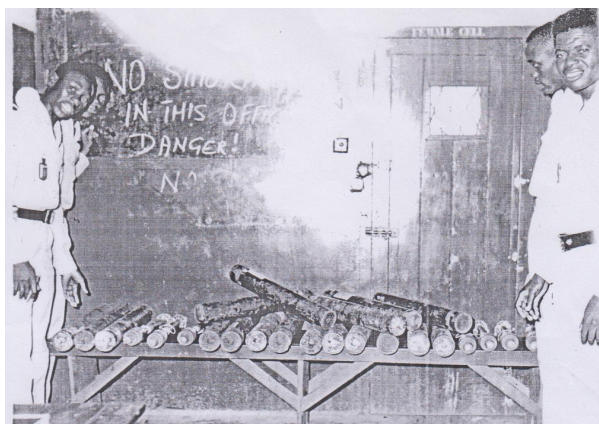
**Photo 1: Seizure of explosives found in Bakoté by public security**



**Source:** NAB, PC/i 1966/19, *Arms and ammunitions, West Cameroon, Security reports on secret arms trafficking in West Cameroon, 1966-1971.*

Two explosives, which were the fruits of maritime trafficking in firearms and weapons of war. The west coast of the country became a rear base, a symbol of violence or a retreat for ex-secessionists with their war machines. The Cameroonian Customs was thus implicated in its surveillance and tracking missions of illicit and undeclared goods (NAB, PC/i 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions, West Cameroon). these traffickers were to be arrested to answer for their crimes in Buea before the Federal Inspector of Administration, the head of the Regional Security of National Security in Buea. In the same vein, on July 6, 1971, the Victoria Special Police Station, following the claims of Koku Tobias, a Ghanaian fisherman residing at Bakingili, claimed to have found a sealed box placed on a stone (NAB: Ref. Victoria July 23, 1971). According to another report, a large cardboard box containing twenty-five dangerous mines with the following inscriptions was found in the customs store at Sanjé a month earlier. The following table lists this seizure of lethal devices. As a complement, here is a picture of these twenty-five (25) mines seized and sequestered in the premises of the public security in 1971.

**Photo n°2: Twenty-five bombs seized by the federal police in 1971**



**Source:** NAB, PC/L 1966/19, *Arms and ammunitions West-Cameroon 1966-1971. Security reports on Secret arms trafficking in West Cameroon. 6th/October 1966.*

Three analyses can be made of these archival documents on cross-border crime between Nigeria and West Cameroon. The first shows that the explosives are kept in a cell reserved for women, which constitutes a serious security limitation. The second reading presents the danger of these devices of death not only for the tenants of this public institution in charge of maintaining order (NAB: Ref. Victoria 23 July 1971). The third reading allows to know that the inscriptions in English language, prohibiting not to smoke in the premises carried at any time these devices could explode and cause damage of serious losses of human lives; to the example of the four gendarmes, little conscious of the dangers on this board. The Niger-Biafran war had after-effects on the defense and security of Cameroon. Border porosity was the fundamental cause of this insecurity between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon and neighboring Nigeria.

### **3.2. Gendarmerie patrols combed the country for SALW flows**

The reunification of Cameroon and the independence of Nigeria on October 1, 1961 did not resolve the issue of the movement of people and their goods. This is the case for Cameroonians and the Ibos populations of Nigeria (Ndikum Azieh: pp.121-123). The Biafran civil war that took place between 1967 and 1970 was the main cause of this insecurity at the Niger-Cameroon borders, but whose populations live under the threshold of precariousness and, object of insurrectional crises, the case of the Biafran identity crisis (NAB:TC (1966)/1correspondence on the activities of Nigerian in Kumba). Security issues that had consequences in Cameroon.

During a sweep at this border of the Cameroonian coast, in the locality of Ayemedjock, the gendarmes discovered eighty-three 7.5m/m cartridges, four strips of one hundred and fifty 7.5m/m cartridges, i.e. 500 for 52. Then, a case of complete spare parts, a rifle branded SHE, with two magazines bearing the number M. 63832, caliber 7.5m/m, two hundred and twenty rounds of 9m/m, four P.M 49 hunters, twelve hunting cartridges, six locally made pistols (NAB, Ref. No.2705/CF, Commandant Compagnie Buea, I. Obama, September 5, 1967) This was a major blow to the traffickers at Ayemedjock on the Niger-Cameroon border. This seizure shows the intense traffic in arms and ammunition that was taking place in the Biafran zone (NAB, Ref. No.R.8/Vol.2/153/67, Activities of Smugglers in Ngie/Ngaw 20th February, 1967). This Niger-Cameroon border was the symbol of the illicit circulation of arms.

On the other hand, the gendarmerie tracked down Moleta and Emija in Bamenda on December 1, 1966, around 6:30 p.m., in an Ibo store: two hundred and nine 12-gauge hunting cartridges were seized from two well-known traffickers in Bamenda for years (NAB, Ref. No. 2705/CF, Commander of the Buea Company, I. Obama, of September 5, 1967). The latter were no longer hiding to sell their 12-gauge cartridges to hunters. They crossed the border and even managed to open arms and cartridge smuggling shops. What was the fate of these seizures made by the Ayemedjock and Bamenda gendarmerie? The uncontrolled circulation of considerable stocks of arms of all calibers, ammunition and gunpowder from Nigeria to Cameroon to be smuggled with the blessing of greedy and zealous Cameroonians who operated with impunity. The porous border and the context of the Biafran secession war accentuated this state of insecurity in Cameroon. Nevertheless, even if the gendarmerie tracked down these smugglers, the bloodletting continued (Tchakounté Pierre, 53 years old, police commissioner, Bertoua, 29 May 2022).

The B.M.M. of Kumba always went to war against the powder traffickers who carried out their illegal activities. This was the case of Mr. Tabit in 1965, who had been living in Widikum, not far from Mamfé, for five years and working in public and private enterprises. He was the owner of a rifle and gunpowder, which he easily obtained from a local shopkeeper (NAB: 1965: PV N°13/BMM/BDA).

During his hearing, he affirmed that he did not use this powder and that he was a former hunter. At the end of the investigation, one thousand five hundred grams of gunpowder were seized from this trafficker and deposited not only at Police Headquarters in Kumba but also at

the Registry of the Permanent Military Tribunal of Buea (NAB, PC/i 1964/22, Arms and ammunitions: 1964-1966). This gunpowder trafficking became a public security problem in Kumba and its surroundings. The ramifications of such unauthorized activity were far-reaching; the actors were also Nigerians. This was the case of Obi, an ethnic Ibo trader, who lived in Mbongué. He trafficked in gunpowder and pharmaceutical products (NAB, Ref.185/RG, N°657/CF: trafficking in ammunition, Manyemen, May 6, 1965) with the Cameroonians Lobé, E. Suh and Ijomah, who trafficked in ammunition and gunpowder between Ndom-Street Oron in Nigeria and Buea in West Cameroon (NAB, PV. The Cameroonian armed forces were on the move to seize and sequester these flows of arms and ammunition, despite some limitations related to smuggling and counterfeiting.

#### **4. Cameroonian armed Forces and Management of sequestered arms flows**

This section deals with the role and contribution of the gendarmerie in the seizure of arms and ammunition during the nationalist struggle between British Cameroon and the part under French administration.

##### **4.1. The "two banks of the Moungo", the gendarmerie tracks down the illicit possession of light weapons**

The following places were identified for receiving and recovering these military logistics: in a gendarmerie, following a seizure by units, an isolated soldier, or voluntarily surrendered, in the brigade, for individual seizures or surrenders; in the premises of a company, for seizures at the level of a sub-district or district; at the legion, at the level of the sector (NAB: 1965 Ministerial Instruction N°370/MINFA/400). The firm intention to transport arms and ammunition seized during the OMPs, by gendarmes and soldiers. Then, the absence of the police in this regalian mission disarming the Cameroonian armed forces. However, one might wonder about the measures of voluntary surrender of an army, a voluntary disarmament by the possessor according to the MINFA note.

This voluntary disarmament was then questionable for men who were themselves on the lookout for a pistol or a shotgun, which were almost impossible to find because of the arms embargo, carried out by means of a regulation in force in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. It is necessary to remember that only the gendarmerie, through the brigades, gendarmerie, company and legion, were authorized to seize, collect or destroy weapons. Why were the military not involved? It is not the case, it is the total silence information is not available in this section. The gendarmerie, certainly because it is in direct contact with the populations of a locality. In addition, in a district, a sub-district, a village, there is a unit of the Cameroonian gendarmerie: brigade, gendarmerie post, territorial brigade, gendarmerie company, at the level of a department and the Legion, which covers an entire Region. This is why MINFA, in agreement with the Head of State, gave priority to the gendarmes in this heavy mission of disarming the troops, nationalists active in the Bamiléké pacification zones, in Mungo in East Cameroon and in Anglophone Cameroon (the towns of Muyuka, Bamenda, Kumba).

The material seized (arms and ammunition) during PKOs (Peacekeeping Operations) was reported to an intelligence officer of the territorially competent brigade; the arms were then sequestered under the responsibility of the heads of gendarmerie units. These weapons were transported by the usual military means of transport to the Administration-Logistics Directorate (DAL) and then to the armoury of the Ministry of the Armed Forces (NAB:PC/(1968)12 report by federal security in West Cameroon). The fate reserved for these seized weapons was that which was inevitably led to the DAL armoury. The arms dealer classified these weapons according to the prescriptions of the military hierarchy. Four types of weapons came from these stocks.

"Good weapons" for the war front, those that could be used by the auxiliary forces, those that had to be repaired in the MINFA armoury workshops, or those that could be partially recovered or had suffered some damage. Finally, the quotas provided for destruction (NAB,

Ministerial Instruction N°370/MINFA/400), which could not be used for the various missions of the Cameroonian MFOs. The analysis is as follows: the Cameroonian army is born in a notorious unpreparedness, the Cameroonian military in the fight against subversives were essentially poor in war logistics. That is why they were forced to collect wrinkled stocks from the fighters of the ALNK, the SDNK and the CNO, recycle them and hope to provide them to the self-defense or auxiliaries. These unusable weapons were simply destroyed to prevent them from falling into the hands of the insurgents.

#### **4.2. Cameroonian Armed Forces and the Management of Weapons Seized from the Maquis**

This is a ministerial instruction from the Ministry of the Armed Forces (MINFA) headed by Sadou Daoudou, which specified the modalities for the control, conservation, transportation and certainly the destruction of arms and ammunition seized during PKOs in Cameroon (NAB, Ministerial Instruction N°0009/MINFA of 29-4-1961, Administrative Service Note 11.611/MINFA/SC/GC/3).

This 1966 note repealed the 1961 note (NAB: (BRH), period from July 1 to July 7, 1964). The unspoken message of this promulgation by MINFA in 1966 is the following: the country was subject to an avalanche of riots orchestrated by armed men who decided to undermine the governing order in 1955.

These nationalists, considered by themselves to be terrorists by the government forces of the ALNK EMG. They were armed with a few hunting rifles, agricultural equipment and some seized goods from the chiefdoms and brigades, and carried out raids against the FMO, killing all those who were sympathetic to the French administrators, who were considered traitors. In concrete terms, the weapons in question, and targeted by MINFA through its ministerial note, are classified in this archival document, which must be analyzed in order to understand their contours.

**Table 1: Architecture of ammunition weapons implicated by the Minister of the Armed Forces**

<b>Order number</b>	<b>Characteristics of the weapons and ammunition covered by the ministerial note</b>
1	Weapons of war and corresponding ammunition
2	Hunting weapons of European manufacture
3	Weapons of local manufacture or trade
4	Ammunition of hunting powder

Source: Table designed by the author following exploitation: NAB, ministerial N°370/MINFA/400, Yaoundé, November 2, 1966.

The first type of rifles being almost non-existent or almost unavailable from the respondents, because at this historical era 1966, the Cameroonian nationalists were poor parents in war logistics. They sometimes acted with agricultural tools, exposing their lives during confrontations with the FMO, who were better equipped (ANY, JOCF, No. 865, 19 December 1959, p.1889). It must be emphasized that this was a gross exaggeration by the MINFA, a strategy to show that they were dealing with real warriors, better equipped with war arsenals. This is not the case. In terms of the manipulation of the military high command, as far as advanced weapons are concerned, we could mention a few seizures, mainly of MAS 36, rifles from Czechoslovakia, old German Mauser rifles, and a few MAT49. These advanced rifles came from seizures orchestrated by armed men in the military barracks, as in the case of Mboppi, in Douala, or in the Bamiléké chiefdoms of West Cameroon (NAB, ministerial N°370/MINFA/400, Yaoundé, November 2, 1966). This is also negligible. It is essentially the last two (02) categories: trading weapons, ammunition and hunting powder, which were the essential armament of the warriors of the EMG of the ALNK. Forges were set up in the maquis to reproduce these weapons,



intended to rekindle the flame of the ideals of the UPC. This poses the problem of the local manufacture of weapons, in a context where the regulations in force totally prohibited this activity. The MINFA went to war against the artisanal manufacture of arms and to dismantle the military posts, places where local rifles were manufactured.

## 5. Conclusion

The issue of the illicit circulation of small arms, particularly small caliber weapons, and firearms in general, between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon and its neighboring countries goes back to the history of these States. It should be remembered that the Nigerian-Biafran civil war of 1967-1970 was the fundamental cause of the illicit circulation of arms and ammunition between the two border entities. It is therefore urgent nowadays that this smuggling and counterfeiting of arms and ammunition be reduced to its simplest form. Crime, organized crime and maritime piracy are scourges that plague the maritime coasts of Mamfe, Mundémba and Kombo Abédimo. The Atlantic coasts should set up real mechanisms to secure their spaces in order to reduce maritime crime, clandestine trafficking of firearms, ammunition, drugs, and the decimation of wildlife species towards Asian countries. The effective control of the continental margins is on the agenda, in the face of the rise of terrorism. The United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the RECs are called upon to review the border management policies inherited from colonization. Mutualization between the member states of the African Union is essential to reduce the undesirable effects of serious crime and the unlawful dissemination of arms and ammunition.

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  33. NAB, TC (1966) 1, correspondance on the activities of Nigerian in Kumba. Ammunitions and drug trafficking.
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  35. NAB, Ref. No.R.8/Vol.2/153/67, Surété Service, Bamenda, Activities of Smugglers in Ngie/Ngaw 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1967.
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- Akono Samuel, 48 years old, Gendarmerie Chief Warrant Officer, Yaoundé, June 20, 2022.
  - Ndoum Siméon, about 55 years old Senior Police Commissioner, Yaoundé, June 26, 2022.
  - Tamekamta Zozime Alphonse, 44 years old, Teacher-researcher, Higher Teacher-s Training School of the University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, June 28, 2022.
  - Tchakounté Pierre, 53 years old, Police Commissioner, Public Security Police Station, 1st district of Bertoua, Bertoua May 29, 2022.