ISSUE 23 | JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2022

OBSERVATORY OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

RISK BULLETIN

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Investigating potential sources of arms flows to al-Shabaab in northern Mozambique.**
   Since conflict broke out in Cabo Delgado in 2017, the weaponry used by the insurgents in northern Mozambique has become more sophisticated. Yet the source of these weapons has not been definitively determined. Some analysts have speculated that regional criminal networks have made use of northern Mozambique's historical smuggling routes to traffic weapons to al-Shabaab. Recent Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) analysis of Cabo Delgado has investigated this possibility and considered several other potential routes of arms flows to the insurgent group.

2. **The maritime interdiction of over a thousand assault rifles en route to Yemen is the latest iteration of Iranian state-sponsored arms smuggling.**
   In December 2021, US naval forces intercepted a stateless fishing dhow crossing the northern Arabian Sea. Believed to have been en route to Yemen, the dhow was carrying 1 400 assault rifles and over 200 000 rounds of ammunition. This is the thirteenth such interdiction by international naval forces since September 2015. The weapons seized in December appear to be Chinese-manufactured Type 56-1 rifles, which is consistent with previous seizures of this type. Analysis of these arms shipments suggests that they are probably Iranian state supplies being provided to Houthi allies in Yemen. Previous GI-TOC analysis has found that these Type-56-1 rifles have also been smuggled to Somalia.

3. **A violent environmental market: the heavy cost of South Africa's abalone trade.**
   The illicit abalone trade has been flourishing in South Africa for more than 25 years, with demand for the marine molluscs as a delicacy, primarily in China, driving a poaching economy. Today, the industry is rife with violence and corruption, enmeshed in the drug trade and controlled by organized-criminal gangs. A new GI-TOC study into the structure of the abalone market has found that while top-level traders maintain control of export and distribution to Asian markets, violent competition proliferates among local criminal networks involved in the trade in South Africa. Amid worsening environmental and social consequences, there is an urgent need to consider a harm-reduction approach to the illegal abalone trade.

4. **What does the year ahead hold for organized crime in eastern and southern Africa?**
   Organized crime is a notoriously difficult phenomenon to quantify. The ENACT Organized Crime Index is the first tool of its kind designed to assess levels of organized crime and states' resilience to criminal activity. The Index measures a range of criminal markets (from environmental crime to human trafficking) and includes resilience indicators (from witness protection to anti-money-laundering measures). The 2021 results can give an insight into how organized crime has changed over the past two years in eastern and southern Africa. This, in turn, can show how trends may continue to develop into 2022. The scores show an overall increase in organized crime in eastern and southern Africa since 2019. States' resilience to the harms of organized crime increased in East Africa but decreased in southern Africa.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Illicit arms flows are the central focus of two stories in this issue of the Risk Bulletin. This is a market that the GI-TOC's Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa has investigated elsewhere in our research, particularly in South Africa, where we have identified how failings in governance (such as at South Africa's Central Firearms Registry) have allowed guns from state sources to be siphoned off to gangs and other criminal networks.[1] It goes without saying that illicit arms flows have a significant and direct impact on levels of violence, conflict and instability in the region.

Our analysis here investigates arms flows to Somalia, as a spillover of illicit arms flows that are transiting by sea from Iran to rebels fighting in the conflict in Yemen. Our research team documented weapons at various locations in Somalia, which appear to have been sourced from shipments of weapons destined originally for Yemen, demonstrating how one conflict can have a destabilizing effect on other conflicts and a wider region. These weapons are feeding into the decades-long and seemingly intractable conflict in Somalia.

We also look into weapons flows to the al-Shabaab insurgents in northern Mozambique (who are not connected to the Somali group that bears the same name). The northern Mozambique conflict – which since mid 2021 has seen the intervention of SADC and Rwandan forces in an attempt to bring stability to the troubled region – has governments around the region concerned about its effect on regional stability. In November 2021, for example, South African president Cyril Ramaphosa and Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta jointly called for increased cooperation to counter terrorism in Mozambique, arguing that this is a regional, rather than national, threat.

Looking beyond illicit arms flows, new GI-TOC analysis looks into how South Africa's illegal abalone trade has a long history with gangsterism: while gangs muscled into the abalone trade, extorting fishermen and making the market more violent, the abalone trade also had a transformative impact on the gangs themselves, by providing the cash needed to give gangs readier access to supplies of drugs and weapons.

The GI-TOC – along with partners in the ENACT (Enhancing Africa's Response to Organized Crime) project – has spent a long time developing a way of quantitatively measuring state's levels of organized crime activity and resilience to organized crime in a comparable way. The resultant tool – the ENACT Organised Crime Index for Africa (which has also now been developed into a global Index) – will be of use to governments, civil society and international organizations to help understand the global landscape of organized crime.

1. Investigating potential sources of arms flows to al-Shabaab in northern Mozambique.

Since the insurgent group known as al-Shabaab first began staging violent attacks in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, in October 2017, they have become a far more sophisticated and effective fighting force. Early attacks in 2017 were carried out using a combination of machetes (widely available for agricultural use in the region) and locally available firearms. The first images of the insurgents shared on social media platforms reflect this, with AK-47s depicted alongside more rudimentary weapons.

Over the past four years, al-Shabaab (which is not connected to the Somalia-based group of the same name) has advanced both in its choice of weaponry and in its strategy. They were able to withstand the response from Mozambican forces and two private military companies – the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group and the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) – who were contracted to suppress the insurgency in the region in 2019 and 2020. Al-Shabaab was able to capture and maintain control over large swathes of territory in Cabo Delgado, including holding the port town of Mocímboa da Praia for a year. The group also launched a successful attack on the town of Palma, which is a site of major developments in oil and gas exploitation in Cabo Delgado.

Since July 2021, intervention by Rwandan forces and SADC coalition forces has helped Mozambican forces to recapture some of this territory. Yet the conflict continues and has resurged in parts of Cabo Delgado and spread into other provinces. Al-Shabaab has also re-established its connection with the Islamic State, as evident from Islamic State propaganda surrounding recent attacks.

Several analysts have argued that al-Shabaab has also sourced weapons from outside of Mozambique, arguing that this is how the group has become better equipped over time. Some have speculated that regional criminal networks have made use of northern Mozambique's historical smuggling routes (transporting commodities such as drugs, illicitly procured gems and timber) to traffic weapons to al-Shabaab.[2]

Recent GI-TOC analysis of the Cabo Delgado situation, (which draws on research the GI-TOC has been conducting in the region since 2018)[3] has investigated this possibility and considered several other potential routes of arms flows.

PRE-EXISTING SOURCES OF SMALL ARMS IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

In the early days of the conflict, insurgents may have tapped into pre-existing sources and illicit flows of weapons in the region. In the lead-up to the insurgency in late 2017, AK-47s were available in northern Mozambique from multiple sources.

The earliest known photo of al-Shabaab insurgents, Mocímboa da Praia, October 2017. *Photo: Eric Morier-Genoud via Twitter*

First, older weapons from Mozambique's civil war (1976–1992) remained in areas where they had not been surrendered during the demobilization process, particularly in locations sympathetic to the main opposition party RENAMO (the Mozambican National Resistance Movement) or more generally in areas that were antipathetic to the governing party FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique).

Second, AK-47s were smuggled into northern Mozambique from the Great Lakes region – in particular, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – to supply a demand among ivory poachers operating in the Niassa Reserve and the Quirimbas National Park during the peak years of Mozambique's elephant-poaching crisis.[4] However, as elephant-poaching rates have been declining in northern Mozambique since 2018, this is no longer an active source of demand. Yet these weapons may have served al-Shabaab in the early days of its formation, particularly given reports of al-Shabaab recruitment among certain groups in the Niassa Reserve.[5]

Finally, weapons from government sources have also regularly found their way into criminal hands, both for elephant poaching and for use by bandits.[6] Banditry was already an endemic issue in northern Mozambique long before the insurgency began, and illicit weapons still circulate for use by bandits.

WEAPONS SOURCED FROM MOZAMBICAN MILITARY

GI-TOC research in late 2021 concluded that the bulk of the insurgents' weaponry comes directly from Mozambican military sources, and includes weapons captured from security-force camps, border posts and police armouries in towns and villages overrun by the insurgents and abandoned by Mozambican security forces in retreat. This aligns with a detailed report from extremism analyst Calibre Obscura, published as our fieldwork concluded, which assessed the origin of al-Shabaab's weapons using social media posts.[7]

Images of weaponry shared either by the insurgents themselves or by coalition forces who have captured weapons from the insurgents are testament to this. For example, footage shared by insurgents from the attack on Mocímboa da Praia in March 2020 shows a cache of weapons seized from an armoury in the town. This attack was a significant turning point in the scale of the conflict, not only because Mocímboa da Praia is a major town but also because it provided the insurgents with access to further weapons in addition to looted cash. Similar footage and images shared on social media platforms also show types of weapons consistent with those used by Mozambican forces.[8]

In the first attack claimed via Islamic State channels in Mozambique in June 2019, the insurgents showed off weapons captured from Mozambican military. This has been the main way in which the insurgents have armed themselves. *Photo: Telegram*

In September 2021, reports emerged that al-Shabaab had used an improvised explosive device (IED), created using a landmine, to target SADC forces.[9] The landmine may have been looted from the armoury at the Namoto border post armoury in 2020, where some old landmines and mortar rounds had apparently remained.[10] There have also been reports of test explosions taking place at insurgent field bases. [11]

Sources connected to al-Shabaab report that some soldiers in the Mozambican armed forces (Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique, FADM) had sold weapons to the insurgent group – particularly in 2018 and 2019, before it had become a major threat. Interviewees described how al-Shabaab would stage an ambush, causing the military detachment to flee and leave their equipment behind, and making the loss of weapons, vehicles and other equipment appear accidental. A few of the insurgents (including senior al-Shabaab leader Ibn Omar) had reportedly served in the Mozambican military, under the conscription system, and used former military contacts to arrange weapons transfers in exchange for payment.[12]

Some reports allege that groups of soldiers formed by demobilized government forces or deserters had been paid to train al-Shabaab members in the early days of the insurgency when they were not yet considered a major threat.[13] There are also reports of military supplies intended for military outposts being redirected to the insurgents in exchange for money.

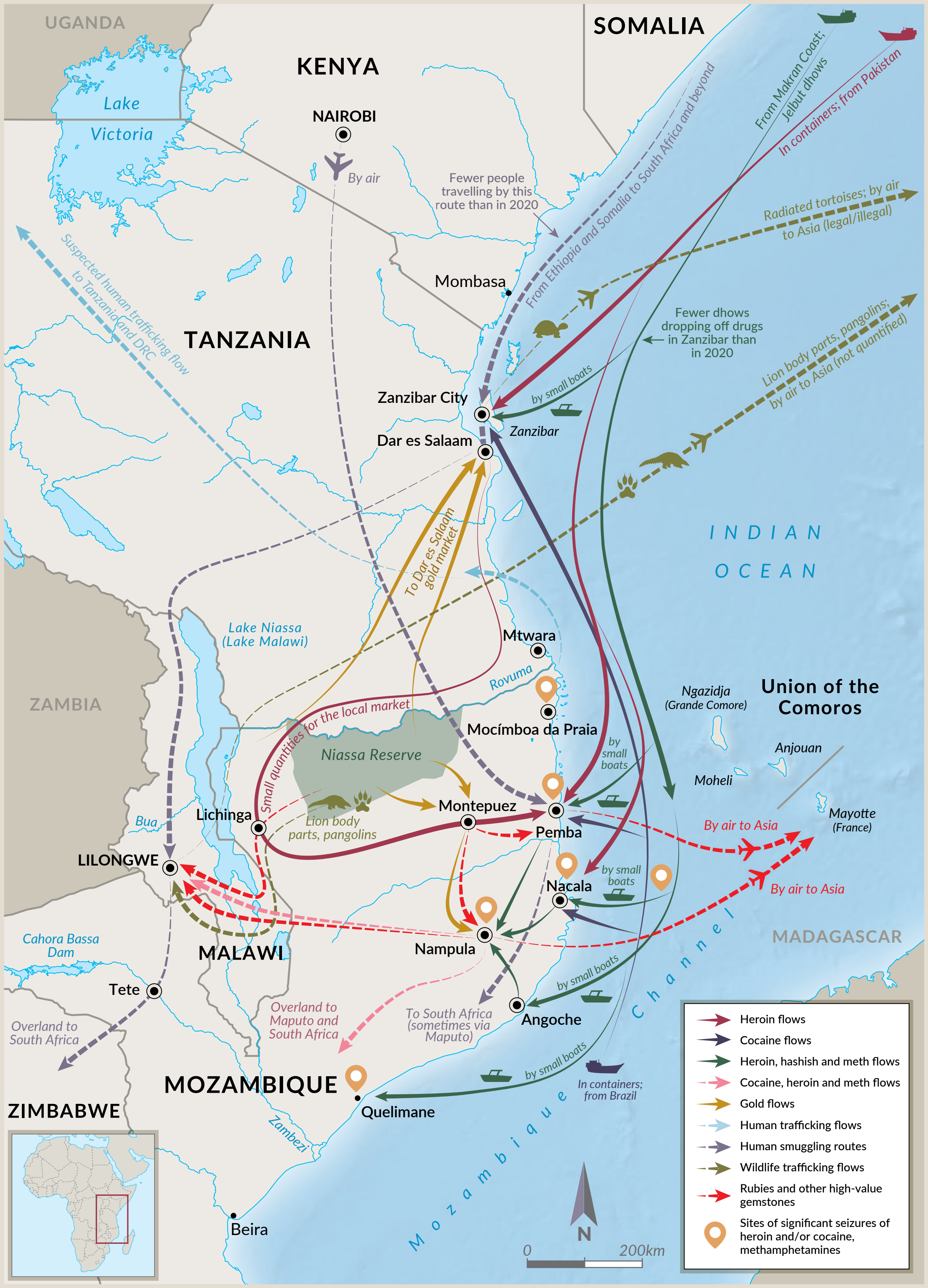
POTENTIAL INTERNATIONAL ARMS FLOWS

While the bulk of weapons used by al-Shabaab clearly come from Mozambican sources, there have been persistent reports about weapons procured from Tanzania, the DRC, Kenya and Somalia.[14] The GI-TOC has investigated these reports, which suggest three routes for weapons smuggling.

First, and most surprisingly, sources in Niassa linked to the insurgency reported that during the al-Shabaab occupation of Mocímboa da Praia, weapons and logistics equipment were flown into the town using fixed-wing aircraft.[15] Other sources also reported that aircraft had been flying into insurgent-occupied Mocímboa da Praia, suggesting that this route was being used to bring in foreign fighters from Somalia and other countries for strategic discussions with the Mozambican insurgents.

Weapons confiscated by Rwandan soldiers from insurgents in Cabo Delgado, 2021. *Photo: Simon Wohlfahrt/AFP via Getty Images*

ILLICIT FLOWS THROUGH NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE


UGANDA
Lake Victoria
KENYA
NAIROBI
By air
SOMALIA
Fewer people travelling by this route than in 2020
From Ethiopia and Somalia to South Africa and beyond
From Makran Coast; Jelbut dhows
In containers; from Pakistan
Radiated tortoises; by air to Asia (legal/illegal)
Mombasa
Suspected human trafficking flow to Tanzania and DRC
TANZANIA
Fewer dhows dropping off drugs in Zanzibar than in 2020
by small boats
Zanzibar City
Zanzibar
Dar es Salaam
Lion body parts, pangolins; by air to Asia (not quantified)
To Dar es Salaam gold market
INDIAN OCEAN
Lake Niassa (Lake Malawi)
ZAMBIA
Mtwara
Rovuma
Small quantities for the local market
Ngazidja (Grande Comore)
Union of the Comoros
Mocímboa da Praia
by small boats
Anjouan
Niassa Reserve
Moheli
Mayotte (France)
Bua
Lichinga
Montepuez
Pemba
By air to Asia
Lion body parts, pangolins
LILONGWE
by small boats
Nacala
By air to Asia
MADAGASCAR
Cahora Bassa Dam
MALAWI
Nampula
Tete
by small boats
Angoche
Overland to South Africa
Overland to Maputo and South Africa
To South Africa (sometimes via Maputo)
Mozambique Channel
In containers; from Brazil
by small boats
MOZAMBIQUE
Quelimane
ZIMBABWE
Zambezi
Beira
N
0
200km
Heroin flows
Cocaine flows
Heroin, hashish and meth flows
Cocaine, heroin and meth flows
Gold flows
Human trafficking flows
Human smuggling routes
Wildlife trafficking flows
Rubies and other high-value gemstones
Sites of significant seizures of heroin and/or cocaine, methamphetamines

SOURCE: GI-TOC fieldwork in the region in November 2021.

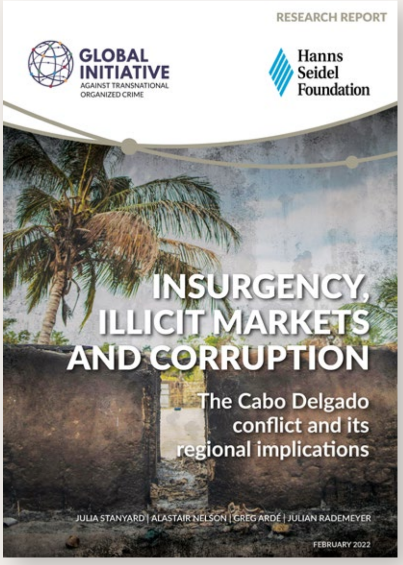
Despite there being multiple separate reports of aircraft landing in Mocímboa da Praia, it has not been possible for the GI-TOC to conclusively confirm this information. Small fixed-wing aircraft are widely used along the East African coast, and with a willing pilot and a false flight plan it could be possible to travel undetected to Mocímboa da Praia. The kind of radar systems required to identify these low-flying aircraft do not exist in northern Cabo Delgado. However, it is difficult to imagine that this activity would have gone unnoticed, whether within pilot circles or from the ground. It is also possible that this narrative is being used to keep other trafficking routes concealed.

The second possibility is for weapons to be smuggled overland, via Malawi or over the more remote border posts into Niassa. This could include weapons sourced in conflict areas in eastern DRC, transported via Lake Tanganyika, which is known as an active smuggling route for a variety of goods including ivory and weapons.[16] This would replicate suspected weapon-smuggling routes existing at the height of elephant poaching in Niassa Reserve.[17] Border posts along these land borders are known for extracting corrupt payments to move goods such as gems, gold, timber, bushmeat and, in the past, ivory. However, it has not been possible to independently confirm that these routes have been used to smuggle weapons to al-Shabaab.

Third, weapons may have been moved via seagoing dhows south from Tanzania to insurgent-held territory along the Mozambican coast. In late 2020 and early 2021, basic supplies (such as food items) were being transported into Mocímboa da Praia from southern Tanzania (around Mtwara) at night to avoid helicopter fire from DAG.[18] This may also have been used as an arms-smuggling route, as reported in GI-TOC interviews conducted in 2020.[19] However, it has not been possible to confirm that weapons have been moved along this route.

DISRUPTION OF TRAFFICKING ROUTES DUE TO THE INSURGENCY

Our research consistently found that trafficking routes through northern Mozambique have changed in the face of the region's increasingly unstable security situation. Changes includes routes having shifted away from areas where insurgents hold territory and conflict is most intense – drug-trafficking landing sites, for example, have moved south to the southern Cabo Delgado and Nampula coastlines. Therefore, trafficking networks in northern Mozambique are unlikely to also be providing weapons to al-Shabaab. While there may be some international flows of arms that have reached al-Shabaab, the evidence suggests that the volume of these flows would nevertheless pale in comparison to the number of weapons sourced from Mozambique's military, either via conflict or through corruption.


RESEARCH REPORT

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Hanns Seidel Foundation

INSURGENCY, ILLICIT MARKETS AND CORRUPTION

The Cabo Delgado conflict and its regional implications

JULIA STANYARD | ALASTAIR NELSON | GREG ARDÉ | JULIAN RADEMEYER

FEBRUARY 2022

This article draws from a new research report from the GI-TOC, 'Insurgency, illicit markets and corruption: the Cabo Delgado conflict and its regional implications', funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, which will be released on 24 February 2022.

2. The maritime interdiction of over a thousand assault rifles en route to Yemen is the latest iteration of Iranian state-sponsored arms smuggling.

On 20 December 2021, US naval forces intercepted a stateless fishing dhow in the northern Arabian Sea. In what was described as a 'flag-verification boarding', intended to establish the origins of the vessel,[20] a cargo of 1 400 assault rifles and over 200 000 rounds of ammunition were discovered. The US navy reported that the weapons are likely to have originated in Iran, as this maritime route has historically been used to traffic weapons to Houthi rebels in Yemen, in violation of both UN Security Council Resolutions and US sanctions.[21]

This is the thirteenth such interdiction by international naval forces since September 2015 of weapons shipments believed to have been destined for Houthi insurgents in Yemen. In two prior incidents, maritime interdictions of arms-smuggling dhows were carried out by the USS *Winston Churchill* (11–12 February 2021) and the USS *Monterey* (6–7 May 2021), off the coast of Somalia and in the Arabian Sea, respectively.

Preliminary images of the December 2021 seizure released by the US Navy indicate that it matches the pattern of earlier maritime interdictions. In particular, the guns onboard seem to be Type 56-1 assault rifles – Chinese-manufactured AK-type rifles characterized by their under-folding metal stocks. The two previous interdictions in 2021 also resulted in the seizure of several thousand of these Type 56-1 rifles, as well as a range of heavier weapons. The green packaging in which the weapons were stored aboard the dhow is also similar to the packaging used to encase the Type 56-1 rifles seized in separate incidents in 2018 and 2021.[22] It is unusual, however, that the most recent seizure also contained ammunition as well as rifles, something that has rarely been seen in earlier interdictions.

Analysis of earlier arms shipments that appear similar to the December 2021 seizure suggests they are likely to be Iranian state supplies being provided to Houthi allies in Yemen. Previous GI-TOC analysis has found that these Type-56-1 rifles have later been documented in illicit markets across Somalia.[23]

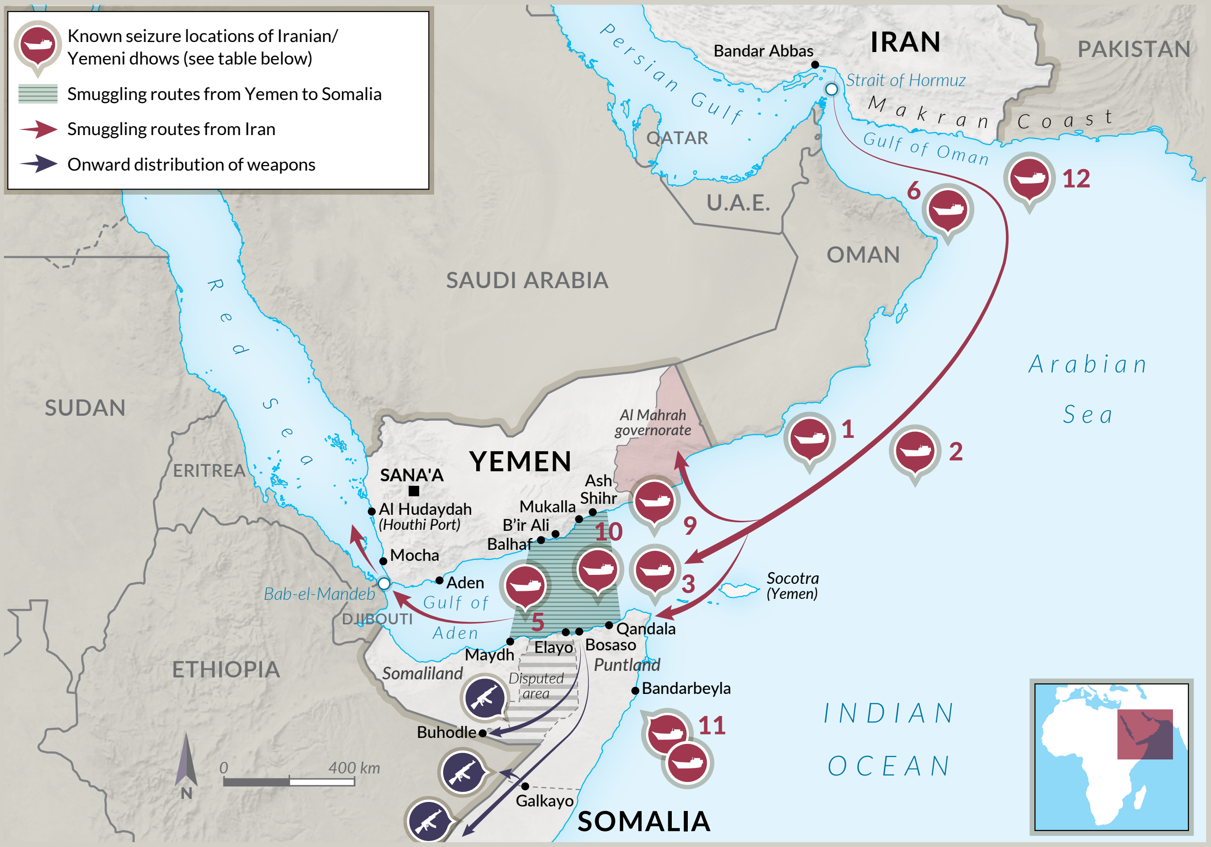
THE EVIDENCE FOR IRANIAN STATE-SUPPLIED ARMS

The civil war in Yemen – which first erupted in late 2014 when Houthi insurgents captured large parts of the country – has become a key battleground for proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi-backed coalition of forces fight in support of the internationally recognized government of Yemen, while evidence suggests that the Houthis have received support from Iran.

A portion of this Iranian support has consisted of deliveries of small arms and light weapons to Yemen,[24] carried out by sophisticated, transnational maritime-trafficking networks.

A dhow found to be carrying 1 400 assault rifles, believed to be travelling from Iran to supply Houthi rebels in Yemen in December 2021. The green packaging seen on the deck of the ship is consistent with previous seizures of this kind. *Photo: US Navy*

KNOWN MARITIME SEIZURES OF ARMS-TRAFFICKING DHOWS, 2015–2021


Known seizure locations of Iranian/ Yemeni dhows (see table below)
Smuggling routes from Yemen to Somalia
Smuggling routes from Iran
Onward distribution of weapons
IRAN
PAKISTAN
Bandar Abbas
Strait of Hormuz
Persian Gulf
Makran Coast
Gulf of Oman
QATAR
U.A.E.
OMAN
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea
SUDAN
ERITREA
YEMEN
SANA'A
Al Hudaydah (Houthi Port)
Mocha
Al Mahrah governorate
Ash Shihr
Mukalla
B'ir Ali
Balhaf
Aden
Gulf of Aden
Bab-el-Mandeb
DJIBOUTI
Socotra (Yemen)
Arabian Sea
ETHIOPIA
Somaliland
Maydh
Elayo
Bosaso
Qandala
Puntland
Disputed area
Bandarbeyla
Buhodle
Galkayo
SOMALIA
INDIAN OCEAN
0
400 km
N
1
2
3
5
6
9
10
11
12

	DATE	INTERDICTING AUTHORITY	LOCATION	MATERIAL SEIZED
1	24 Sep 2015	HMAS *Melbourne*	Arabian Sea, off the coast of Oman*	75 anti-tank guided missiles (Toophan/ M113 Konkurs/ 9M133 Kornet variants).
2	27 Feb 2016	HMAS *Darwin*	Arabian Sea, off the coast of Oman*	1 989 AK-pattern assault rifles; 49 PKM light machine guns; 100 RPG launchers; 20 60-mm mortars tubes.
3	20 Mar 2016	FS *La Provence*	Gulf of Aden*	1 998 AK-pattern assault rifles; six PKM light machine guns; 64 Hoshdar-M sniper rifles; 100 PRG launchers; 20 60-mm mortars; nine 9M113 Konkurs or 9M133 Kornet variant anti-tank guided missiles.
4	28 Mar 2016	USS *Sirocco*	Persian Gulf or Arabian Sea	1 500 AK-pattern assault rifles; 21 DShK-pattern heavy machine guns; 200 RPG launchers.
5	28 Aug 2018	USS *Jason Dunham*	Gulf of Aden*	Over 2 522 AK-pattern (Type 56-1) assault rifles.
6	25 Jun 2019	HMAS *Ballarat*	Gulf of Oman*	697 bags ammonium nitrate fertilizer; 475 000 rounds small calibre ammunition.
7	25 Nov 2019	USS *Forrest Sherman*	Arabian Sea	21 'Dehlavieh' anti-tank guided missiles; components for the Quds-1 land attack cruise missile, for a C802 anti-ship cruise missile and for a third, unidentified cruise missile; two previously unknown surface-to-air missiles.
8	9 Feb 2020	USS *Normandy*	Arabian Sea	150 'Dehlavieh' anti-tank guided missiles; three 358 surface-to-air missile; various optical sights.
9	17 Apr 2020	Saudi-led coalition forces	Gulf of Aden*	3 002 Type 56-1 rifles, other unknown materiel.
10	24 Jun 2020	Saudi-led coalition forces	Gulf of Aden*	1 298 AK-pattern rifles (mostly Type 56-1s); RPG-29 variants; 'Dehlavieh' anti-tank guided missiles; PKM-pattern light machine guns; DShK-pattern heavy machine guns, optical sights; AM-50 Sayyad anti-material rifles; Walther air rifles.
11	11–12 February 2021	USS *Winston Churchill*	Indian Ocean*	~3 700 AK-pattern assault rifles, 100 PKM-pattern light machine guns, 200 PKM spare barrels, 80 DShK-pattern heavy machine guns with spare barrels, 25 DShK-pattern heavy machine guns mounts, 50 12.7 mm sniper rifles with optics, 90 RPG launchers.
12	6-7 May 2021	USS *Monterey*	Arabian Sea*	2 555 Type 56-1 rifles, 35 AKS-74U rifles, 194 RPG launchers, 192 PKM light machine guns, 100 SVD-pattern sniper rifles (plus optics), 52 AM-50 Sayyad anti-materiel rifles, 51 AM-50 Sayyad POSP optics, 48 anti-tank guided missiles.
13	20 Dec 2021	USS *Tempest* and USS *Typhoon*	North Arabian Sea	1 400 assault rifles, seemingly Type 56-1s. 226 600 rounds of ammunition

NOTE: * Indicates seizures shown on the map.

SOURCE: UN Panel of Experts on Yemen, US Central Command, Australian Navy, GI-TOC.

The 1 400 assault rifles seized from the dhow and the rounds of ammunition aboard a US naval vessel. *Photo: US Navy*

Frequent meetings and transhipments between dhows of Iranian, Yemeni and Somali origin disguise the provenance of weapon shipments and evade detection.[25]

Three pieces of evidence point to the intercepted weapons coming from Iranian state supplies. First, analysis of the serial numbers of the Type 56-1 rifles seized in February and May 2021 shows that the numbers run almost consecutively, which suggests that they could have formed part of a state-to-state transfer from China (where these weapons are manufactured) to Iran.[26] While state-to-state weapons transfers would be expected to contain newly manufactured weapons with a continuous run of serial numbers, stock assembled from black-market trading would probably have a wider range or more random distribution of numbers.

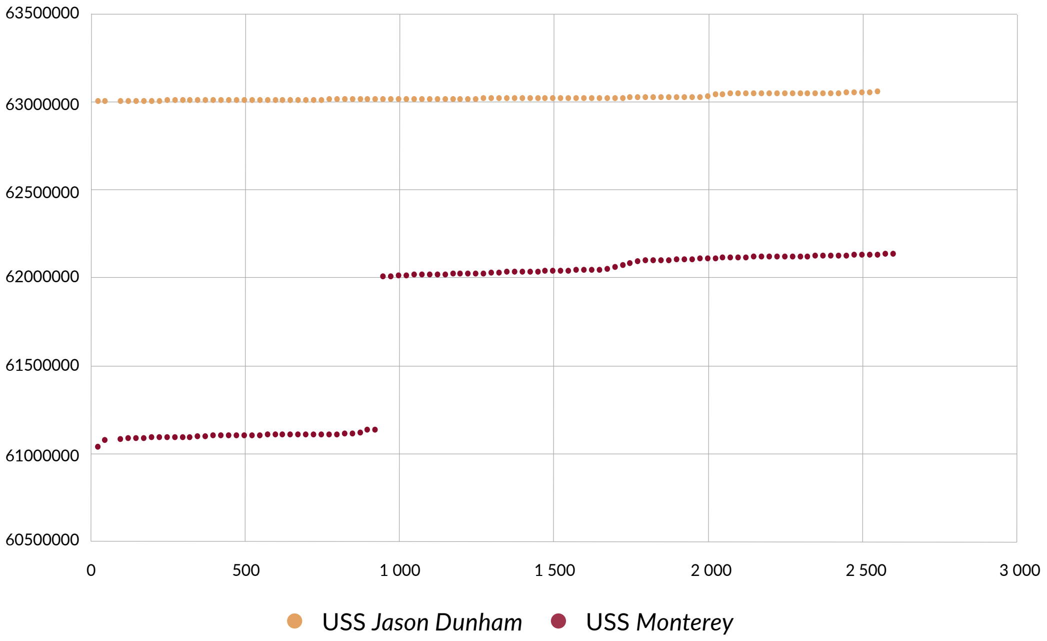


FIGURE 1 Proximity of the serial numbers of rifles seized by the USS *Jason Dunham* and USS *Monterey*.

NOTE: To facilitate graphical presentation, each data point represents the averaged value of a group of 25 serial numbers. The proximity of the serial numbers (of the entire shipment in the case of the USS *Jason Dunham* seizure, and in two clusters in the USS *Monterey* seizure) suggests the weapons come from state stockpiles.

The Type 56 rifle is a Chinese copy of the Soviet-manufactured AKMS assault rifle, first produced in 1956. The primary feature distinguishing the Type 56-1 model from other Type 56 rifles is the stock, which folds beneath the rifle making it easier to carry.

Second, most of the seizures since late 2015 have also contained weapons manufactured in Iran itself.

Third, GPS information from several seized arms-trafficking dhows suggests that the vessels had travelled from Iran in the days before their interception. For instance, a GPS device onboard one of two dhows intercepted by US forces in February 2021 contained coordinates from late January 2021 that corresponded to a small anchorage lying roughly 10 kilometres east of Jask, a strategically important port near the Strait of Hormuz that is host to an Iranian naval base.[27]

The Wall Street Journal reported in January 2022 that a draft report prepared by the UN Security Council's Panel of Experts on Yemen identified Jask as the origin point for multiple weapons shipments to Yemen, citing interviews with the Yemeni crewmembers and data from navigational devices onboard the dhows.[28]

SPILLOVER INTO SOMALIA

Between December 2020 and August 2021, GI-TOC field researchers documented a total of 417 small arms and light weapons in Somalia by surveying 13 different locations. Some 38 of these (9.1% of the total) were Type 56-1 rifles and were found in eight of the locations.

The serial numbers of the Type 56-1 rifles found in Somalia clustered around those documented in various maritime seizures, suggesting a common source. As noted above, corroborating evidence strongly indicates that common source to be Iranian state arsenals.

It remains difficult to know exactly when and how the rifles reached Somalia. It is open to speculation whether they were trans-shipped from Iranian consignments en route to Yemen, or diverted into the illicit arms market only after reaching Yemen. Regardless, it is likely that some of the rifles being transported by the vessel intercepted last December may also eventually have found their way to Somalia.

THE DECEMBER 2021 INTERDICTION

Following the December 2021 interdictions, the US Navy determined that the vessel was 'a hazard to navigation for commercial shipping' and sank it.[29] The five crewmembers of the dhow intercepted in December 2021 all identified themselves as Yemeni nationals and were subsequently handed over to Yemeni authorities.[30] This represents a departure from previous practice, where arms-trafficking vessels and their crews have been released following the seizure of their cargoes. The weapons, meanwhile, were transferred to a US guided-missile destroyer. There has been pressure on international forces by external observers – such as the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia – to preserve seized weapons for documentation and analysis, in cases such as this.[31]

Evidence suggests that trafficking networks have repeatedly used the same dhows to transport multiple weapons shipments. For example, one of the two dhows intercepted in February 2021 – the *Umm-al-Mada'in* – was identified by a GI-TOC source familiar with maritime arms-smuggling gangs in both Yemen and Somalia as the same dhow intercepted just two months later by international forces.[32]

The sinking of the latest intercepted vessel perhaps indicates a shift in approach by international forces operating in the Arabian Sea and western Indian

The green packaging found aboard the dhow interdicted by the USS *Jason Dunham* on 28 August 2018 (pictured) is consistent with the most recent seizure and another in 2021. *Photo: Class Jonathan Clay/US Navy*

Ocean (to intercept arms and drugs shipments) towards preventing the same vessels from being used in multiple trafficking incidents.

THE REGIONAL RAMIFICATIONS

The supply of weapons to Yemen sustains a civil war that has led to one of the world's worst ongoing humanitarian disasters. Over 20 million people are estimated to need humanitarian assistance or protection, and UN agencies operating in Yemen warned in late December 2021 that 8 million people of these will receive reduced food rations from the start of 2022 as a result of budget shortfalls.[33]

The proliferation of arms in Somalia, diverted from Yemen, also has potentially serious security implications for the African country, as well as for neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya. The militant groups al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant faction operating in Somalia's Puntland region routinely source small arms and ammunition from Yemen.[34]

3. A violent environmental market: the heavy cost of South Africa's abalone trade.

The illicit abalone economy has been flourishing in South Africa for more than 25 years. Demand for the sea-floor-growing molluscs (considered a high-status delicacy in East Asia, primarily in China) has driven a black market, which, in South Africa, is closely bound up with organized crime. The industry today is rife with violence and corruption, enmeshed in the drug trade and controlled by local gangs. Consequently, the already harsh environmental and social impacts of the abalone trade continue to worsen.

Abalone poaching occurs along most of South Africa's coastline, with hotspots in the Cape peninsula and Overberg regions of the Western Cape, the portion of the Eastern Cape coast up to Gqeberha, and further north up to the Wild Coast.[35] Once caught, the product is shucked and dried at some of the many processing facilities throughout the country.[36]

Dried abalone is then smuggled to Hong Kong, an abalone trade hub that imports thousands of tonnes of the mollusc each year. The product reaches Hong Kong either directly from South Africa or, increasingly, by being smuggled overland to neighbouring southern African countries, where it can easily be laundered into the large and legitimate global market for abalone.

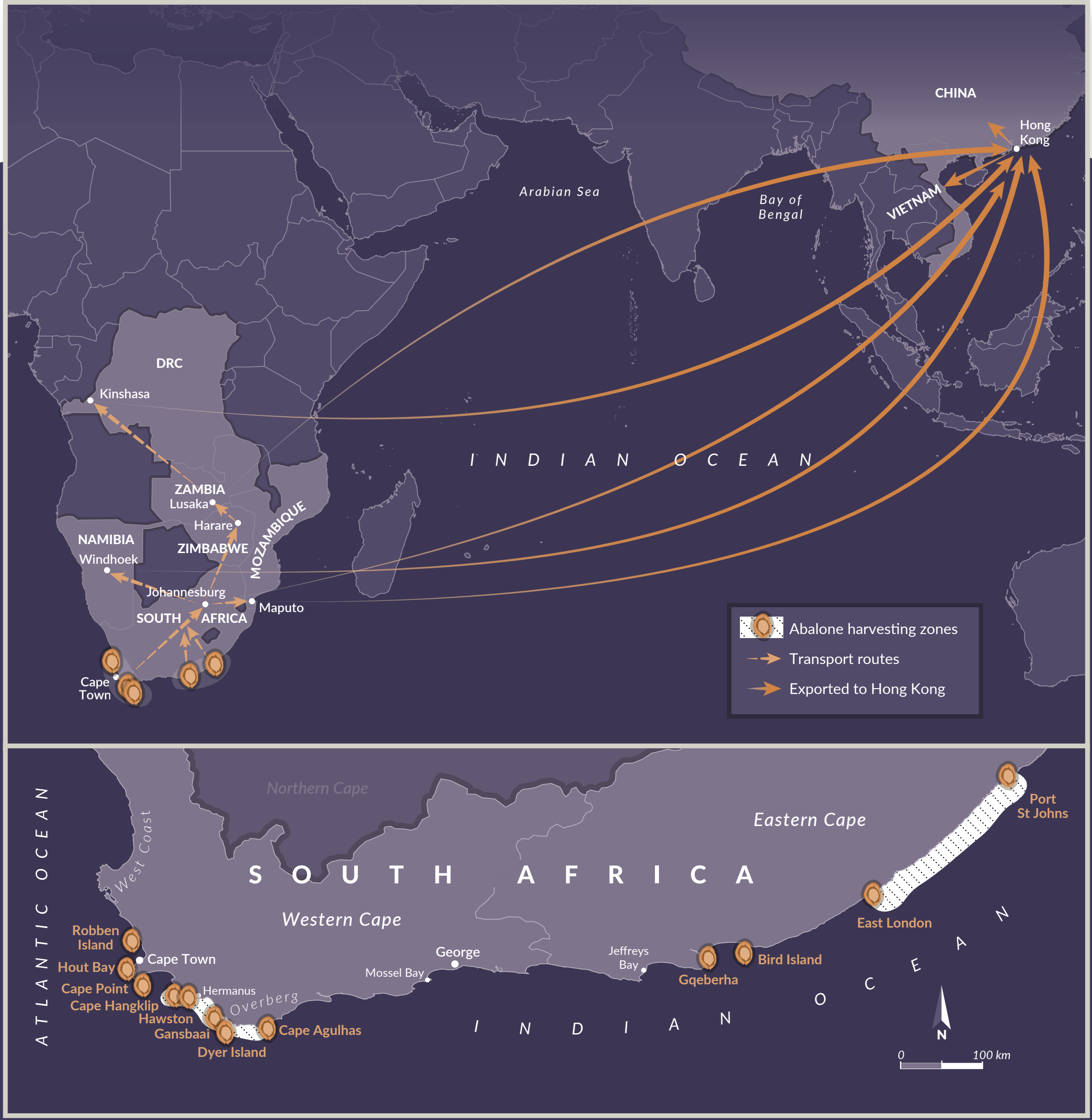

CHINA
Hong Kong
VIETNAM
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
INDIAN OCEAN
DRC
Kinshasa
ZAMBIA
Lusaka
Harare
ZIMBABWE
NAMIBIA
Windhoek
MOZAMBIQUE
Johannesburg
SOUTH AFRICA
Maputo
Cape Town
Abalone harvesting zones
Transport routes
Exported to Hong Kong
Northern Cape
West Coast
ATLANTIC OCEAN
SOUTH AFRICA
Western Cape
Eastern Cape
Port St Johns
East London
Robben Island
Cape Town
Hout Bay
Cape Point
Cape Hangklip
Hermanus
Overberg
Hawston
Gansbaai
Dyer Island
Cape Agulhas
Mossel Bay
George
Jeffreys Bay
Gqeberha
Bird Island
INDIAN OCEAN
N
0
100 km

FIGURE 2 Global routes of illicit abalone trade and abalone poaching territory in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, South Africa.

THE CHANGING POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ABALONE INDUSTRY

South Africa's illegal abalone market began thriving in the early 1990s, spurred by demand from China's newly opened economy and fast-growing middle class. This provided a lucrative opportunity for black and Coloured fishers who had been excluded from South Africa's commercial fishing industry – first, during the apartheid era, and then in its immediate aftermath, as a result of the slow progress of regulatory reforms. Throughout the 1990s, organized-criminal gangs based in Cape Town – already involved in retail drug markets – were drawn into the abalone trade as extortionists (demanding protection fees from divers), middlemen and as the owners of poaching vessels. While the gangsters brought violence and drugs to South Africa's fishing communities, the poaching economy provided a revenue stream for gangs to buy weapons and drugs, thereby handing gangs greater power and having a transformative effect on the gangs themselves.

Today, the abalone market is a complex ecosystem. As of 2020, five distinct groups of actors could be identified working in the illegal trade: poaching syndicates (known as 'divers') that developed out of Coloured fishing communities in the Western Cape; black poaching syndicates and divers from the Eastern Cape, working in the Overberg and Cape Town area, who are increasingly affiliated with gangs; Cape criminal gangs, in particular those associated

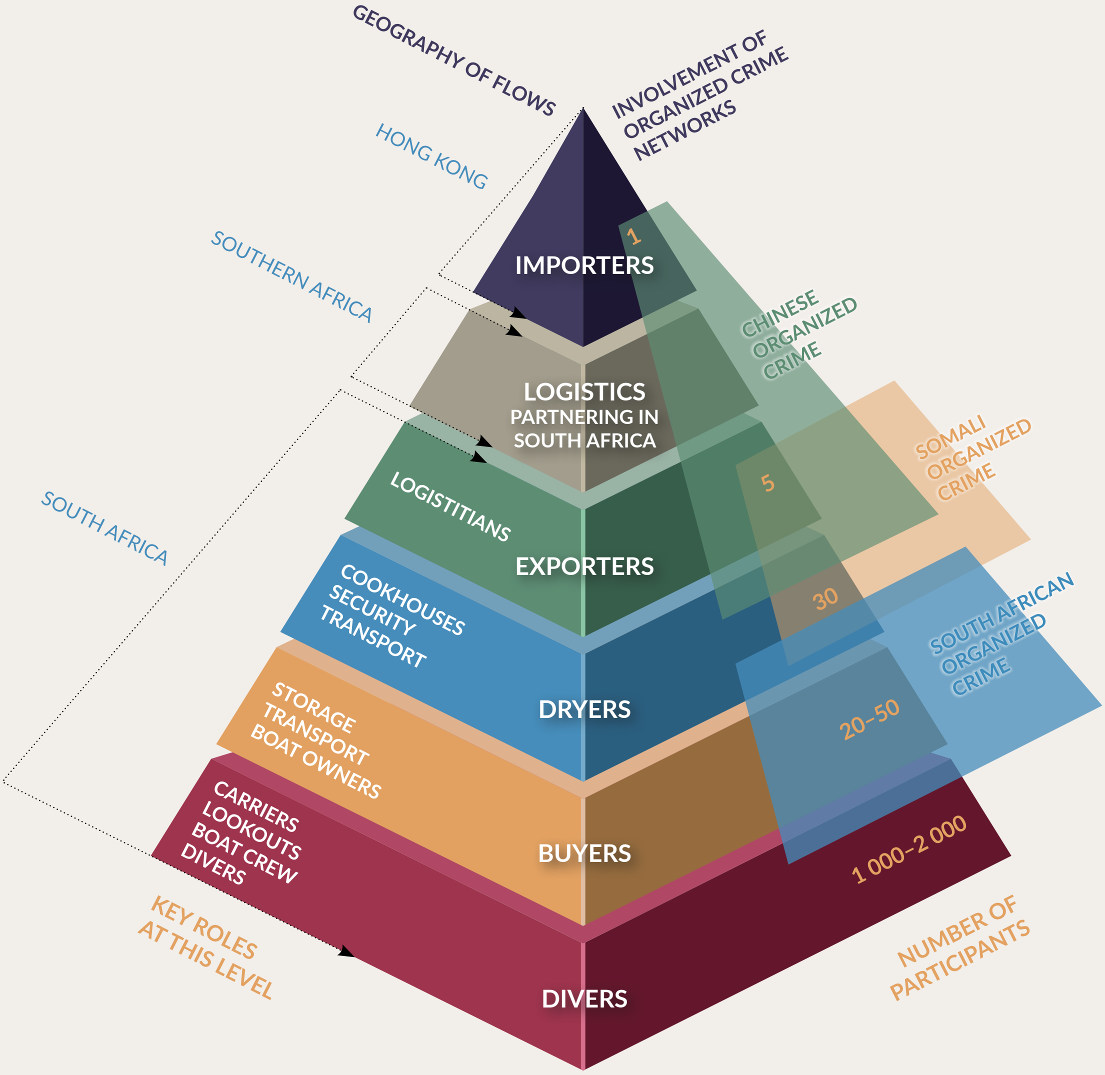

GEOGRAPHY OF FLOWS
HONG KONG
SOUTHERN AFRICA
SOUTH AFRICA
INVOLVEMENT OF ORGANIZED CRIME NETWORKS
IMPORTERS
1
LOGISTICS
PARTNERING IN SOUTH AFRICA
CHINESE ORGANIZED CRIME
LOGISTITIANS
EXPORTERS
5
SOMALI ORGANIZED CRIME
COOKHOUSES
SECURITY
TRANSPORT
DRYERS
30
SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIZED CRIME
STORAGE
TRANSPORT
BOAT OWNERS
BUYERS
20–50
CARRIERS
LOOKOUTS
BOAT CREW
DIVERS
DIVERS
1 000–2 000
KEY ROLES AT THIS LEVEL
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

FIGURE 3 Organizational structure of the illicit abalone global supply chain and estimated number of participants.

SOURCE: Kimon de Greef and Simone Haysom, Disrupting abalone harms: Illicit flows of *H. midae* from South Africa to East Asia, GI-TOC, February 2022 with the notorious 28s prison gang; Somali (and sometimes Congolese) South Africa-based middlemen buying from black divers, and arranging transport and laundering for Chinese buyers; and Chinese networks encompassing buyers, driers and exporters.[37] These elements of the supply chain suggest a striking division between local actors, operating primarily in the bottom half of the value chain, and foreign nationals operating mainly at the top.

In addition to the criminal networks directly involved in the abalone trade, there are a range of people who can be considered as 'enablers' of the illicit market. These provide crucial professional services, such as facilitating financial transactions or providing legal or logistical services, and in many ways make the criminal trade possible.

RIGID CONTROL AT THE HIGHER LEVELS OF THE TRADE CHAIN

Networks of Chinese high-level traffickers operate in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa's biggest logistics hub. According to interviews with law-enforcement officers,[38] and people close to operators in the abalone industry, there are very few of these traffickers who control illegal abalone exports to Hong Kong at a high level.

These Hong Kong bosses reportedly dictate where top-level buyers – those who buy abalone, dry the product and arrange for its export – are allowed to work, which local middlemen they are allowed to deal with, and what quantities of abalone they are expected to supply.[39]

So-called operational managers in South Africa monitor the buyers and help coordinate exports. The level of oversight is such that investigators struggle to execute reverse entrapments, as the arrival of any abalone on the market that hasn't been accounted for by a buyer in the network raises suspicions, no matter how small: 'If as little as 300 kilograms of abalone enters the market, the Chinese immediately know who took it in and who they bought it from,' one senior investigative official said.[40]

Officials describe a system where prospective buyers must first be approved and then play by the rules to do business. Occasionally, buyers take in abalone intended for rivals, but only in small quantities, so they aren't detected. Officials estimate that fewer than 40 buyers work at this level, most of them Chinese. They have been joined, in the past few years, by a small number of Somali traffickers who have entered the trade.[41]

VIOLENT COMPETITION CLOSER TO SOURCE

Beneath the tightly controlled upper levels of the trade are 'frontline buyers', who deal directly with poaching syndicates and gangs. This level of the market is characterized by greater amounts of disorder and competition.[42] There is continual low-grade war between frontline buyers over attracting divers' catches.

At the level of poaching syndicates, there is much fluidity: gang extortion, high levels of competition and, at times, extreme violence means that there is significant turnover of people involved in the market.[43] Poachers refer to the chain of transactions between the harvesting of the abalone and its delivery to a frontline buyer as a 'line' (or *lyn*, in Afrikaans).[44] A 'line' implies integration and organization of the chain, which includes securing protection from corrupt officials.

However, the chain of transactions that connect poachers and buyers is in fact unstable: an ambitious boat driver with the capital to buy his own equipment, establish a connection to a corrupt official, and communication links with a frontline buyer, can break away and form his own operation. Divers with their own scuba-diving equipment can work independently from poaching syndicates and simply sell their products directly to frontline buyers. Although significant capital is required, resourceful divers can acquire the necessary equipment and essentially leapfrog the system and become criminal entrepreneurs.

The presence of individual actors contributes to the fragmentation of the market and broadens the scope for violence. These entrepreneurs vie for a stake in the market while more established players try to prevent them from muscling in on it. Increased competition at this level has resulted in a high rate of violent incidents (five senior police informants were reportedly killed in 2021 alone), and a greater number of episodes of poaching groups robbing one another have been observed.[45] These trends have had a destabilizing effect on the market.

Police raid an abalone-drying facility in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, on 20 January 2018. *Photo: Julian Rademeyer*

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN NATIONALS

Somali and Congolese groups are identified as being involved mainly in the transport phase, with the latter acting as logistics partners and the former also involved as middlemen buying from poachers and arranging transport and laundering services for Chinese networks.[46]

When drying facilities are raided by law enforcement, those arrested are often reported as undocumented foreign migrants from southern African countries (e.g. Malawi and Zimbabwe) or Pakistan. It is thought that buyers may invest heavily in training migrants to be highly skilled driers, as the quality of this process has consequences for the final price that can be charged for the goods.

Overall, the number of smaller poaching and drying businesses has grown – especially those businesses involved in buying from local middlemen to sell to exporters. Many small shopping malls (known as 'China malls'), where goods are sold wholesale, are believed to double as hubs for the illicit abalone trade.[47]

LIMITING THE SOCIAL HARMS OF THE ILLEGAL ABALONE TRADE

As with other forms of illegal wildlife trade, the abalone market has been criminalized because of its environmental harms: the degradation of a species endemic to South Africa (*H. midae*), and the knock-on effect on the integrity of kelp-forest ecosystems.

Yet there are also acute social repercussions linked to the illicit abalone trade, including increased violence and corruption, and burgeoning arms and drugs markets spurred by financial flows to criminal gangs. These harms have also become more acute over time, as a greater range of criminal actors have become involved in the trade, with highly detrimental consequences for certain Cape communities.

Globally, drug policy reforms have successfully shifted towards approaches that aim to limit the harmful social effects of these illegal markets. It may be time for the illegal abalone trade to also adopt a similar harm-reduction approach.

RESEARCH REPORT

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

DISRUPTING ABALONE HARMS

Illicit flows of *H. midae* from South Africa to East Asia

KIMON DE GREEF | SIMONE HAYSOM

FEBRUARY 2022

This article draws on research from 'Disrupting abalone harms: Illicit flows of *H. midae* from South Africa to East Asia', a new GI-TOC study by Simone Haysom and Kimon de Greef published in February 2022. Available at: https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/abalone-south-africa-east-asia/.

4. What does the year ahead hold for organized crime in eastern and southern Africa?

Organized crime is a notoriously difficult phenomenon to measure quantitatively. Not only does most organized criminal activity take place undetected, with those involved going to great lengths to conceal their role, but what is considered 'organized crime' is in fact disputed. In some countries, it is a politically contested issue, and it may be difficult to define the boundaries of what constitutes a 'criminal group' or 'network'.

Quantitative indicators of organized crime also have their limitations. With regards to drug markets, for example, drugs seizures are often used as a proxy for measuring drug-trafficking trends, when in fact the frequency and quantity of seizures may be shaped by the efficacy of policing strategies or levels of corruption, for example.

The ENACT Organised Crime Index – developed by the GI-TOC, the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL – is the first tool of its kind designed to assess levels of organized crime and states' resilience to organized-criminal activity, in a holistic manner.

The 2021 results of the Index offer insight into how organized crime has changed over the past two years in eastern and southern Africa. This data can, in turn, be used to predict how trends may develop into 2022. The assigned scores show an overall increase in organized-criminal activity in eastern and southern Africa since 2019. They also indicate that states' resilience to the harms of organised crime has increased in East Africa but decreased in southern Africa.

HOW THE INDEX WORKS

The Index is modelled on three constituent elements, two of which combine to provide a 'criminality score': the scale and impact of criminal markets (10 in total, ranging from environmental crime to drugs markets and human trafficking) and the influence of criminal actors (comprising four types, from mafia-style groups to criminal actors embedded within government).

The third element is 'resilience', which is defined as a country's ability to withstand and disrupt organized-criminal activity through political, economic, legal and social measures. The indicators in the 'resilience score' include witness protection and anti-money laundering measures. Both scores are measured on a scale from 1 to 10.

OVERALL TRENDS

A significant update to the 2021 Index is that it captures the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on organized crime across the African continent. The pandemic has taken a severe economic toll and put pressure on governments to deliver essential services while addressing an ongoing health crisis. In this context, organized crime in Africa has evolved and taken advantage of the confusion wrought by the pandemic; it has filled in the gaps left by state institutions, by adapting illicit activities in order to circumvent pandemic restrictions and by providing alternative sources of income and parallel services.

The Global Organized Crime Index (of which the ENACT Africa Index forms a part) found that Africa has the second-highest continental score for criminal markets, after Asia. In late 2020, the UN Conference on Trade and Development estimated that the African continent experiences an annual loss of US$88.6 billion in illicit financial flows linked to criminal activities.[48] The Africa Index findings from 2021 indicate that this figure has grown in the intervening months.

EAST AFRICA

East Africa scored the highest levels of criminality in Africa (with a criminality score of 5.66). Criminality in East Africa is driven by several extensive criminal markets as well as by a strong presence of criminal actors in fragile areas beset by prolonged conflicts. Index data showed that six of the nine countries that make up this region have significantly high levels of criminality, with scores ranging from 5.79 to 6.95.

The Index identified human trafficking as the most pervasive criminal market in East Africa. The extremely high average score is driven largely by the scores of Eritrea (9.0), South Sudan (8.5), Sudan (8.0) and Somalia (8.0), all four of which rank among the five most affected countries for human trafficking on the continent.

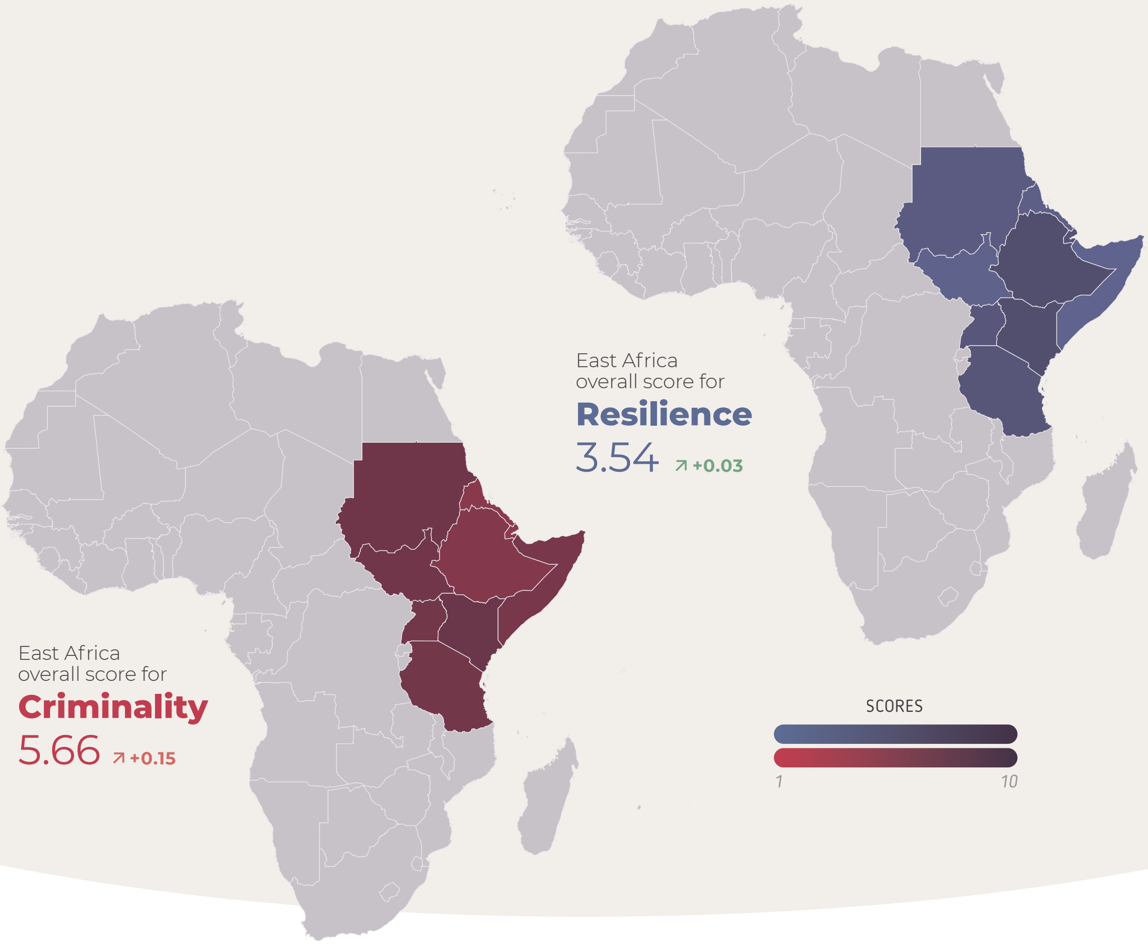

East Africa
overall score for
Resilience
3.54 ↗ +0.03
East Africa
overall score for
Criminality
5.66 ↗ +0.15
SCORES
1
10

FIGURE 4 East Africa overall criminality and resilience scores.
SOURCE: ENACT Organised Crime Index 2021.

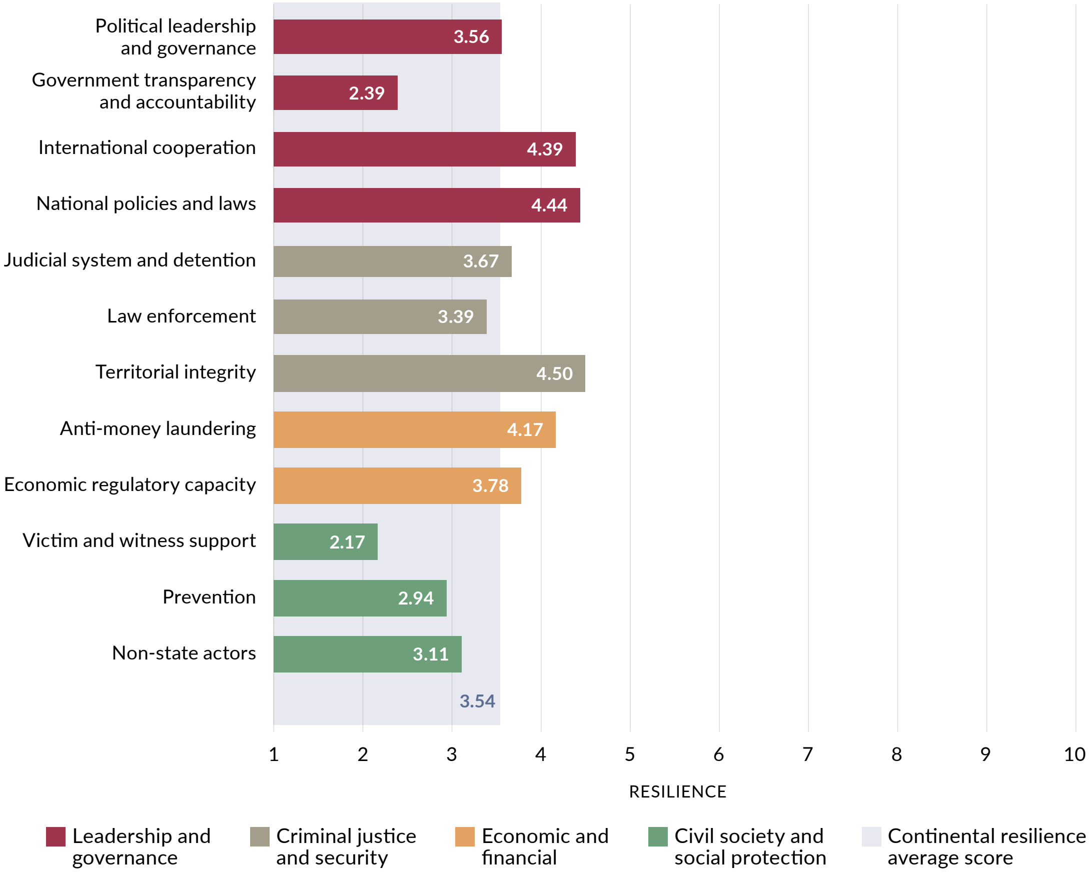


FIGURE 5 Resilience scores for East Africa.
SOURCE: ENACT Organised Crime Index 2021.

Although all countries in the region are afflicted by high levels of human smuggling (with the exception of Uganda, at 5.0), the very high average score is largely a result of the situation in Eritrea. Repressive border-control procedures are imposed by the government, which compel potential migrants (including those who do not wish to participate in Eritrea's compulsory military service) to rely on illegal channels.

East Africa's overall criminality score increased from 5.51 in 2019 to 5.66 in 2021. Criminal markets such as human trafficking and human smuggling saw an increase of 0.78 and 0.67 respectively, constituting the highest score increases for the region. During the same period, arms trafficking and fauna crimes increased by 0.33 and 0.39, respectively. The increase in arms trafficking could be linked to ongoing civil unrest and violence in the region, most notably Ethiopia's Tigray conflict, which has spurred demand in the regional small-arms trade.

East Africa also reported the lowest regional average score for resilience in Africa (3.54). Law-enforcement capabilities (scoring just 3.39) were judged to be poor, as the lack of trust in law-enforcement agencies, in addition to their limited integrity, corruption and weak capacity are ongoing problems across the region. Similarly, the judicial system and detention indicator scored low (3.67) because of the lack of independence as well as poor access to justice and harsh prison conditions, which in some cases do not meet fundamental human-rights principles. Again, countries experiencing episodes of violence and conflict (such as Ethiopia) scored poorly.

However, East Africa's overall score for resilience has shown a small improvement since 2019 (+0.03). With the exception of Tanzania, Djibouti and Ethiopia, all countries in the region saw their overall resilience scores increase. Notably, Ethiopia's Tigray conflict has affected almost every facet of resilience to organized crime scored in the Index.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

At first glance, criminality in southern Africa appears moderate, as the region has an average score of 4.67 – the lowest in Africa. In fact, most countries in the region do not feature markets that are beyond a moderate influence when it comes to criminality. Yet high levels of criminality are concentrated in four southern African countries: South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

The most pervasive criminal market in southern Africa is fauna crimes, which affect more than half of the countries in the region. Criminal groups target keystone fauna species, such as elephants and rhinos, of which the largest remaining populations are found in southern Africa.

South Africa remains the region's highest-scoring country in terms of criminality. The high crime levels are stoked by endemic gang violence, with groups particularly active in the drug trade and extortion, and with an illicit arms market that is at least partly fuelled by weapons diverted from police stockpiles.[49]

In addition to recording high levels of heroin consumption, South Africa is home to the most deep-rooted consumption market for methamphetamines, meaning that the country's score for synthetic-drugs market is the highest in the region, at 8.0. This market is supplied by domestic production as well as meth imports from West Africa. In addition, recent GI-TOC research has tracked how Afghanistan-produced meth is being trafficked into southern Africa along maritime routes typically used to transport heroin.[50]

Southern Africa tends to outperform the rest of Africa on most resilience indicators, including international cooperation on counter-crime strategies. The regional resilience scores have, however, decreased since the 2019 Index, owing to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021 Index points to 'law enforcement' (3.73) being the factor behind resilience with one of the worst overall scores in southern Africa, as was the case with East Africa. Almost half of the countries in the region have severely limited law-enforcement agencies, which are crippled by flagrant corruption. Severe lack of resources and capacity, as well as the poor treatment of people by security forces and subsequent lack of popular trust in the police, are among the factors inhibiting anti-organized-crime efforts throughout the region.

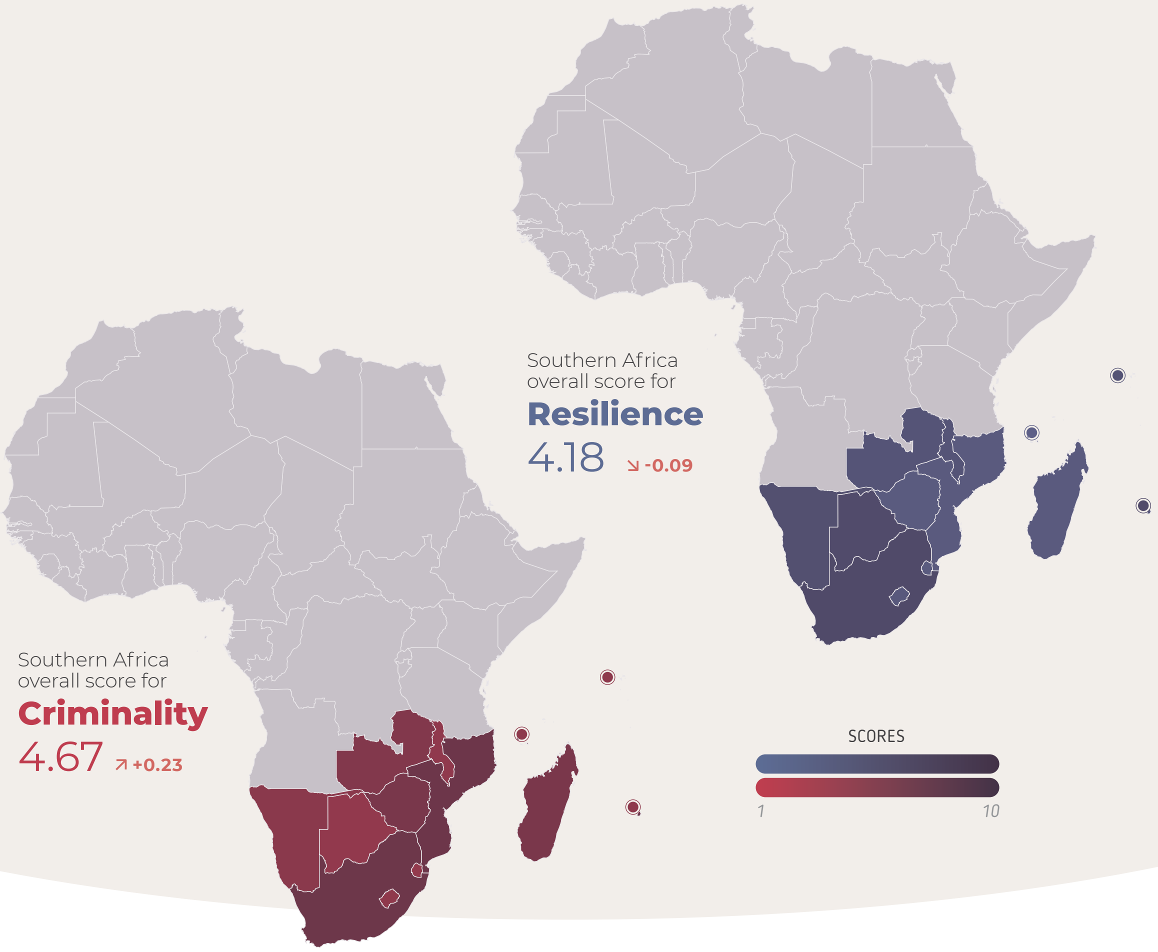

Southern Africa overall score for
Resilience
4.18 ↘ -0.09
Southern Africa overall score for
Criminality
4.67 ↗ +0.23
SCORES
1
10

FIGURE 6 Southern Africa overall criminality and resilience scores.
SOURCE: ENACT Organised Crime Index 2021.

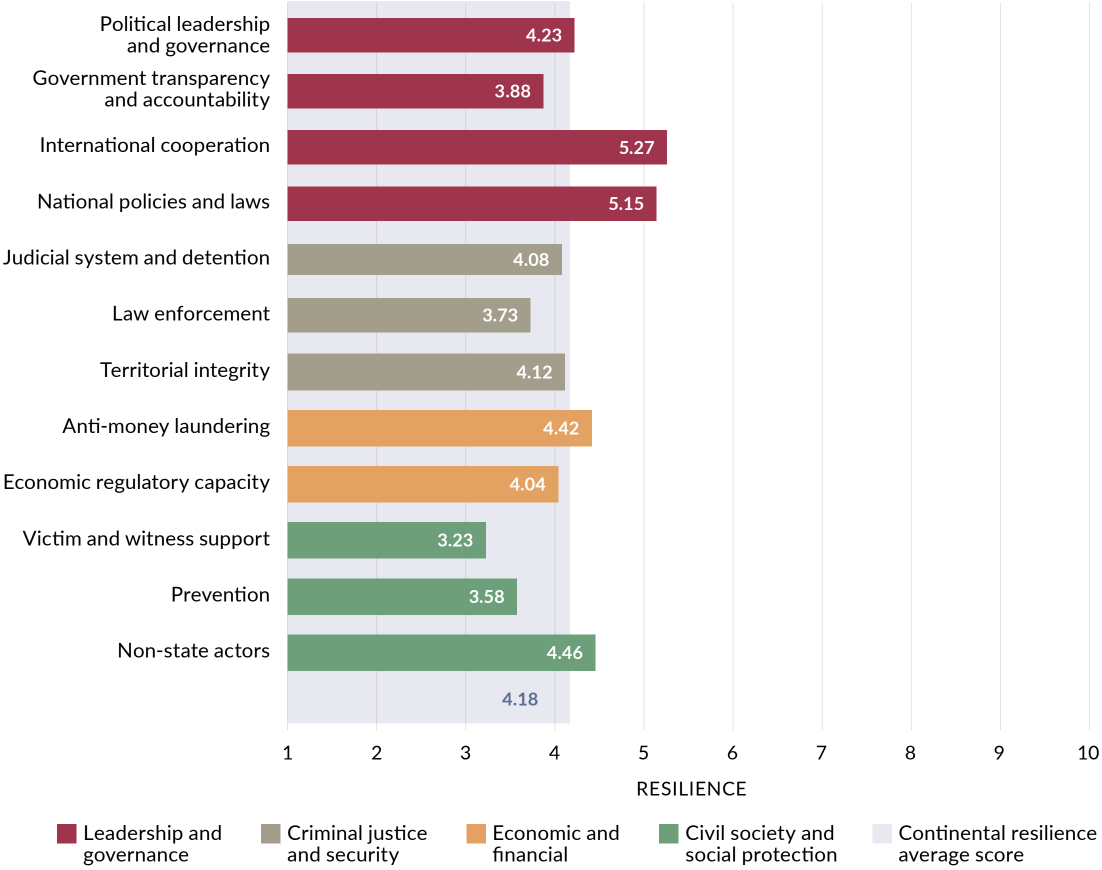


FIGURE 7 Resilience scores for southern Africa.
SOURCE: ENACT Organised Crime Index 2021.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR 2022?

In the year ahead, we can expect some forms of criminal activity to further increase as the economic effects of the pandemic persist. As the research found that the majority of people in Africa live in countries with high levels of criminality and low levels of resilience to organized crime, we can expect organized crime to continue to have a significant damaging effect on the lives and prosperity of many communities. However, we hope that the incremental gains made in resilience in some areas – particularly in parts of East Africa – continue. Countries can use the Index as a tool to identify areas of weakness and improve in those policy areas. Civil society groups can also use the Index as a tool for advocacy and to effect change.

Notes

1 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, How to silence the guns? Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets, GI-TOC, September 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GITOC-ESA-Obs-How-to-silence-the-guns-Southern-Africas-illegal-firearms-markets.pdf.

2 See, for example, Tim Lister, Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique Grows in Sophistication and Reach, CTC Sentinel, 13, 10, 2020, 35–45, https://ctc.usma.edu/jihadi-insurgency-in-mozambique-grows-in-sophistication-and-reach.

3 See Simone Haysom, Where crime compounds conflict: Understanding northern Mozambique's vulnerabilities, GI-TOC, 2018, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/northern_mozambique_violence; GI-TOC, Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa Risk Bulletin, Issue 7, April–May 2020, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-7; Alastair Nelson, A triangle of vulnerability: Changing patterns of illicit trafficking off the Swahili coast, GI-TOC, May 2020, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/triangle-vulnerability-swahili-coast; GI-TOC, Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa Risk Bulletin, Issue 17, March–April 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-17.

4 Ed Stoddard, Mozambique's Niassa Reserve turns tide on 'catastrophic' ivory poaching, Daily Maverick, 19 June 2019, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-06-19-mozambiques-niassa-reserve-turns-tide-on-catastrophic-ivory-poaching; GI-TOC, Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa Risk Bulletin, Issue 5, February–March 2020, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-5.

5 Eric Morier-Genoud, The jihadi insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14, 3, 2020, 396–412.

6 Rachel Bale, How Illegal Weapons Fuel Poaching—and Poaching Fuels the Illegal Weapons Trade, *National Geographic*, 12 January 2016, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/160112-Africa-gun-control-poaching-elephants-rhinos.

7 Calibre Obscura, The weaponry of IS Central Africa (Pt 1): Insurgents in Mozambique, 22 December 2021, https://www.calibreobscura.com/the-weaponry-of-is-central-africa-pt-1-insurgents-in-mozambique.

8 Ibid.

9 Erika Gibson, Sadc forces tread dangerous ground in Mozambique, Business Day, 19 September 2021, https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/africa/2021-09-19-sadc-forces-tread-dangerous-ground-in-mozambique; Cabo Ligado, By the Numbers: Cabo Delgado, October 2017–September 2021, 14 September 2021, https://www.caboligado.com/reports/cabo-ligado-weekly-6-12-september-2021. Reports that the insurgents are using explosives were later refuted by the Mozambican authorities; see Mozambique News Agency, Mozambique: Defence Minister Unaware of Landmine Use By Isis Terrorists, 20 September 2021, https://allafrica.com/stories/202109210178.html.

10 Interview with private sector-security/logistics consultant, Pemba, 13 October 2021.

11 Ibid.

12 There are reports that Ibn Omar had served in the navy in Pemba. João Feijo, From the 'faceless enemy' to the hypothesis of dialogue: Identities, pretensions and channels of communication with the *Machababs*, Observatório do Meio Rural (OMR), 10 August 2021, https://omrmz.org/omrweb/wpcontent/uploads/DR-130-Cabo-Delgado-Pt-e-Eng.pdf.

13 Information shared by an analyst in Mozambique with connections to Mozambican security services, December 2021.

14 João Feijo reports from interviews with kidnapped women that there were suspicions that al-Shabaab had been sourcing weapons from overseas. João Feijo, Characterization and social organization of Machababos from the discourses of kidnapped women, OMR Observador Rural, 109, April 2021, https://omrmz.org/omrweb/wp-content/uploads/OR-109-Characterization-and-social-organizacion-of-Machababos.pdf; investigative report: Pemba, Montepuez and Negomano, submitted by Omardine Omar to the GI-TOC, 9 October 2021 (unpublished).

15 Interviews with two sources in Niassa province linked to the insurgency, November 2021.

16 Interview with OMR researcher João Feijó, Maputo, 5 October 2021; investigative report: Pemba, Montepuez and Negomano, submitted by Omardine Omar to the GI-TOC, 9 October 2021 (unpublished).

17 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, How to silence the guns? Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets, GI-TOC, 15 September 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/southern-africas-illegal-firearms-markets.

18 GI-TOC, Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa Risk Bulletin, Issue 17, March–April 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobsrisk-bulletin-17.

19 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, How to silence the guns? Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets, GI-TOC, 15 September 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/southern-africas-illegal-firearms-markets.

20 Under article 110 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) warships have a right to conduct such

‘flag-verification boardings’ in international waters in order to verify the flag, or home country, of the vessel. These boardings are widely used in contemporary maritime law enforcement, including by international forces operating in the Arabian Sea and Western Indian Ocean to interdict arms and narcotics flows. See Angeline Lewis, Flag Verification on the High Seas: Understanding Requirements for Masters and Commanders, *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 30, 2, 2015, 335-360.

21 NAVCENT Public Affairs, U.S. Navy Seizes 1,400 Assault Rifles During Illicit Weapons Interdiction, 22 December 2022, https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2882679/us-navy-seizes-1400-assault-rifles-during-illicit-weapons-interdiction.

22 Jay Bahadur, An Iranian Fingerprint? Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, GI-TOC, November 2021, p15, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia.

23 Ibid.

24 For an instructive summary of the nature of Iranian support to the Houthis, see Thomas Juneau, How Iran helped Houthis Expand Their Reach, War On The Rocks, 23 August 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/08/how-iran-helped-houthis-expand-their-reach.

25 As the GI-TOC has previously reported, at least one Somalia-based network is involved in trafficking weapons from Iran to Houthi rebels; see Jay Bahadur, Snapping back against Iran: The case of the *Al Bari 2* and the UN arms embargo, GI-TOC, November 2020, https:/globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-pb.

26 Although Iran was under a UN arms embargo until October 2020, restrictions on exports to the country did not extend to small arms and light weapons. Therefore, no legal barriers existed to prevent China from supplying Type 56-1 rifles to Iran.

27 Jay Bahadur, An Iranian Fingerprint? Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, GI-TOC, November 2021, p21, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia.

28 Benoit Faucon and Dion Nissenbaum, Iran Navy Port Emerges as Key to Alleged Weapons Smuggling to Yemen, U.N. Report Says, *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 January 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-navy-port-emerges-as-key-to-alleged-weapons-smuggling-to-yemen-u-n-report-says-11641651941.

29 NAVCENT Public Affairs, U.S. Navy seizes 1,400 assault rifles during illicit weapons interdiction, 22 December 2022, https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2882679/us-navy-seizes-1400-assault-rifles-during-illicit-weapons-interdiction.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Information provided by a maritime source with knowledge of arms-trafficking operations in Yemen and Somalia, 21 July 2021. The second dhow that was intercepted in February 2021 by the USS *Winston Churchill* trafficking weapons was also intercepted for a second time. In January 2022, the US Navy intercepted this dhow carrying 40 tonnes of an agricultural fertilizer that is also used as an explosives precursor. See more at: NAVCENT Public Affairs, U.S. Navy Interdicts Stateless Vessel Previously Caught Smuggling Weapons, 23 January 2022, https://www.dvidshub.net/news/413267/us-navy-interdicts-stateless-vessel-previously-caught-smuggling-weapons?fbclid=IwAR3b2tiqr2XNXheT3-bBenpXtRywzyDI5mVfJ1aaBcHQW7SI6PcE3UYEw3Y#.Yezy0FZuxvk.facebook.

33 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Yemen: Humanitarian Response Snapshot (October 2021), 8 December 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-response-snapshot-october-2021; UN News, Yemen alert: 8 million face reduced rations amid funding shortages, 22 December 2021, https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108612.

34 Jay Bahadur, An Iranian Fingerprint? Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, GI-TOC, November 2021, p21, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia.

35 S Raemaekers et al., Review of the causes of the rise of the illegal South African abalone fishery and consequent closure of the rights-based fishery, *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 54, 2011, 433–445.

36 N Okes et al., Empty shells: An assessment of abalone poaching and trade from southern Africa, TRAFFIC, 2018, https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/empty-shells.

37 Elizabeth Marx, dubbed the Poaching Queen by the press, ran a massive poaching operation in Gansbaai during the first decade of the 2000s. Upon her arrest, a court order authorized the state to seize assets worth R16 million from the syndicate, including two houses, a farm, 15 vehicles and two boats; see John Yeld, Court orders poaching suspects’ assets seized, IOL, 19 February 2003, https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/court-orders-poaching-suspectsassets-seized-101615. Marx was later convicted and jailed.

38 Interviews with Marcel Kroese, former head of enforcement at the national fisheries department, Cape Town, February 2021, by phone; interview with senior Hawks official, Cape Town, November 2020, by phone; interview with senior provincial detective, Cape Town, November 2020, by phone; interview with former associate of several abalone syndicates, December 2020.

39 Jonny Steinberg, The illicit abalone trade in South Africa, ISS Paper 105, Institute for Security Studies, 5 April 2005, https://issafrica.org/research/papers/the-illicit-abalone-trade-in-south-africa; interview with senior Hawks official, Cape Town, May 2021.

40 Interview with senior Hawks official, Cape Town, November 2020, by phone.

41 Interview with senior Hawks official, Cape Town, November 2020, by phone; interview with senior provincial detective, Cape Town, November 2020.

42 Interview with Angelo Joseph, community organizer in Hout Bay, Cape Town, December 2020, by phone.

43 Interview with senior Hawks official; see also Kimon de Greef and Shuhood Abader, *Poacher: Confessions from the Abalone Underworld*, Kwela, 2018.

44 Interview with Angelo Joseph, community organizer in Hout Bay, Cape Town, December 2020, by phone.

45 Ibid.

46 Interview with senior Hawks official, May 2021.

47 Interview with senior Hawks official; interview with abalone poacher who has sold directly to buyers at China malls, November 2020; see also Kimon de Greef and Shuhood Abader, *Poacher: Confessions from the Abalone Underworld*, Kwela, 2018.

48 UN Conference on Trade and Development, Africa could gain $89 billion annually by curbing illicit financial flows, 28 September 2020, https://unctad.org/news/africa-could-gain-89-billion-annually-curbing-illicit-financial-flows.

49 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, How to silence the guns? Southern Africa’s illegal firearms markets, GI-TOC, September 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/southern-africas-illegal-firearms-markets.

50 Jason Eligh, A synthetic age: The evolution of methamphetamine markets in eastern and southern Africa, GI-TOC, March 2021, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/meth-africa.

Risk Bulletins are regular outputs of our regional observatories, which draw on civil society networks to provide new data and contextualize trends related to organized-crime networks, illicit trade and state responses to them. If you would like to subscribe to future editions of the Risk Bulletin, please sign up here or email julia.stanyard@globalinitiative.net.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with 500 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

www.globalinitiative.net

The Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa works in association with ENACT to develop regional capacity to tackle organized crime.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME