



**AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO  
UNITED NATIONS ARMS EMBARGOES**  
STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY TO MANAGE  
AND VERIFY WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION IN SOMALIA

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## **NOTES**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
JVT	Joint Verification Team
PoE	Panel of Experts on Somalia
SNA	Somali National Army
SPF	Somali Police Force
SSF	Somali Security Forces
WAM	weapons and ammunition management

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOINT VERIFICATION TEAM

In May 2014, the Security Council called for the establishment of a Joint Verification Team (JVT) to physically verify weapons and ammunition supplied for the development of the Somali Security Forces (SSF) under the partial suspension of the arms embargo on Somalia; to verify systems and structures put in place to control this materiel and prevent their diversion; and, to support the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in complying with the decisions of the Security Council on arms and ammunition management. The JVT is intended to complement the work of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Somalia (PoE).<sup>1</sup>

## COMPOSITION AND MANDATE

The JVT includes international experts to reinforce its independence and objectivity, while ensuring that the FGS assumes full ownership and accountability of its national stockpiles.<sup>2</sup> The FGS requested Conflict Armament Research to provide international expertise and external, independent support to FGS verification efforts. The JVT operates under the overall authority of the Office of National Security.

## EVOLUTION

The JVT was originally established to verify weapons and ammunition imported following the partial suspension of the arms embargo and distributed to the SSF. However, its work evolved over time in response to the operational context. In assuming weapons and ammunition management (WAM) assistance functions, it progressively adopted a comprehensive approach to control, monitor and verify materiel in the possession of the SSF, including materiel present in Somalia prior to the partial suspension of the arms

embargo, as well as materiel recovered from armed groups during military and law enforcement operations and subsequently integrated into SSF stockpiles.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The JVT commenced work in March 2016 by conducting a baseline survey of arms and ammunition that Somalia had imported since the partial suspension of the arms embargo in 2013. The verification phase started in November of the same year and, by early 2020, the JVT had collected and analysed data from a total of 40 units within the Somali National Army (SNA) and Somali Police force.<sup>3</sup> By mid-2019, the JVT had verified over 2,030 weapons and 500,000 rounds of ammunition supplied to the SSF.<sup>4</sup>

## CHALLENGES

A combination of administrative and operational challenges delayed the JVT from fully achieving its objectives. Somalia is currently pursuing capacity to develop a centralized database that would provide the JVT with up-to-date information on imported weapons and ammunition and their distribution along the supply chain. Access by the JVT to armouries outside the capital remains limited due to the lack of WAM governance systems at the Federal Member State level, which undercuts the ability of the JVT to conduct spot checks. The security environment in Somalia is especially challenging to the work of the JVT. Somali military operations necessitate the rapid movement of weapons and ammunition in the supply chain and, with soldiers and police officers continuously deployed with their weapons, it is difficult to effectively track the distribution of weapons and ammunition.

1 Security Council, UN document S/PRST/2014/9, 22 May 2014.

2 Security Council, UN document S/2014/243, 3 April 2014.

3 Conflict Armament Research. Internal records: unpublished, 2020.

4 Security Council, UN document S/2019/616, 30 July 2019.



Members of the Somali Police Force registering a weapon using a smartphone together with a data collection application during a pilot to test this approach in Mogadishu and Baidoa in early 2020. (Source: CAR)

# I. INTRODUCTION

The past decade witnessed considerable evolution in the design, implementation and monitoring of Security Council arms embargoes with a view to strengthening their effectiveness. This evolution was accompanied by an increase in the range of entities and actors mandated by the Security Council to contribute, in a complimentary manner, to monitoring and assessing compliance with a given arms embargo regime.<sup>5</sup> These actors have included independent groups of experts, monitoring teams, and peace operations on the ground.<sup>6</sup>

Security Council practices also evolved in response to the growing realization that the effectiveness of arms embargoes cannot be achieved without addressing the capacity challenges facing Member States, particularly the States to whose territory embargoes apply. On multiple occasions, the Security Council tasked its subsidiary organs and the UN Secretariat to assess the capacity of focus States and the additional assistance they require to implement obligations.<sup>7</sup>

The Security Council contends with varying levels of cooperation by focus States. The 2015 High-Level Review of United Nations Sanctions noted that compliance and support by focus States is affected by how they perceive their own involvement in the governance of the sanctions.<sup>8</sup> The High-Level Review acknowledged how the Security Council addressed this challenge but recommended a more proactive approach to managing relationships with focus States, including coordination of sanction exemption measures and technical assistance.<sup>9</sup>

The Joint Verification Team (JVT) established pursuant to resolution 2182 (2014) concerning Somalia demonstrates innovation and adaptability in United Nations sanctions. The JVT represents a case through which the Security Council established a cooperative compliance mechanism combining complementary monitoring functions with a technical assistance mandate and entrusting the focus State with the responsibility to lead it.

This paper examines this novel mechanism and analyses the extent to which it has fulfilled its objective since its establishment. The paper draws lessons learned from the mechanism and how it serves as an additional monitoring function to compliment the work undertaken by the United Nations Panel of Experts on Somalia (PoE). The following sections of the paper examine the background of the establishment of the JVT, its structure and methodology, and the regulatory and operational context in which it discharges its mandate. The paper then overviews the activities conducted by the JVT to date and the challenges it has encountered. The final two sections of the paper offer reflections on measures that could be undertaken to improve the functioning of the mechanism in the context of Somalia and the prospects for its replicability in other contexts.

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly, *Compendium of the High-level Review of United Nations Sanctions*, UN document A/69/941-S/2015/432, 12 June 2015, page 11.

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the evolution of Security Council arms embargoes in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Libya and Somalia, see UNIDIR, "Applying conventional arms control in the context of United Nations arms embargoes", 2018, <https://unidir.org/publication/applying-conventional-arms-control-context-united-nations-arms-embargoes>

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly, *Compendium of the High-level Review of United Nations Sanctions*, UN document A/69/941-S/2015/432, 12 June 2015, pages 19, 21, 27 and 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp 27-28.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In 1992 the Security Council, through resolution 733, imposed a complete and general embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Somalia.<sup>10</sup> In 2002, through resolution 1425, the Security Council adjusted the arms embargo, expanding it to encompass technical advice, financial and other assistance, and training related to military activities.<sup>11</sup>

Following two decades of conflict and a transitional period of government, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established on 20 August 2012. Since that time, the FGS, jointly with international partners and the African Union Mission in Somalia, has been fighting to degrade al-Shabaab, a non-State armed group designated by the Security Council as a threat to peace, security and stability in Somalia.<sup>12</sup> As part of this initiative, the Security Council partially suspended in 2013 the general and complete arms embargo to strengthen the FGS' ability to provide security and combat insurgent threats. Resolution 2093 (2013) allowed deliveries of weapons and military equipment intended solely for the development of the Somali Security Forces (SSF). This partial suspension was extended, with modifications, by the Security Council in subsequent resolutions.<sup>13</sup> However, the lack of WAM systems and infrastructures at the time presented challenges to the FGS for effectively managing the sudden influx of imported weapons and ammunition into the country.

The partial suspension of the arms embargo came with certain conditions. In order to promote accountability and transparency, and to fully account for Somalia's weapons imports, the Security Council imposed

several arms control requirements on the FGS. These relate to reporting, transfer and post-delivery controls. The continuation of the partial suspension was contingent upon the FGS' compliance with these requirements.<sup>14</sup> The FGS was expected to develop the infrastructure and institute systems and procedures for the registration, storage, distribution and use of weapons and military equipment, in order to prevent their diversion to entities or individuals outside the SSF. The FGS was also required to report regularly to the Sanctions Committee on weapons and ammunition received and distributed in accordance with the notification procedures set out by the Security Council.<sup>15</sup>

The FGS' obligation to report on its weapons and ammunition management (WAM) structures and capacities is part of a broader reporting framework, whereby it is also required to report regularly to the Sanctions Committee on the structure, composition, strength and disposition of its security forces, and the status of regional and militia forces. One purpose of this requirement is to identify the forces that are entitled to receive military assistance, including weapons and ammunition, and provide a baseline for the embargo implementation.<sup>16</sup>

10 Security Council, UN document S/RES/773, 1992, para. 2.

11 Security Council, UN document S/RES/1425, 2002, para. 2.

12 See "Al-Shabaab", <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/751/materials/summaries/entity/al-shabaab>.

13 Security Council, UN documents S/RES/2111, 2013, op. para. 6; S/RES/2142, 2014, op. para. 2; S/RES/2182, 2014, op. para. 3; S/RES/2244, 2015, op. para. 2; S/RES/2317, 2016, op. para. 2; S/RES/2385, 2017, op. para. 2; S/RES/2444, 2018, op. para. 14; and S/RES/2498, 2019, op. para. 9.

14 Security Council, UN documents S/RES/2142, 2014, pre. para. 10; and S/RES/2182, 2014, pre. para. 16.

15 Security Council, UN document S/RES/2093, 2013, op. paras. 33-40.

16 Security Council, UN document S/2016/919, 2016, p. 180.

### 3. OVERVIEW OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT IN SOMALIA



▲ Weapons marking and recordkeeping at a 10 day weapons marking training course conducted by the United Nations for the Somali National Army officers. (Source: UNSOM)

The FGS has taken concrete steps since its establishment to develop systems, infrastructures and human capacities to manage weapons and ammunition in compliance with its obligations under the partial suspension of the arms embargo and its broader efforts to strengthen the security sector.<sup>17</sup> With support from bilateral partners, United Nations entities and regional organizations, improvements were made, particularly in Mogadishu, to increase accountability over transfers as well as the physical security of weapons and ammunition prior to distribution down the supply chain.<sup>18</sup>

In establishing controls over weapons and

ammunition transfers, the FGS centralized import and distribution authorization at the level of the Ministry of Defence. In accordance with this centralized approach the SSF send requests for supplies to the Somali National Army (SNA) through their respective ministries. All imported materiel is then marked and registered at the Halane central armoury prior to distribution to units of the SSF.<sup>19</sup> In 2014, with support from the United Nations Mine Action Service and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, the FGS embarked on a weapons-marking programme for all of its armed forces. The programme included a training component which enabled

17 Abdikarin Ali-Hassan, "Work In Progress: Weapons And Ammunition Governance In Somalia", UNIDIR, 17 June 2020, <https://unidir.org/commentary/work-progress-weapons-and-ammunition-governance-somalia>.

18 UNIDIR, *Towards a National Framework for Arms and Ammunition Management in the Federal Republic of Somalia* 2017, p. 5. <https://unidir.org/publication/towards-national-framework-arms-and-ammunition-management-federal-republic-somalia>, accessed 25 June 2020.

19 Ibid.



▲ Weapons lined up and ready for verification by the JVT in Warta Nabada Police Station, Mogadishu. (Source: JVT)

the SSF to continue marking weapons independently. Combined with record-keeping, such a programme provides the FGS an overview of weapons acquired for—and held by—the SSF and helps to prevent their diversion down the supply chain.

The Presidential Decree of 18 September 2018 codifies the WAM processes in Somalia, which are implemented through a set of standard operating procedures.<sup>20</sup> On 27 August 2020, the FGS cabinet endorsed additional standard operating procedures that codify transfer controls with a particular emphasis on distribution and post-distribution. The new set of procedures also institutionalizes the JVT.<sup>21</sup> The Office of National Security of the Federal Government of Somalia is responsible for overseeing implementation of the WAM framework and interfaces with the SSF, the PoE, and international partners providing WAM assistance.

Despite the significant progress made, Somalia's security institutions continue to contend with considerable resource constraints. In demonstrating its continued commitment to enhance WAM and address the remaining challenges, the FGS defined its WAM agenda for the period 2020 – 2025. This includes closing the procedural gaps in the safe and secure distribution of weapons and ammunition to SSF across the country and building human expertise within the different security institutions. The FGS also prioritized strengthening WAM procedures, infrastructures and technical capacity at the Federal Member State level.<sup>22</sup>

20 The procedures cover: 1) general armoury procedures; 2) armoury procedures for weapons; 3) armoury procedures for ammunition and explosives; 4) accounting of weapons, ammunition and explosives; 5) marking of weapons; 6) destruction of weapons and ammunition; 7) transport of weapons and/or ammunition; 8) reception and documentation procedures at Halane armoury; and 9) management of captured weapons. See Security Council, UN document S/2019/616, 2019, p. 5.

21 Authors correspondence with FGS official, 2 September 2020

22 Authors correspondence with FGS official, 19 August 2020

## 4. ORIGINS OF THE JOINT VERIFICATION TEAM

With the partial suspension of the arms embargo in 2013, the Security Council requested the Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea (the predecessor to the PoE) to provide regular assessments on the progress made by the FGS in establishing WAM capacities, structures and procedures as well as an assessment of diversion cases. The Security Council also requested the Monitoring Group to report on its own ability to monitor the delivery of military supplies to Somalia.<sup>23</sup>

Recognizing the continued challenges faced by the FGS regarding WAM, the Security Council adopted resolution 2142 (2014), in which it requested the Secretary-General to provide options and recommendations on United Nations assistance, and other technical assistance, to the FGS. Specifically, it sought recommendations for improving the FGS' capacity to store, distribute and manage weapons and military equipment, including monitoring and verification.<sup>24</sup> In line with this request, an assessment team was deployed to Mogadishu and Nairobi from 12 to 18 March 2014. The team was led by the Department of Political Affairs and comprised experts from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Development Programme and the Monitoring Group.

The assessment team's findings were presented in a letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council dated 3 April 2014.<sup>25</sup> The assessment team underlined that the Monitoring Group was the primary international mechanism for monitoring compliance with the Somalia sanctions regime. However, while it analysed notifications of weapons and ammunition imports, it was unable to travel

to and within Somalia to physically verify their delivery and distribution. This was because the Monitoring Group operated *"under the same security restrictions as the rest of the United Nations system"*<sup>26</sup>. The assessment team considered the possibility of replicating arms embargo monitoring mechanisms previously deployed in west Africa but determined that these contexts benefitted from both the presence of a robust United Nations peacekeeping mission and a less restrictive security environment.<sup>27</sup>

In light of Somalia's context, the assessment team recommended the establishment of a JVT consisting of the FGS as well as international experts. The assessment contained three conditions for effective implementation of the JVT. First, the international experts on the team would need to travel throughout Somalia to conduct verification and to "provide the independence and objectivity to promote confidence in the Security Council" that weapons and ammunition are not diverted. Second, the FGS would need to guarantee unhindered access to verification sites and to remedy identified deficiencies. Finally, the team would contribute to building national capacity to undertake verification in the long term.<sup>28</sup>

The recommendation was taken up by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 22 May 2014 and reiterated in resolution 2182 of 24 October 2014 which called on the FGS to establish a JVT to "conduct routine inspections of government security forces' stockpiles, inventory records and the supply chain of weapons, and ... provide its findings to the Committee, for the purposes of mitigating the diversion of arms and ammunition to

23 Security Council, UN document S/RES/2093, 2013, para. 41.

24 Security Council, UN document S/RES/2142, 2014, para. 10.

25 See Security Council, UN documents S/2014/243, 2014; S/PRST/2014/9, 2014.

26 Security Council, UN Document S/2014/243, 2014, p. 5.

27 Ibid, p. 6. In the report, the Secretary-General refers to the Integrated Embargo Monitoring Unit of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the inspection of weapons deliveries carried out by the UN Mission in Liberia, explaining that, due to capacity and security considerations, such models would not be suitable for the Somali context.

28 Security Council, UN Document S/2014/243, 2014, p. 5.



▲ Security Council meeting on the situation in Somalia in November of 2019. (Source: UN Assistance Mission in Somalia)

entities outside of the security services of the FGS".<sup>29</sup> Through subsequent resolutions, the Security Council welcomed the FGS' efforts in establishing and operationalizing the JVT. It further urged UN Member States to support the team and the broader WAM efforts in Somalia.<sup>30</sup>

29 Security Council, UN documents S/PRST/2014/9, 2014; and S/RES/2182, 2014, para.7.

30 Security Council, UN documents S/RES/2244, 2015; S/RES/2317, 2016; S/RES/2385, 2017; and S/RES/2444, 2018.

## 5. COMPOSITION OF THE JOINT VERIFICATION TEAM



▲ Somali Federal Darwish Police who are part of the Somali Police Force (SPF) march during the pass-out ceremony of a paramilitary training held at the General Kahiye Police academy, Mogadishu, Somalia on 13 February 2020. (Source: AMISOM)

In 2015, the FGS invited Conflict Armament Research to work jointly with it on the team. The organization was selected for its unique experience in documenting, tracing and investigating illicit weapons and ammunition in conflict-affected locations. The evidence it generates is targeted primarily at, and shared confidentially with, State arms-control policy-makers and arms export licensing authorities, and is intended to inform and support effective weapon management and control.<sup>31</sup> Prior to its involvement in the JVT, the organization was active in Somalia and East Africa broadly, documenting and investigating illicit arms supplies to a variety of actors in conflict zones,<sup>32</sup> including violations of the Somalia arms embargo.<sup>33</sup>

The JVT operates under the overall authority of the Office of National Security of the Federal Government of Somalia and is composed of up to four FGS officials with relevant expertise in WAM, and up to four international experts from Conflict Armament Research. The Team is co-led by a member of the FGS and a member of Conflict Armament Research.

31 European Union, document CFSP 2017/2283, 11 December 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2283&from=EN>.

32 See <https://www.conflictarm.com/publications/>.

33 Conflict Armament Research, "Maritime Interdictions of Weapon Supplies to Somalia And Yemen", 2016 <https://www.conflictarm.com/dispatches/maritime-interdictions-of-weapon-supplies-to-somalia-and-yemen/>.

## 6. VERIFICATION

### 6.1 VERIFICATION OF MATERIEL IMPORTED PURSUANT TO THE PARTIAL LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO

As a first measure, in March 2016 the JVT undertook a weapons and ammunition baseline survey, which entailed compiling a list of all weapons and ammunition that the FGS had imported since the partial suspension of the arms embargo in 2013. The JVT gathered this data from pre- and post-delivery notifications to the Sanctions Committee and cross-checked it against SNA logbooks and physical stockpiles in Halane armoury. The data was also checked against all paperwork associated with the onward supply to SSF units as per the procedures that the FGS had established to account for its weapons up and down the supply chain. The methodology, scope and outputs of the baseline survey constituted an important element of the verification exercise. The survey further contributed to reconciling and harmonizing the separate datasets of imported weapons held by the FGS and the Sanctions Committee. The JVT synthesized this information in a report, which the Office of National Security submitted to the Sanctions Committee in April 2016.

In November of the same year, the JVT commenced the verification phase of its work: conducting spot-checks of weapons and ammunition with deployed SSF units in order to verify that weapons imported for the FGS had been delivered to the intended end-users. As of June 2020, the JVT had collected data from SNA units, sub-units and SPF police stations.

The JVT's verification methodology comprises the following five elements:

- » **Import data collection** – The JVT collects and documents all records associated with the importation of military equipment into Somalia for the FGS. This includes export and import notifications that the FGS and supplying States have transmitted to the Sanctions Committee, packing lists, bills of lading, and end-user certificates. This data is compiled in spreadsheet form and maintained by the Office of National Security and Conflict Armament Research.
- » **Armoury assessments** – When authorized by one of the security forces, the JVT conducts inventory counts at FGS weapon and ammunition armouries and checks associated logbooks and ledgers for consistency.
- » **Distribution of military equipment** – The JVT collects and documents distribution forms associated with the onward supply of military equipment to the various security forces, both to Mogadishu and within the Federal Member States. The JVT crosschecks this data against physical stockpile counts.
- » **Spot checks** – The JVT seeks to conduct spot checks of imported weapons and ammunition that have been deployed to the SSF. At each inspection, the JVT requests to view and document items associated with the distribution forms that are generated at the time of onward supply after import. The JVT records the weapons and ammunition it spot-checks photographically—with date stamps and geographical coordinates included in the photographs' metadata—and compiles the data in spreadsheet form.
- » **Reporting** – The JVT reports its findings to the Office of National Security on a bi-annual basis. The Office then transmits the verification reports to the Sanctions Committee, as an annex to the regular reports submitted at six-months intervals.



▲ Officials from the African Union Mission in Somalia inspect captured weapons handed over to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), in Mogadishu on 27 February 2020. (Source: AMISOM)

## 6.2 VERIFICATION OF PRE-EXISTING AND RECOVERED MATERIEL

While the core of the JVT's mandate is to verify weapons and ammunition imported under the partial suspension of the arms embargo, it progressively adopted a more comprehensive approach to verification in response to broadening national WAM objectives. The JVT records weapons and ammunition that were present in Somalia prior to the partial suspension of the arms embargo, and that are in service with the SSF. Unlike in the case of newly imported weapons and ammunition, the JVT does not have a baseline against which to assess the serial numbers, quantities and distribution of pre-existing materiel. Nonetheless, registering legacy weapons in service with the SSF provides an important baseline against which to compare records during follow-up visits to relevant units in order to verify that those weapons have not been diverted.

On occasion, the JVT has also documented weapons and ammunition that select SNA divisions in Kismayo and Baidoa have captured from al-Shabaab, sharing analysis and findings with the FGS. More recently, the FGS has worked on formalizing and agreeing on the mechanism by which recovered weapons are handed over from the African Union Mission in Somalia to the FGS in Mogadishu to facilitate the former's compliance with its obligations pursuant to the Security Council resolutions. This mechanism should facilitate more systematic access by the JVT to captured weapons for analysis and onward reporting.<sup>34</sup> The uniform handling of recovered weapons will also enable the FGS to better evaluate diversion risks as well as to understand the sources and patterns of illicit supplies to al-Shabaab and other unauthorized non-State actors.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Security Council, UN document S/RES/2182, 2014, op. para. 6, which "Requests the SNA and the [African Union Mission in Somalia] to document and register all military equipment captured as part of offensive operations or in the course of carrying out their mandates, including recording the type and serial number of the weapon and/or ammunition, photographing all items and relevant markings and facilitating inspection by the [Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea] of all military items before their redistribution or destruction".

<sup>35</sup> The management and tracing of recovered weapons in Somalia is the subject of a forthcoming publication by UNIDIR.

## 7. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY-BUILDING



▲ Members of the JVT capture images of weapons in service with government forces as a key part of the process, providing a verifiable reference point for associated data. (Source: CAR)

In addition to its verification work, the JVT provides technical assistance and advisory services to strengthen WAM and to address gaps in related processes and practices, thereby reinforcing the foundation for full and effective verification well into the future. At the operational level, this entails the ad-hoc provision of mentoring and the elaboration of innovative approaches to capture data on materiel in the possession of the SSF.

During site visits conducted in 2019, the JVT distributed newly designed logbooks and trained relevant personnel in each location on their proper use. The JVT conducted a limited monitoring exercise of logbook implementation at 13 SPF stations in Mogadishu in late 2019 and found the logbooks to be satisfactorily in use, or use had commenced at the majority of stations visited.<sup>36</sup>

In early 2020, the JVT began to promote the development and subsequent piloting of an innovative technical solution to capture and centrally compile images and data on weapons in service with the SPF in Mogadishu and Baidoa, using a mobile data-collection tool. This not only serves to expand the reach and efficiency of the JVT, but also helps to build-up a library of data for a national weapons database, which is planned for development.<sup>37</sup>

36 Conflict Armament Research. Internal records: unpublished, 2019

37 Authors correspondence with FGS official, 19 August 2020

## 8. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PANEL OF EXPERTS



▲ Somali police officers march during a parade at a ceremony held to mark the 74th anniversary of the Somalia Police Force at General Kahiye Police Academy in Mogadishu on December 20, 2017. (Source: AMISOM)

The JVT was designed to work with the PoE and its predecessor in a complementary and coordinated manner in monitoring the partial suspension of the arms embargo. This mutually reinforcing relationship serves to address the operational constraint faced by the PoE in verifying the distribution of weapons and ammunition down the supply chain and in the various regions of Somalia (these constraints are particularly due to the UN movement restrictions to which the PoE members are subject).<sup>38</sup>

In discharging its mandate, the PoE (and previously the Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea) has benefited from the work and expertise of the JVT in several ways. On occasion, the JVT provided support in analysing progress and gaps in WAM. The

analysis was aimed at assessing the level of FGS compliance with its obligations under the partial lifting of the arms embargo.<sup>39</sup> The PoE has used data contained in the JVT report regarding the distribution of weapons to verify information provided by supplying States and the FGS in its periodic report to the Sanctions Committee regarding the strength and disposition of the SSF.<sup>40</sup> In utilizing the verification reports of the JVT, the PoE has been able to identify measures to further strengthen information-sharing among the Sanctions Committee, the JVT and the PoE, as well as measures to enhance the JVT's verification exercises.<sup>41</sup>

38 Security Council, UN Document S/2015/801, 19 October 2015, annex 7.5, p. 289.

39 Security Council, UN document S/2017/924, 2 November 2017, P. 34.

40 Security Council, UN Document S/2019/858, 1 November 2018, pp. 129–130.

41 The proposal to submit the JVT reports to the Sanctions Committee as an annex to the biannual report was made by the Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea in its report to the Security Council. The PoE also recommended that the JVT cross-references, where possible, the serial numbers of weapons it documents with available FGS records detailing the distribution of arms to the SSF. See Security Council, UN documents S/2018/1002, 9 November 2018, p. 48; and S/2019/858, 1 November 2018. Pages 192–193.

## 9. CHALLENGES

Since its establishment, the JVT has faced challenges that undercut its ability to fully verify all weapons delivered to Somalia under the partial suspension of the arms embargo. Nonetheless, its work has helped to reveal several gaps in the supply chain and areas for improvement.

### 9.1 AWARENESS OF THE JOINT VERIFICATION TEAM AND THE IMPACT ON ACCESS

Initially, there was a general lack of awareness regarding the JVT among the SSF. Although the FGS arranged for the JVT's roll-out in advance through the chain of command, the lack of prior sensitization force-wide resulted in delays as unit commanders sought clarification before granting the JVT access to stockpiles.<sup>42</sup>

### 9.2 COORDINATION OF ARMS DELIVERIES

The JVT highlights the need for improved donor coordination and compliance with Security Council and FGS requirements in order to ensure that all weapon deliveries are properly notified and recorded, thereby enabling the JVT to verify their distribution and use. Supplying States have either failed to, or inconsistently complied with the Security Council obligations to notify the Sanctions Committee and the FGS of any weapons and ammunition deliveries to Somalia five working days in advance and provide details on the types of weapons, serial numbers, and quantities delivered.<sup>43</sup> This practice undercuts the JVT's ability to maintain an up-to-date and accurate baseline of all weapon imports into Somalia and verify their distribution and use down the supply chain.

### 9.3 DISTRIBUTION RECORDS AND ESTABLISHING THE CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Weapons and ammunition delivered to the FGS in Mogadishu are marked and registered at the Halane armoury prior to

distribution to the SSF. At the distribution stage to SSF units, the type and quantity of weapons issued and the unit they were issued to, as well as the serial number and photograph of the end-user are recorded in manual logbooks and electronic spreadsheets. However, the JVT noted the difficulty in updating distribution records at the unit level. In scenarios where the weapon is reassigned to another soldier within the unit, the data is not captured and shared upstream. A lack of a centralized and up to date database undercuts the JVT's ability to conduct up-stream supply-chain verification.

### 9.4 VERIFYING MATERIEL IN OPERATIONAL CONTEXTS

Although the JVT's access to FGS' weapons and ammunition has improved since late 2017, verifying materiel in operational settings is an ambitious target. This is due to the fact that many SNA units are deployed on operations, patrols and checkpoints. This operational constraint hampers the JVT's ability to adequately verify weapon distributions at the unit level. These challenges are compounded by the lack of financial resources and international support to improve storage and record keeping infrastructure at the level of forward operating bases and sectors. These factors combined emphasize the limitations as to how further down the supply chain verification can be adequately conducted in a dynamic operational context.

<sup>42</sup> Authors correspondence with FGS official, 19 August 2020

<sup>43</sup> Security Council, UN document S/RES/2498,2019, op. paraa. 15-16 and 18.



▲ An officer of the SPF Logistics Corps registers weapons into a government-issued logbook. The JVT has worked closely with the SPF and other security forces to facilitate and encourage the mainstreaming of the official government logbooks. (Source: CAR)

## 9.5 FUNDING THE JOINT VERIFICATION TEAM

Despite the consistent calls made by the Security Council to Member States to support the work of the JVT and WAM efforts more broadly, lack of funding significantly hampered the establishment and operationalization of the JVT.<sup>44</sup> The JVT largely relies on inconsistent and limited voluntary contributions. Since 2015, the operational costs of the JVT were covered by voluntary contributions secured by Conflict Armament Research. At times,

the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia has provided additional logistical support, including security convoys, flights and accommodation. However, support from the Mission is subject to United Nations movement restrictions (as with the PoE).

<sup>44</sup> Security Council, UN Document S/2015/801, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea: Somalia*, 19 October 2015. Annex 7.1, page 254

## 10. REFLECTIONS

On the basis of the above, this observation paper identifies a series of measures that could help to further strengthen the JVT moving forward in both its mandate as a complementary arms embargo monitoring mechanism and as a tool for WAM assistance and capacity-building.

### 10.1 MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN AND FACILITATE VERIFICATION

- » Supplying States should ensure that notifications of weapon deliveries are as specific as possible, as to the contents of the materiel, including serial number/batch number as well as information detailing the year of manufacture.
- » Supplying States should endeavour to apply import markings prior to delivery of weapons to Somalia, including generic force-level markings, to enable tracking of the weapons by the FGS. At the very least, supplying States must not deliver weapons without unique manufacturer serial numbers. If unique import markings are not present at the time of import, FGS marking teams should add a unique serial number in compliance with the International Tracing Instrument and the standard operating procedures on marking of weapons.
- » Supplying States should comply with FGS policy to deliver weapons and ammunition initially to Halane armoury for registration and marking, rather than directly to units. In instances where this cannot be avoided, supplying States should comply with Security Council requirements and provide the FGS with detailed records of delivery, including weapon serial numbers and ammunition lot numbers, as well as delivery verification evidence.
- » Federal Member States should make specific notifications to the Office of National Security when receiving weapons and ammunition directly and institute adequate record-keeping and distribution practices to enable subsequent verification.
- » To facilitate access by the JVT to various locations, the FGS could establish a bi-annual JVT schedule in consultation with the Office of National Security and SSF. The composition of the team could also benefit from the inclusion of senior SSF officials that could wield influence to ensure timely access and regularly sensitize field commanders on the JVT mandate.
- » While verifying materiel in operational contexts has challenged the JVT, complementary data-gathering and verification measures which do not require the JVT's presence could be streamlined into the procedures at rear-echelon and forward operating bases. This could include recording the serial numbers of weapons held by soldiers during rotation, possibly with the use of secure data-capture applications, the use of which is currently being considered by the JVT. The JVT could also cooperate with the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia in providing logistical assistance to facilitate the JVT's access to remote areas.
- » As a mechanism mandated by the Security Council, donors should commit funds to support the work of the JVT in a comprehensive and sustainable fashion. The United Nations could also consider supporting the JVT, as appropriate, through existing funding mechanisms.



▲ Members of the SNA during a demonstration as part of a passing-out parade in August 2012 (Source: AMISOM)

## 10.2 MEASURES TO ENHANCE WAM IN SOMALIA

- » The FGS would benefit from developing and enforcing a national strategy or policy on WAM that, among other obligations, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all SSF and agencies in supporting the JVT and implementing verification activities. The FGS would also benefit from establishing an inter-ministerial mechanism to ensure that the findings and recommendations of the JVT are regularly communicated and discussed among the relevant decision-makers. This step could further foster accountability and transparency among SSF commanders and help to monitor action taken in response to gaps identified by the JVT.
- » The FGS would benefit from a defence strategy outlining plans for force generation efforts. This would allow the FGS and donors to make informed and timely decisions regarding weapon supplies and distribution.
- » Armoury construction or refurbishment programmes should, as an integral component, include the distribution and training on the use of the standard, government-endorsed logbook, as well as provision for the use of the national weapons database, once it becomes operational.

## II. PROSPECTS FOR REPLICABILITY

Arms embargoes typically target both national authorities and non-State actors at the outset of the regime, with provisions against the authorities eased over time. The Security Council increasingly has introduced arms control obligations for national authorities, to support them in their management of the gradual easing of arms embargoes, and to prevent exempted materiel from fuelling insecurity.

The modification implemented by the Security Council in 2013, in introducing a JVT in the Somalia context, provides several key insights into Security Council arms embargoes. First, it demonstrates flexibility on the part of the Security Council in considering and adopting innovations to make arms embargoes more effective. Second, the JVT, places emphasis on national ownership by empowering the FGS to conduct internal verification of distributed material, with support from international experts, rather than strictly relying on external entities to monitor and assess FGS compliance. This contributes to instituting and deepening national capacities and systems of oversight and accountability that could endure even after the arms embargo is fully lifted. Third, the design of the JVT enables the FGS to demonstrate to the Sanctions Committee the progress made on WAM at the national level. This provides a critical indicator with regard to the ability of the FGS to safely and securely manage its imported materiel.

Resolutions setting up sanctions regimes, including arms embargoes, do not stipulate specific benchmarks for the adjustment or lifting of those embargoes. Security Council Panels of Experts and Monitoring Groups rarely report on the WAM achievements in States under arms embargoes. However, practice has evolved, and following requests over the past few years from several Member States under embargo to lift restrictions on their imports, the Security Council expressly requested the assessment of States' WAM capacity and requirements with the view to create tangible and

measurable benchmarks. The roles and contributions of the JVT in Somalia can be understood in this context. The Security Council also has imposed additional reporting requirements on several national authorities under embargo, mainly in relation to the structure of their armed forces, as well as arms control obligations regarding exempted transfers of materiel and the management of stockpiles.

Although a JVT can be time and resource intensive to undertake, the experience in Somalia has demonstrated the value that such an initiative can have for an embargoed State whose sanctions regime is undergoing reform. The Security Council might consider proposing a JVT for embargoed States where State actors are not under embargo but are known to have WAM challenges. Likewise, similar models might be considered by resource-limited States that are not under embargo but that face challenges with regard to WAM and accountability. Since the ultimate lifting of an arms embargo provides a clear incentive for embargoed countries to partake in a cooperative verification mechanism, alternative incentives would need to be considered for those States not under embargo but that might benefit from such a mechanism. Since the reporting of JVT findings to the Security Council would not be relevant for non-embargoed States, reports could nonetheless be provided to potential weapon exporting States in order to inform the export risk assessments that are ordinarily undertaken prior to supplying weapons to a State whose WAM practices are relatively weak.

In contexts where an arms embargo does not apply to State actors, whether by design or as a result of a partial suspension, a cooperative verification mechanism offers a constructive approach to promoting enhanced transfer and end-user/end-use controls, while building the capacity of the focus States, particularly those in security transition, to develop sustainable WAM and accountability systems.

## 12. CONCLUSION



▲ Members of the Somali Police Force registering a weapon using a smartphone together with a data collection application during a pilot to test this approach in Mogadishu and Baidoa in early 2020. (Source: JVT)

The introduction of a JVT is a unique provision of the arms embargo in Somalia. It enables the FGS to take ownership of accountability for its stocks, while embedding international WAM experts as part of the team. In this respect, the JVT serves as a self-assessment tool for the FGS to identify shortcomings and to improve its WAM systems and practices. The JVT and its reports play a critical role in informing the Security Council on FGS compliance with the arms embargo and various international standards on WAM. Furthermore, the JVT serves as an avenue to periodically evaluate FGS regulation and control over its imports, marking, registration, storage and distribution of arms and ammunition up and down the supply chain.

The JVT remains one of the most significant achievements by the FGS on WAM and stands as a model for cooperation

between the FGS and the international community. The JVT and the scope of its work has evolved over time, not only in response to embargo-related verification requirements, but to serve broader WAM objectives determined by the FGS with the advisory support of international experts. A JVT system continues to aid the FGS in establishing an inspectorate or auditing mechanism, which will enable the FGS to comprehensively and independently account for its weapons and ammunition well into the future.



The Joint Verification Team on weapons and ammunition in Somalia represents an innovative approach to monitoring and verifying the implementation of Security Council arms embargoes.

This observation paper sets out the establishment, methodology, role and activities of the Joint Verification Team, while cataloguing the challenges faced. The paper provides a series of key reflections on weapons and ammunition management in Somalia and considers how the Joint Verification Team might be replicated in other contexts.

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