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ORGANIZED CRIME



THE PRICE OF CIVIL WAR

A survey of Somalia's
arms markets

JAY BAHADUR

APRIL 2022





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A full-page photograph of a soldier in camouflage uniform and gear, including red pouches, standing in a street littered with debris. In the background, there are buildings and a large Coca-Cola advertisement. The image is overlaid with a white geometric design consisting of intersecting lines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A member of Somalia's security services patrols the scene of a suicide car-bomb blast on 30 August 2016 in Mogadishu.
© Mohamed Abdiwahab/AFP via Getty Images



Between December 2020 and August 2021, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) field researchers documented a total of 425¹ small arms and light weapons (SALW) and over 3 200 rounds of ammunition across Somalia. In November 2021, we published a research report based on a portion of this data, entitled 'An Iranian fingerprint?'.² That report focused on the proliferation of Chinese-manufactured Type 56-1 assault rifles in illicit markets across Somalia, concluding that the rifles had very likely been diverted from Iranian arms transfers to Houthi insurgents in Yemen.

The current report presents additional findings from this eight-month collection of field data. The analysis is structured in three parts: the first consists of a pricing study of 13 illicit markets across Somalia that the GI-TOC surveyed; the second highlights four case studies of interest, including materiel of Iranian and Saudi origin, as well as a series of Chinese assault rifles doctored to appear as if they were of Russian manufacture; and the third part presents a brief summary of the findings of the ammunition survey.

The pricing data is broken down and analyzed according to three categories: country of manufacture, type of weapon and geographical location within Somalia. Almost all the SALW catalogued by our researchers consisted of assault rifles, constituting 94.8 per cent of the materiel. By far, the most common countries of manufacture were China and Russia (Soviet Union), which together accounted for 80.9 per cent of the total identifiable materiel. On average, Russian and Chinese assault rifles were priced at roughly the same level (US\$1 452 compared to US\$1 459), even though Russian rifles tended to be decades older.

Most significantly, however, the study found that assault rifles cost on average US\$90 more in southern Somalia than in the north. This constitutes tentative quantitative evidence for the common view that most illicit SALW enter Somalia through Puntland – a semi-autonomous region in the north-east of the country – and are distributed onward to the south. Consequently, the price of a weapon would be expected to rise the further south it is transported, reflecting the extra logistics costs along the supply chain.



The US Navy coastal-patrol ship USS *Typhoon* interdicted a stateless dhow transporting illicit weapons in the northern Arabian Sea on 20 December 2021. © US Navy

More Type 56-1 rifles seized

Since the publication of our November 2021 report ‘An Iranian fingerprint?’, US forces have conducted an additional seizure of weapons allegedly destined to supply Houthi forces. This occurred on 20 December 2021, when US Navy coastal-patrol vessels interdicted a stateless dhow in the northern Arabian Sea, seizing approximately 1 400 AK-pattern assault rifles and 226 000 rounds of ammunition.³ Initial photos of the seizure (see below) showed the rifles to be consistent with Type 56-1 rifles observed in suspected

Iranian transfers of arms to Yemen since mid-2018. It is probable that a portion of the rifles in this consignment would have eventually reached Somalia had they not been seized in transit.

A more detailed account of this seizure is available in issue 23 of the GI-TOC’s East and Southern Africa Risk Bulletin, published in March 2022.⁴



Approximately 1 400 seized Type 56-1 rifles and other materiel displayed on the rear deck of the guided-missile destroyer USS *O’Kane*. © US Navy/Petty Officer 3rd Class Elisha Smith



Most of the SALW and ammunition items catalogued for this study were found in the possession of illicit arms dealers and in illicit arms markets, but also in the hands of ordinary civilians, security guards and soldiers. In several instances, the same weapon was documented on more than one occasion, either in different locations or in the same location but on different dates.⁵

The existence of this north–south supply chain has broader implications for the Horn of Africa region. As noted above, the GI-TOC has previously established that surplus SALW supplied in the context of the Yemeni civil war are spilling over into Somalia. Weapons are either diverted to Somalia from illicit maritime shipments while en route from Iran to Yemen, or are transported onward to Somalia by illicit trafficking networks once they reach Yemen. The materiel then finds its way into the hands of Islamist militants groups operating in Somalia, namely al-Shabaab and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The materiel probably also enters into neighbouring countries. Somalia's position as an arms-trafficking corridor may have particularly destabilizing repercussions for Ethiopia, which is grappling with its own civil war and the ongoing Balkanization of the country along ethnic lines.

Meanwhile, the war in Yemen has recently escalated, with Houthi ballistic missiles striking Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), earlier this year. As that war drags on, the maritime arms-trafficking networks that have sprung up to service the Houthi demand for weapons are likely to become increasingly entrenched. In future, these networks may well expand their reach further inland into the Horn of Africa, becoming a permanent fixture of the conflict landscape.

Key findings

- More than 60 per cent of the illicit weapons found in Somalia had been manufactured in China.
- Almost 95 per cent of the illicit weapons found in Somalia were assault or battle rifles.
- Weapon-pricing trends support the notion that illicit flows originate in northern Somalia and extend southward.
- Chinese- and Russian-manufactured assault rifles were priced almost identically in illicit markets, despite Russian rifles typically being decades older.
- KLS and KLF assault rifles likely to be of Iranian manufacture – possibly part of illicit arms transfers from Iran to Yemen – were also documented by our researchers.
- NATO-calibre G3 battle rifles and corresponding ammunition – some of which is of Saudi Arabian manufacture – are increasingly common in northern Somalia.
- Weapons from Somali federal government stocks continue to leak into the illicit market.
- More than 20 weapons bearing similarly falsified serial numbers were found in southern Somalia – apparently Type 56 Chinese assault rifles, modified to appear Russian.
- Arms diverted into Puntland from Iranian and Saudi Arabian transfers to their respective allies embroiled in the Yemen conflict could have particularly destabilizing consequences in the region.
- The deteriorating security situation in northern Somalia may also allow space for arms-trafficking networks to operate with greater ease.
- In future, arms trafficking networks in Somalia may well spread further into the Horn of Africa.

Methodology

In analyzing and interpreting the findings, the GI-TOC consulted extensively with several international arms experts with experience of working in Somalia and the wider region.

The materiel was documented in 13 locations across Somalia (see Figure 2): Badhan, Baidoa, Bardera, Belet Hawo, Beletweyne, Buhodle, El Wak, Dolow, Galkayo, Garowe, Galdogob, Hudun and Las Anod/Tukaraq. The documentation locations included three border points with Ethiopia (Buhodle, Dolow and Galdogob) and two with Kenya (Belet Hawo and El Wak).

The largest single quantity of illicit arms was found in Galkayo, a city in north-central Somalia, where 100 weapons (23.5 per cent of the total) were documented. Galkayo hosts a substantial black market for SALW and functions as a distribution hub where arms originating in the north are sent onward to southern Somalia and west to the Ethiopian border. In the border town of Galdogob, Puntland, we were also able to document a small number of weapons located within neighbouring Ethiopia.

We chose not to conduct data collection in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the focus of the study is on the illicit arms trade. While Mogadishu is the principal entry point for SALW and ammunition into Somalia, most of this materiel has been imported legally by the Somali federal government following the partial lifting of the UN Security Council arms embargo in 2013. Secondly, heightened insecurity stemming from the ongoing national political crisis was an additional obstacle to carrying out field research in Mogadishu. Despite the absence of data collection in Mogadishu itself, the current study catalogues instances where legally imported government weapons have been found at illicit markets surveyed by our researchers.

The field researchers were required, wherever possible, to supply geo-tagged photographs of each weapon they documented, including detailed images of the serial number, factory stamp and other relevant markings. Wherever possible, they also recorded pricing data on weapons – either the asking price in the illicit market or the value ascribed to it by the weapon's current owner. They also collected information concerning the suspected provenance of each weapon.

When documenting ammunition, the researchers typically photographed a single image of a headstamp (a combination of the factory marking and year of manufacture) as a representative sample of the type of ammunition observed at a given location. They documented a total of 126 unique headstamps over the course of the data collection. Unfortunately, the researchers had no opportunity to document ammunition packaging, which made it virtually impossible to meaningfully trace the catalogued materiel, given that manufacturers produce millions of identical cartridges for numerous recipients every year. The discussion of ammunition is therefore limited to a brief overview of general trends.

For the purposes of analysis, this paper frequently refers to 'northern' and 'southern' Somalia. 'Northern Somalia' is defined here as territory north of, and including, the city of Galkayo, which straddles Puntland's southern border. 'Southern Somalia' is defined as the remainder of the country, south of Galkayo.

Finally, unless otherwise stated, the identification of a weapon's or ammunition's manufacturer or manufacturing country does not imply either party's involvement in the illicit trafficking of materiel.



AK-47 rifles recovered from al-Shabaab hideouts in Baidoa, Somalia, September 2016. © Sabir Olad/Alamy

Our researchers managed to obtain pricing data for virtually all of the 425 SALW recorded in the data set. In most cases, the price recorded was the asking price of the weapon in the illicit market where it was documented. Where the weapon was in the private possession of an individual, the price recorded was the value ascribed to it by its owner.

The following subsections present the pricing data as a whole, and subsequently in several disaggregated subcategories. These subcategories include country of manufacture, location of the documented weapon and weapon type (i.e. assault rifle, automatic handgun or machine gun).

Country of manufacture

It was possible to conclusively identify the country of manufacture for 388 of the weapons in the data set. By far, the most common point of origin was China, which accounted for 239 (61.6 per cent) of the SALW for which the manufacturing country could be identified. The next most common country of manufacture was Russia/Soviet Union, which accounted for 75 (19.3 per cent) of the SALW in the data set (see Figure 1 for countries of manufacture).

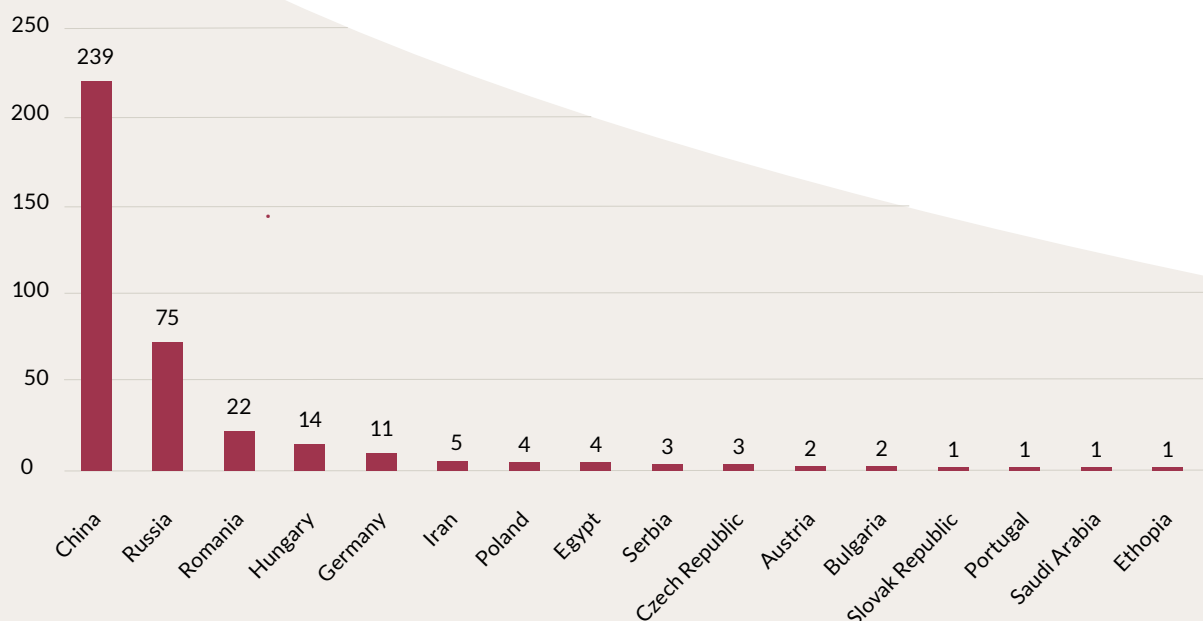


FIGURE 1 Weapons identified in the study, by country of manufacture.

Price by location

As noted above, the field researchers surveyed illicit arms markets in 13 locations across Somalia. Seven of these locations were in northern Somalia and six in the south.

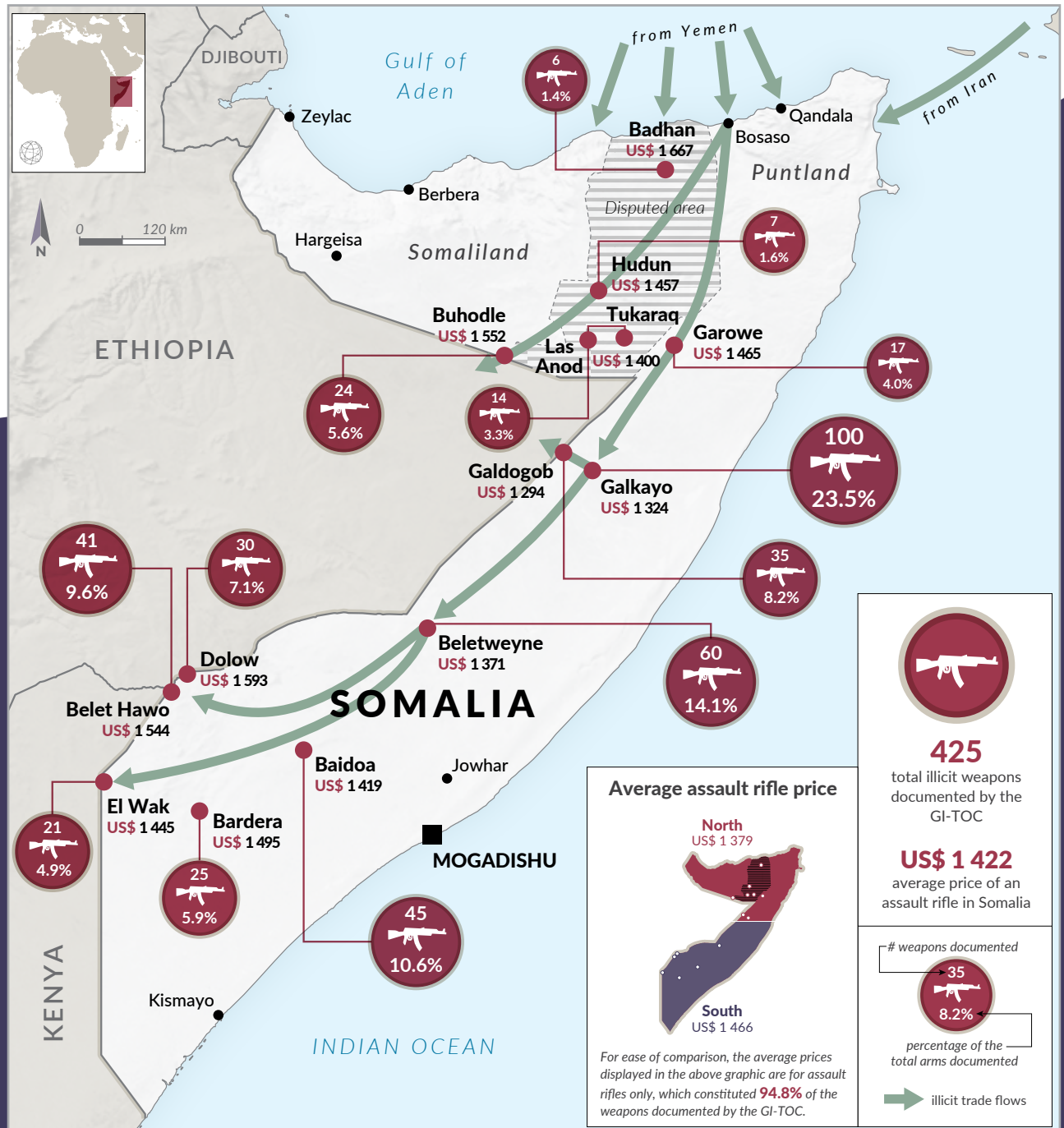


FIGURE 2 Average price of weapons by documentation location.

Price by weapon type

The researchers were able to conclusively identify a weapon type for each of the 425 weapons catalogued for this study. For the purposes of analysis, weapons have been grouped into three broad categories: assault rifles, automatic handguns and machine guns. The following sections present and analyze pricing data for these three categories.

Assault/battle rifles

Assault/battle rifles were by far the most common item catalogued by the researchers, accounting for 403 (94.8 per cent) of the total identifiable SALW. We were able to collect pricing data for 399 of the 403 total rifles. Prices for the rifles ranged between US\$900 and US\$2 000; the average price was US\$1 422.

Chinese- and Russian-produced rifles were priced almost identically, averaging US\$1 459 and US\$1 452, respectively. However, the Russian weapons tended to be decades older than their Chinese counterparts. Chinese rifles were found that had been produced as recently as 2020, while no Russian weapon had a manufacture date later than 1988. The fact that relatively new Chinese rifles sold for nearly the same price as decades-old Russian models reflects the widespread belief that the latter are of superior quality.⁶ Indeed, previous research into the small-arms trade in Somalia has revealed cases in which dealers have added fake Russian markings to Chinese and other AK-pattern rifles in order to augment their value.⁷ We explore one possible example of this practice in a case study below (see 'Frankenstein rifles – the mysterious 'EM' marking').

Country	Rifles documented	Average price (US\$)
China	228	1 459
Russia (Soviet Union)	72	1 452
Romania	21	1 319
Hungary	13	1 277
Germany	11	1 291

FIGURE 3 Average rifle price, by country of manufacture (sample size n ≥ 10).

There is limited reliable historical pricing data on SALW in Somalia for purposes of comparison with this study's findings. Moreover, the existing data typically only encompasses Mogadishu, where no field research was conducted for the present study for the reasons explained. However, it is worth presenting the available data as a general frame of reference for the GI-TOC's findings.

The latest publicly available Small Arms Survey (SAS) pricing data dates to 2015 in Mogadishu, where the price of an 'original' AK-pattern rifle was reported to range between US\$1 500 and US\$1 800.⁸ This represented a significant increase compared with previous SAS data, from 2011–2012, where the average price of an AK-pattern was reported to be US\$731.⁹ In other words, the average price of assault rifles roughly doubled between 2011 and 2015. One factor likely to have been driving this rise in prices was the Somali government's gradual re-imposition of state authority

in Mogadishu after the forces of the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab were largely expelled from the capital in 2011. The weapons trade was driven underground in response to a government crackdown on open markets, in particular Mogadishu's infamous Bakara market. The SAS report itself notes that its 2015 data was collected after the Somali government 'asserted greater authority in the city and limited black market trading in weapons and ammunition'.¹⁰

Three years later, a 2018 Reuters report cited a figure of US\$1 350 as the average price of an assault rifle in Mogadishu, while describing how the mass looting of weapons from a UAE training base in the capital had caused it to temporarily plummet to US\$700.¹¹

It is important to note that Mogadishu is situated in southern Somalia, where SALW prices would probably be somewhat higher than those in the north of the country, for reasons explained earlier. This north-south discrepancy is examined in the following paragraphs.

A north-south divide

Of the 403 assault rifles in this study, 199 were documented in northern Somalia and 204 in the south. There was a significant price disparity, with US\$1 379 the average asking price for a rifle in northern Somalia, compared with US\$1 466 in the south – a difference of approximately US\$90.

This north-south price disparity is evidence for the commonly accepted view that Puntland is the primary entry point for illicit weapons into Somalia, with weapons becoming increasingly expensive the further south they are transported along the supply chain. However, pricing data must be treated with caution as definitive evidence for the north-south supply chain. Notably, the current analysis does not account for possible variations in demand, or other relevant factors that might also explain price differences between north and south. Additionally, weapon prices observed in certain locations in northern Somalia were higher than the national average, highlighting the limitations of analysis based on pricing alone.

Automatic handguns

The field researchers documented a total of 18 automatic handguns in six locations across Somalia (see Figure 4). Most of these (15) were recorded in the south of the country. Handgun prices ranged from US\$800 to US\$2 000, with an average price of US\$1 358.¹²

Handguns are typically the weapon of choice for close-quarters targeted killings in Somalia. The higher prevalence in southern Somalia of politically and ideologically motivated killings might partially explain why handguns were more numerous in illicit markets in the south than in the north.

Most of the handguns for which it was possible to determine a date of manufacture were Chinese, and had been produced in 2015. Recently manufactured Chinese handguns are commonly found on the black market in Yemen as well as Somalia. In Yemen, these handguns – along with other types of SALW – are frequently advertised for sale on semi-public chat groups on the Telegram encrypted-messaging application (see the photo).

Given that Yemen is the source of many of the illicit SALW entering Somalia, it is plausible that the handguns documented by the researchers also found their way into the country along this supply chain.

However, in the absence of serial numbers of illicit Yemeni handguns with which to conduct an analysis, it was not possible to verify this supposition.



A Chinese-manufactured CS/LP5 9 mm handgun documented by the GI-TOC in Beletweyne in July 2021 (left).
A CS/LP5 handgun advertised on a Telegram channel in Yemen (right).

Date of documentation	Location	Serial number	Model	Manufacturer	Year of manufacture	Price (US\$)
Jan-21	Galkayo	019562	CF98-9	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 100
Jan-21	Galkayo	CZW089	Glock 19	Glock Ges.m.b.H.	Undetermined	1 400
Jan-21	Galkayo	KEP 409	Glock 17	Glock Ges.m.b.H.	Undetermined	1 500
Apr-21	Baidoa	KO50098	K100 Mk7	Grand Power S.r.o.	Undetermined	1 800
May-21	Baidoa	61007768	Type 54	Undetermined	Undetermined	900
May-21	Baidoa	021000	CF98-9	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 400
May-21	Bardera	832817	Model 213	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	Undetermined	1 250
May-21	Bardera	ZU08864	P-83 Wanad	Fabryka Broni Works 11, Radom	1991	1 400
May-21	Bardera	3254	M48	Fegyver- és Gépgyártó Részvénytársaság	Undetermined	1 400
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	BF1185	Tokarev TT-33	Izhmash	1958	900
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	N1112732	Type 54	Undetermined	Undetermined	800
Jun-21	Beletweyne	028735	CF98-9	China North Industries Corporation	Undetermined	1 700
Jun-21	Beletweyne	61004595	Type 54	Factory 99	Undetermined	900
Jun-21	Beletweyne	857[illegible]	Undetermined	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 300
Jun-21	Dolow	009785	CF98-9	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	2 000
Jun-21	Beletweyne	023827	CF98-9	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 500
Jun-21	Beletweyne	030973	CF98-9	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 700
Jul-21	Beletweyne	003629	CS/LP5	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 500

FIGURE 4 Automatic handguns documented by the GI-TOC.

Machine guns

The researchers documented only three machine guns over the course of the study. These – all PKM-pattern (7.62 × 54R mm calibre) machine guns – were

documented in illicit markets in Beletweyne and Baidoa, in southern Somalia (Figure 5). The average asking price for these weapons was US\$13 000.

Date of documentation	Location	Serial number	Model	Country of manufacture	Price (US\$)
May-21	Baidoa	АД 052	PKM-pattern	Russia	15 000
Jun-21	Beletweyne	3366	PKM-pattern	Undetermined	13 000
Jun-21	Beletweyne	МП 622	PKM-pattern	Russia	11 000

FIGURE 5 PKM-pattern machine guns documented by the GI-TOC.

The general absence of heavier-calibre weapons in the illicit markets surveyed by the researchers was probably because the markets catered more to individual buyers than to armed groups. Other than government security forces (both federal and regional), the primary buyers of machine guns and

other light weapons are likely to be clan-based militias as well as the militant groups al-Shabaab and the Somalia faction of ISIL. In such cases, the heavier weaponry is often owned collectively by the clan, or sourced by the militant group directly, not purchased by individuals in illicit markets.




A Russian-manufactured PKM-pattern machine gun documented in Beletweyne in June 2021.

A photograph of a man in a desert setting, wearing a white headscarf with a red band and a camouflage-patterned shirt. He is operating a machine gun mounted on a tripod. A long, continuous belt of ammunition, with brass-colored and dark-colored rounds, extends from the gun towards the foreground. The background shows sand dunes under a clear blue sky. A large, bold, white text overlay is positioned in the lower half of the image.

FROM THE YEMEN WAR TO 'FRANKENSTEIN GUNS': FOUR CASE STUDIES

A pro-government fighter in Yemen. The proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia has resulted in a spillover of Iranian- and Saudi-supplied weapons into Somalia. © AFP via Getty Images



The sections that follow present four brief case studies highlighting SALW of particular analytical interest documented over the course of the study. In the first, the field researchers recorded several apparent Iranian and one apparent Saudi rifle. It is likely that these weapons had reached Somalia from Yemen, an example of spillover from the ongoing proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia taking place in the country.

The second case study highlights assault rifles that appear to have been diverted from Somali-government stocks into the illicit economy. The leakage of legally imported government weapons has been ongoing since the UN arms embargo on Somalia was partially lifted almost a decade ago.

In the third case study, we recorded approximately two dozen assault rifles in southern Somalia that displayed falsified serial numbers beginning with the prefix 'EM17'. These so-called 'Frankenstein guns' appear to be of Chinese origin, but were subsequently heavily modified with the addition of counterfeit Russian components and/or markings. These modifications probably took place in artisanal workshops and were intended to increase the market value of the rifles by making them appear to be of Russian manufacture.

A final case study briefly presents weapons in the GI-TOC's data set that show a close serial number proximity to weapons documented by third-party researchers in several foreign countries. Serial number proximity may indicate a common point of origin, and therefore identifying such correlations may suggest avenues for potential future enquiry.

Rifles of suspected Iranian and Saudi manufacture

Our researchers documented five apparent KLS and KLF assault rifles believed to be of Iranian manufacture. The Islamic Republic of Iran produces a copy of the Soviet/Russian AKM-series assault rifle, which it designates as the 'KLS' and the 'KLF'; the KLS model is characterized by its fixed, wooden stock, whereas the KLF features a folding metal stock.¹³

All five weapons found in Somalia displayed seven-digit serial numbers produced using the 'dot-peen' marking technique characteristic of Iranian weapons manufacturing.¹⁴



A suspected Iranian-manufactured KLF assault rifle documented in Beletweyne, Somalia, in June 2021.

Three of the rifles also displayed an elongated letter 'D' marking on the rear sight, which is also typical of Iranian-manufactured rifles.¹⁵

The GI-TOC has previously established that weapons supplied from Iran and intended for Houthi insurgents in Yemen have subsequently been found in Somalia, specifically Type 56-1 assault rifles.¹⁶ It is plausible that the KLS and KLF rifles documented for this study had similarly formed part of illicit arms transfers from Iran to Yemen. Indeed, one owner of an apparent Iranian rifle, in Buhodle, reported that the weapon had been brought from Yemen into an area east of Bosaso.¹⁷

Furthermore, Iranian KLS rifles have been previously observed among seized materiel purportedly intended for Houthi forces. In March 2016, for instance, the French naval vessel *FS Provence*

interdicted a stateless dhow off the coast of Somalia transporting an illicit cargo of weapons. Among the consignment were almost 2 000 AKM-pattern rifles consistent with Iranian-manufactured KLS models.¹⁸ The frequency of sequential serial numbers among the rifles suggested the possibility that they had originated in a state weapons-storage facility, bolstering the argument for Iranian supply.¹⁹ However, there is no direct evidence that the five Iranian rifles documented in Somalia during the current study had also originated from Iranian arms transfers to the Houthis.²⁰ The government of Iran did not respond to the GI-TOC's request for export information about the rifles.

The average illicit market price or value ascribed to an Iranian rifle by its owner was US\$1 480, although this figure was skewed higher by the presence of a single outlier at US\$2 000.



An apparent Iranian-manufactured KLF rifle documented in Beletweyne in June 2021. The 'dot-peen' serial-number-marking technique (left) and elongated 'D' on the rear sight (right) are both indicative of Iranian-manufactured weapons.

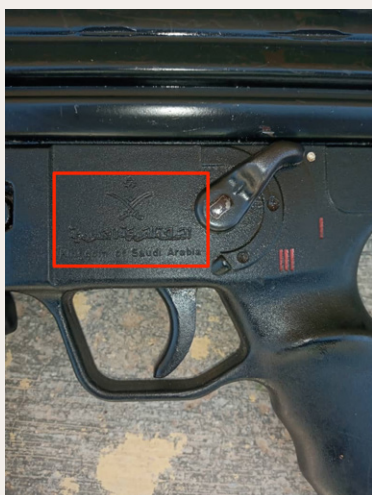
Date of documentation	Location	Serial Number	Model	Country of manufacture	Price (US\$)
Apr-21	Galkayo	2305360	KLS	Iran	1 300
Apr-21	Galkayo	2306507	KLS	Iran	1 300
Apr-21	Galkayo	2304586	KLS	Iran	1 300
May-21	Buhodle	2315428	KLF	Iran	2 000
Jun-21	Beletweyne	2200914	KLF	Iran	1 500
Jun-21	Badhan	210833	G3	Saudi Arabia	2 000

FIGURE 6 Rifles of suspected Iranian and Saudi manufacture documented in Somalia.

In the northern Puntland town of Badhan, our researchers documented a single weapon that appeared to have been manufactured in Saudi Arabia, a NATO-calibre G3 battle rifle (see below). The rifle had an asking price of US\$2 000. The design for the G3 rifle belongs to the German company Heckler & Koch, but G3s are currently manufactured under license by many countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia.²¹

The arms dealer in possession of the weapon said he had purchased it from arms smugglers who source

their weapons from Yemen.²² It is probable that the weapon had been supplied by Saudi Arabia to anti-Houthi coalition forces in Yemen before being diverted into the illicit supply chain. In response to a tracing request from the GI-TOC, Saudi officials stated that the rifle was not registered in a database of firearm carry permits and ownership for Saudi citizens.²³ However, the response did not address whether the weapon had been exported for use in Yemen or elsewhere.



An apparent Saudi-manufactured G3 rifle, documented in Badhan, northern Puntland, in June 2021. The national emblem of Saudi Arabia is embossed next to the rifle's fire selector.

Additional Saudi G3s and ammunition documented in Puntland

Independent evidence obtained from security consultants operating in Somalia indicates that Saudi weapons – as well as ammunition – may be more common in northern Somalia than the presence of the single rifle we documented suggests. On 28 July 2021, Puntland maritime authorities seized a cache of weapons after they were offloaded from a fishing

vessel at a beachhead east of Puntland's main port of Bosaso.²⁴ The consignment was reportedly intended for the militant group al-Shabaab.²⁵

Among the seized materiel were 15 G3 rifles with corresponding optical sights.²⁶ Based on photographic evidence obtained by the GI-TOC, at least four of the rifles appear to be of Saudi manufacture (see below).



G3 rifle and corresponding optical sight, seized by Puntland authorities in July 2021.



Four G3 rifles of apparent Saudi origin captured by Puntland maritime authorities in July 2021.

Of even greater significance is that a large quantity of 7.62×51 mm NATO-calibre ammunition compatible with G3 rifles was also documented in Puntland some months earlier. On 15 May 2021, the Puntland presidential guard seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition west of Bosaso as they were being transported from Yemen.²⁷ Included in the seizure were 30 000 rounds of 7.62×51 mm ammunition.²⁸ As with the G3 rifles, the ammunition was reportedly intended for al-Shabaab.²⁹ A steady supply of such ammunition would be crucial to attracting local buyers for the rifles, given that 7.62×51 mm rounds are not otherwise widely available in Somalia.

A photograph of the seizure obtained by the GI-TOC showed at least 16 crates of this ammunition, each containing 1 000 rounds (see below). Arabic markings on the crates and also on an individual ammunition carton indicated that the ammunition had been produced in Saudi Arabia in 2018 under lot number 180013. The carton bore the stamp of the General Authority for Military Industries, which is the self-described 'regulator, enabler and licensor' of Saudi Arabia's defence-manufacturing sector.³⁰



Crates of Saudi-produced 7.62×51 mm NATO-calibre ammunition, photographed in Bosaso in May 2021.



A 7.62×51 mm ammunition round (left) and carton (centre) bearing the stamp of the Saudi General Authority for Military Industries (right).

Saudi officials did not respond to the GI-TOC's tracing request on the seized materiel. However, it is highly likely that both the G3 rifles and the ammunition

displayed above had originally been intended for use by Arab Coalition forces fighting in Yemen, before being trafficked onward to Somalia.

Weapons diverted from Federal Government of Somalia stocks

Since the UN arms embargo on Somalia was partially lifted in 2013, the Somali federal government has been permitted to legally import weapons and ammunition up to a prescribed calibre.³¹ With assistance from international partners, the government established a weapons and ammunition management (WAM) system designed to register and track material in the possession of the federal security forces. The government was provided with eight marking machines – including two mobile units – to add official markings to weapons in the possession of the security forces.³² The standard practice is for all new weapons imported by the Somali government to be marked at the central armoury, located within the Mogadishu international airport compound.³³

Despite the government's significant WAM efforts, UN monitors responsible for assessing compliance with the arms embargo, as well as media outlets, have routinely reported the leakage of Somali government arms into illicit markets.³⁴ In several instances, Somali government weapons have been deployed in attacks by al-Shabaab.³⁵

The current study has confirmed that the leakage of federal-government weapons continues to take place. Of the weapons documented, 20, or almost 5 per cent, bore apparent Somali government markings, indicating that they had probably once belonged to state security forces (Figure 7). An 'SO XDS' marking indicates that the weapon had



A Type 56-2 assault rifle marked by the Somali National Army in 2017 ('SO XDS-2017'). The rifle was documented in the possession of a businessman in Baidoa in April 2021.

previously been in the possession of the Somali National Army (SNA). A 'NISA' marking indicates that the weapon had been registered by the National Intelligence and Security Agency.

The average asking price for government-marked assault rifles was US\$1 515, approximately US\$50 higher than the average for other rifles found in southern Somalia.³⁶ The higher price point can be explained by the fact that the government arms consisted predominantly of recently imported Chinese rifles as well as Russian rifles, which both typically command a greater than average asking price in Somalia. It is also possible that prior government stewardship increased the perceived value of the weapons in the eyes of potential buyers.

Date of documentation	Location	Serial number	Government marking	Model	Manufacturer	Year of manufacture	Price (US\$)
Jan-21	Galkayo	U 73799	SO XDS 2015	vz. 58	Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod	1969	1 100
Apr-21	Baidoa	4115274	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	Undetermined	1 700
Apr-21	Baidoa	4085565	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	Undetermined	1 500
May-21	Baidoa	60012303	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-1	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 500
May-21	Baidoa	4024167	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	Undetermined	1 600

Date of documentation	Location	Serial number	Government marking	Model	Manufacturer	Year of manufacture	Price (US\$)
May-21	Baidoa	60061006	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-1	Jianshe Machine Tool	2015	1 500
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	119134	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	Undetermined	1 500
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	972736	[erased]	AKM	Izhmash	1974	1 500
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	564140313	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 700
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	[erased]	SO XDS-2017	Type 56-2	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 500
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1706284	NISA 2020	AKMS	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 500
Jun-21	Beletweyne	60008111	SO XDS 2018	Type 56-1	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1708612	NISA 2021	AKMS	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	TE879	NISA-2021/C.C.C/ AK-160	AKM	Tula Arms Plant	1974	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	3H0606	NISA-2021/C.C.C/ AK-296	AKM	Izhmash	1960	1 700
Jun-21	Dolow	1974 972983	NISA-2021/C.C.G/ AK-137	AKM	Izhmash	1974	1 500
Jun-21	Dolow	1974 BX6996	NISA-2021/C.C.C/ AK-262	AKM	Tula Arms Plant	1974	1 500
Jun-21	Dolow	EW2194	NISA 2021/C.C./??	AK-47	Izhmash	1953	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	1968 XI901	NISA-2021/C.G.G/ AK-285	AKM	Izhmash	1968	1 600
Aug-21	Beletweyne	Undetermined	SO XDS 2019	Type 56-1	Undetermined	Undetermined	1 000

FIGURE 7 List of weapons with Federal Government of Somalia markings.



A Type 56-2 assault rifle formerly belonging to the Somali National Army, documented in Belet Hawo on 13 June 2021. The serial number of the rifle had been manually erased, perhaps to render it untraceable.

All the Somali government-marked weapons that had leaked into the illicit market were assault rifles, of either Chinese, Russian or (in one case) Czech manufacture. With one exception, all government-marked weapons were documented in southern Somalia. This pattern of distribution was to be expected, as the practical sphere of control of the federal government (and likewise its security forces) is limited to certain urban centres in the south of the country.

Previous reporting by UN sanctions monitors,³⁷ and also by the GI-TOC,³⁸ identified Baidoa, the headquarters of SNA Sector 60, as a major leakage point for government arms. The five SNA-marked weapons documented in Baidoa during the current study suggest that the sector remains susceptible to arms diversion.

Also notable in the present study was the large number of NISA-marked weapons that had leaked into illicit markets in Dolow, in Gedo region. This trend may be related to the increasingly prominent role played by NISA forces in Gedo as a result of the ongoing political rift between the president of the Somali federal government and the president of Jubbaland, the regional administration to which Gedo nominally belongs. NISA's presence in Dolow – probably the most populous city in Gedo – is especially pronounced, and members of the agency in Dolow have been accused of a spate of sexual assaults against women as well as other abuses.³⁹

Somali officials did not respond to the GI-TOC's request for information pertaining to the import and distribution of the government arms subsequently diverted into the illicit economy.

Frankenstein rifles – the mysterious 'EM' marking

In southern Somalia, our researchers documented nearly two dozen assault rifles all bearing falsified serial numbers beginning with the prefix 'EM17'. These 'EM'-marked rifles were documented on 22 occasions, all of them in three cities near the Somalia–Kenya and Somalia–Ethiopia borders (Belet Hawo, Dolow and El Wak). Subsequent

analysis concluded that they were originally Type 56 Chinese-manufactured rifles that had been modified to appear Russian.

Several characteristics of the rifles suggest a Chinese origin. The weapons' rivet pattern, as well as the 'double notch' at the base of the trigger, are distinctive of Chinese manufacture.⁴⁰



An example of an assault rifle bearing a fraudulent 'EM17' serial number. The rifle was documented in El Wak in May 2021.

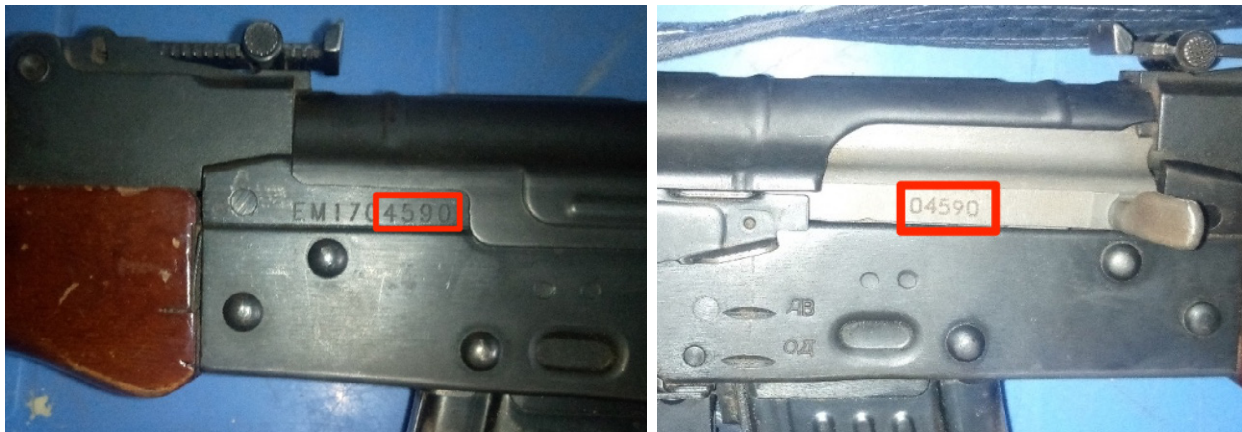


The 'double notch' at the base of the rifle's trigger is distinctive of Chinese manufacture.

However, the 'EM' serial marking is not associated with Chinese arms-manufacturing practices, and was probably the result of a post-factory serialization process.⁴¹ In other words, the serial number was added (or modified) in an informal setting subsequent to the weapon's appearance in the illicit market.

It is standard manufacturing practice for the final five digits of an assault rifle's serial number to be replicated on its bolt carrier. In the case of these

'EM' rifles, there was seemingly a deliberate effort to mimic this practice. A possible scenario is that the gunsmith responsible for the modifications simply inserted the 'EM17' prefix in front of the genuine partial serial number present on each weapon's original bolt. In this fashion, fraudulent complete serial numbers were generated that would match the bolt number, and therefore appear to be consistent with standard weapon-marking norms.



A falsified 'EM' serial number (left) incorporating the final five digits (04590) of serial number on the weapon's bolt carrier (right).

While at their core Chinese, these 'Frankenstein' rifles displayed modified components that appeared to belong to Russian-manufactured weapons. 'EM'-marked rifles universally displayed counterfeit fire selectors made to appear Russian (indicated by the

Cyrillic characters 'AB/ОД').⁴² All except one of the rifles had been further modified by the addition of Russian rear sights (indicated by the Cyrillic character 'П'), either taken from other weapons or counterfeited to appear Russian (see below).



An 'EM'-marked rifle modified with apparent counterfeit Russian fire selector markings (left) and rear sight (right).



An 'EM'-marked rifle, bearing fraudulent serial number EM1708612, with its original Chinese rear sight still in place (left). The rifle bore evidence of attempts to erase its NISA marking (right).

In only one case (serial number EM1708612) did the weapon's original Chinese rear sight appear to remain in situ, perhaps because the available supply of replacement Russian-style sights had been exhausted. This particular rifle was also notable for an additional marking on its receiver – 'NISA 2020' – indicating that it had probably belonged to the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency before appearing in the illicit market. Scratches on the receiver indicate that a deliberate effort had been made to erase the NISA marking (see the photo).

It is not clear where the modifications to these rifles took place. The post-market modification and retooling of weapons by artisanal gunsmiths is more common in Yemen than in Somalia. However, the GI-TOC is not aware of 'EM'-marked rifles advertised for sale on Yemeni Telegram groups used to market illicit arms.⁴³ Nor have sources in Yemen reported observing any 'EM'-marked rifles in the country.

Interestingly, in about half of the cases, the dealers holding the weapons reported the United Arab Emirates as their origin, suggesting another possible purpose for the falsified 'EM' markings.

No value added

In all likelihood, the addition of counterfeit Russian components to these rifles was intended to increase their perceived value. As noted above, Russian weapons are commonly believed to be of higher quality than Chinese weapons, and there have been previous instances in Somalia of dealers adding fake Russian markings to AK-pattern rifles in order to add to their value.⁴⁴ However, it does not appear that the falsified Russian components increased the weapons' sale price. The average asking price for an 'EM'-marked rifle was US\$1 500 (Figure 8), slightly less than the average for Chinese-manufactured assault rifles documented in southern Somalia.

Date of documentation	Location	Serial number	Price (US\$)
May-21	El Wak	EM1708624	N/A
May-21	El Wak	EM1709402	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1707356	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1704717	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1710839	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1707799	1 500
May-21	El Wak	EM1707883	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1704590	1 400
May-21	El Wak	EM1701243	1 400
Jun-21	El Wak	EM1708087	1 400
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	EM1700615*	1 400
Jun-21	Belet Hawo	EM1701252	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1700118	1 500
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1701975	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1703457	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1706284	1 500
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1708612	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1709154	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1703473	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1707898	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1700615*	1 600
Jun-21	Dolow	EM1704495	1 600

FIGURE 8 'EM'-marked Type 56-1 rifles documented by the GI-TOC.

* Note that one rifle (serial number EM1700615) was documented in two different markets and at different prices. It was first observed in an illicit market in Belet Hawo in June 2021; less than two weeks later, it was found in Dolow, approximately 35 km to the north-east. On the second occasion, the rifle's asking price was US\$1 600, US\$200 higher than in the Belet Hawo market.

Serial-number correlations with weapons documented outside Somalia

In several instances, firearms displayed serial numbers close to those of weapons documented by third-party researchers outside Somalia (Figure 9). Between 2017 and 2020, these weapons were found in four countries, namely Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. In each case they were assault rifles chambered in Soviet standard 7.62 × 39 mm ammunition.

Serial-number proximity may indicate some connection between the weapons, such as a common journey along an illicit supply chain. However, with only a few isolated data points, it was not possible to reach meaningful conclusions on the significance of these serial-number proximities. At best, the correlations may be treated as guiding observations to inform future research into possible illicit supply-chain connections between Somalia and the four other countries.

Date of documentation	Documentation location	Model	Country of manufacture	Year of manufacture	Manufacturer	Serial number or partial serial number
May-21	Somalia (Belet Hawo)	Type 56	China	Undetermined	Factory 386	3537800
Oct-20	Burkina Faso	Type 56	China	Undetermined	Factory 386	35373XX*
Jun-21	Somalia (Beletweyne)	Type 56-1	China	Undetermined	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	13000239
Feb-17	Niger	Type 56-1	China	Undetermined	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	130003XX*
Jun-21	Somalia (Hudun)	Type 56-1	China	Undetermined	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	19069023
Nov-20	Afghanistan	Type 56-1	China	Undetermined	Qinghua Machine Tool Factory	190687XX*
Feb-21	Somalia (Galdogob)	Kbk-AKMS	Poland	1978	Fabryka Broni Works 11# Radom	MG18416
Jan-20	Mali	Kbk-AKMS	Poland	1978	Fabryka Broni Works 11# Radom	MG181XX*

FIGURE 9 Serial-number correlations with weapons documented outside Somalia.

* Note that the serial numbers for weapons documented outside Somalia have been partially redacted at the request of the data holder.



AMMUNITION DOCUMENTED IN ILLCIT MARKETS

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Our field researchers documented more than 3 200 rounds of ammunition over a four-month period between March and June 2021. These rounds were recorded at 10 locations across Somalia (Baidoa, Bardera, Belet Hawo, Beletweyne, Buhodle, Dolow, Galkayo, Garowe, Hudun, and Las Anod/Tukaraq). The ammunition had production dates ranging between 1945 and 2019.



FIGURE 10 Ammunition documentation locations across Somalia.

NOTE: A total of 3 266 rounds of ammunition were documented.

From this accumulated data, it was possible to identify 126 unique ammunition headstamps – a distinct combination of the calibre, factory number and year of production. The plurality (approximately one-quarter) of these unique headstamps corresponded with ammunition produced in China.

Notably, recently produced Chinese ammunition was found in some illicit markets, most commonly in the Gedo region. In a few instances, ammunition bearing identical headstamps has been documented by independent researchers outside Somalia.

Summary of findings

As noted above, GI-TOC researchers documented a total of 126 unique headstamps in Somali illicit markets. Most of them (75, or 59.5 per cent) corresponded to 7.62 × 39 mm calibre, the predominant type of ammunition used in assault rifles found in Somalia. The data set also included machine-gun

ammunition, such as 7.62 × 54R mm (29 headstamps) and 12.7 × 108 mm (2 headstamps), and smaller quantities of ammunition more commonly used in handguns, such as 7.62 × 25 mm, 9 × 19 mm and 9 × 18 mm.

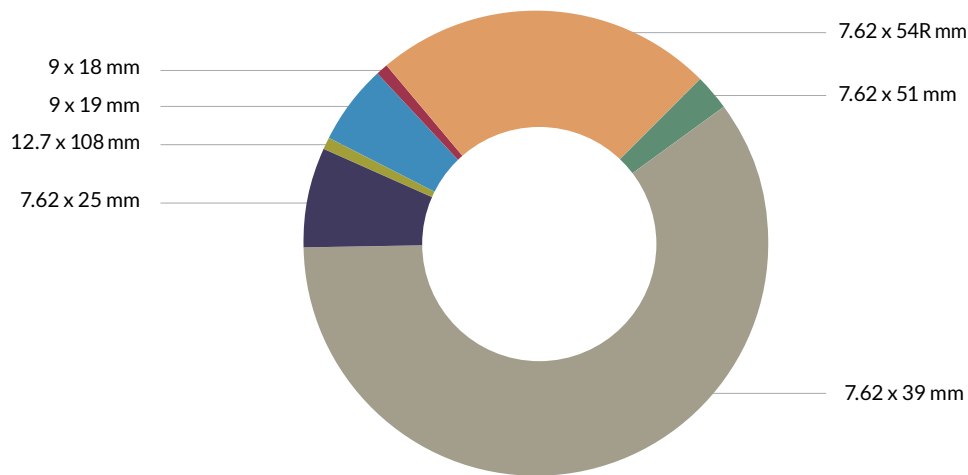


FIGURE 11 Unique headstamps by type of ammunition.

The ammunition catalogued by the GI-TOC originated in 20 manufacturing countries. China accounted for the greatest number of unique

headstamps (32, or about one-quarter of the total), followed closely by Russia (30 headstamps) and Ukraine (11 headstamps) (Figure 12).

Country of manufacture	7.62 x 25 mm	7.62 x 39 mm	7.62 x 51 mm	7.62 x 54R mm	9 x 18 mm	9 x 19 mm	12.7 x 108 mm	Total
Algeria		1						1
Bosnia and Herzegovina		5						5
Brazil						1		1
Bulgaria	1	7		2				10
China		19		11	1	1		32
Czech Republic		1						1
Egypt				2				2
Ethiopia		2		1				3
Germany		1						1
Hungary		1						1

Country of manufacture	7.62 x 25 mm	7.62 x 39 mm	7.62 x 51 mm	7.62 x 54R mm	9 x 18 mm	9 x 19 mm	12.7 x 108 mm	Total
Kenya		1						1
Republic of Korea		1						1
Kyrgyzstan	1	3		2				6
Pakistan		1						1
Romania	1	1					2	4
Russia	6	14		10				30
Turkey			2					2
Uganda		2						2
Ukraine		11						11
Unidentified		4		1				5
United States			1			5		6
Totals	9	75	3	29	1	7	2	126

FIGURE 12 Unique headstamps documented in Somalia, by country of manufacture and calibre.

Perhaps of greatest note were three unique headstamps belonging to 7.62 × 51 mm NATO calibre ammunition, two produced in Turkey and one in the United States. All three headstamps were documented at Las Anod/Tukaraq, located in an area disputed between Puntland and Somaliland. As noted above, 7.62 × 51 mm ammunition is relatively

rare in Somalia. As with the Saudi-manufactured ammunition described above (see ‘Additional Saudi G3s and ammunition documented in Puntland’), the presence of 7.62 × 51 mm ammunition may be the result of a need to provision the G3 battle rifles that have only recently begun appearing in northern Somalia.



7.62 × 51 mm ammunition produced in Turkey (left and centre) and the United States (right). The ammunition was manufactured in 2017, 1998, and 2013, respectively.

Also of particular interest are the instances of recently produced ammunition. 11 unique headstamps corresponded to ammunition manufactured between 2016 and 2019, which is noteworthy for the short intervening period between the production date and the diversion of the materiel into the illicit sphere. Six of the unique headstamps

originated in China: three by Factory 811, one by Factory 945, one by Factory 311 and one by Factory 11. Two of the headstamps that we documented (945_16 and 811_16) had also been observed by independent researchers in countries outside Somalia (Figure 13).

Headstamp	Manufacturer (Country)	Year of manufacture	Calibre	Number of documentation events in Somalia	Countries where similar ammunition was documented
945_16 	Factory 945 (China)	2016	7.62 x 54R mm	1 (Baidoa) 2 (Belet Hawo)	Mali (2019) Syria (2021)
811_16 	Factory 811 (China)	2016	7.62 x 39 mm	2 (Baidoa) 2 (Dolow)	Niger (2019) Somalia (2017, 2018)
IK_16_7.62x39 	Igman Zavod (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	2016	7.62 x 39 mm	1 (Las Anod/ Tukaraq)	Not previously documented
P S_16_7.62x39 	Poongsan Metal Manufacturing, Angang Plant (Republic of Korea)	2016	7.62 x 39 mm	1 (Las Anod/ Tukaraq)	Not previously documented
811_17 	Factory 811 (China)	2017	7.62 x 39 mm	10 (Belet Hawo) 5 (Baidoa) 1 (Bardera) 1 (Dolow)	Not previously documented
811_17 	Factory 811 (China)	2017	7.62 x 54R mm	1 (Belet Hawo)	Not previously documented
11_17 	Factory 11 (China)	2017	7.62 x 54R mm	1 (Beletweyne)	Not previously documented
311_17 	Factory 311 (China)	2017	7.62 x 39 mm	20 (Dolow) 1 (Belet Hawo)	Not previously documented
IK_17_7.62x39 	Igman Zavod (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	2017	7.62 x 39 mm	2 (Las Anod/ Tukaraq)	Not previously documented
IK_18_7.62x39 	Igman Zavod (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	2018	7.62 x 39 mm	2 (Las Anod/ Tukaraq)	Not previously documented
IK_19_7.62x39 	Igman Zavod (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	2019	7.62 x 39 mm	2 (Las Anod/ Tukaraq)	Not previously documented

FIGURE 13 Recently manufactured (2016–2019) small-calibre ammunition documented in Somalia.

Unfortunately, our researchers were unable to document the ammunition's accompanying packaging, which severely limits the chances of accurate tracing, given that manufacturers produce millions of identically marked cartridges for multiple recipients every year. The GI-TOC was therefore unable to identify the source of diversion of the documented ammunition and could not establish the nature of the supply mechanism used to procure it.

In more than two-thirds of cases, our researchers were able to collect pricing data for the ammunition they documented. 7.62 × 39 mm ammunition, by far the most common calibre in Somalia, was also the cheapest, averaging US\$2.00 per round. As would be expected, 12.7 × 108 mm machine gun ammunition was the priciest, at an average of US\$5.00 per round.

Calibre	Type	Average price per round (US\$)
7.62 × 25 mm	Handgun	3.93
7.62 × 39 mm	Rifle	2.00
7.62 × 51 mm	Rifle	N/A
7.62 × 54R mm	Machine gun	3.72
9 × 18 mm	Handgun	3.00
9 × 19 mm	Handgun	2.00
12.7 × 108 mm	Machine gun	5.00


FIGURE 14 Average price per round of ammunition, by calibre.



IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The Badbaado refugee camp in Mogadishu, housing thousands affected by conflict in southern Somalia. Increasing instability in Puntland could have cascading consequences for southern Somalia as well as neighbouring countries.

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It has long been taken for granted that the northern coast of Puntland is the major entry point for illicit arms and ammunition into Somalia. The materiel then finds its way into illicit markets and into the hands of ordinary civilians, security guards and soldiers, as well as militants belonging to al-Shabaab and the Somalia faction of ISIL.

However, there has been little direct evidence tracing the flow of these arms southward. The GI-TOC's November 2021 research paper, which drew on the same data as the present study, established that Type 56-1 rifles originally intended for Houthi forces in Yemen were entering Somalia through Puntland's maritime borders. Some of these rifles were evidently trafficked onward to the south, as they were documented by our field researchers as far away as Dolow, on the Kenyan border.⁴⁵ Through its analysis of pricing trends, the current paper provides quantitative evidence – albeit tentative – for this north–south supply chain, demonstrating that assault rifles sell for an average price that is approximately US\$90 higher in southern Somalia than in the north.

The paper also provides additional evidence for the spillover of the Yemen conflict into Somalia. It is likely that Iranian-manufactured weapons documented in Somali markets had originated in arms supplies to Houthi insurgents. Additionally, Saudi-manufactured G3 battle rifles and corresponding 7.62 × 51 mm ammunition, also likely supplied in the context of the Yemen war, are increasingly appearing in northern Somalia.

This spillover has adverse implications for the security of Puntland, traditionally one of the more stable regions in war-torn Somalia. Puntland is flanked to its west and east by al-Shabaab and the Somalia faction of ISIL. Both groups routinely source their small arms and ammunition from Yemen.⁴⁶ Since last year, however, the security situation in Puntland has deteriorated rapidly following the abrupt withdrawal of US military personnel from the region.

The Puntland Security Force (PSF), an elite US-trained and US-supported counter-terrorism unit, was previously one of the most effective forces in Somalia at fighting Islamist insurgents. In early 2021, however, the PSF's American handlers hurriedly pulled out of Puntland, along with most other US military personnel in Somalia.⁴⁷ In November 2021, following an unsuccessful attempt by the Puntland president to replace the PSF's commander, the president unleashed the Puntland regular forces against the PSF. PSF troops withdrew from their field deployments and barricaded themselves at the unit's Bosaso headquarters, leading to a protracted urban stand-off that has resulted in the killing and displacement of civilians.⁴⁸ This climate of interne-cine conflict has opened additional space for both al-Shabaab and ISIL militants to exploit. The influx of arms and ammunition into Puntland, diverted from transfers by Iran and Saudi Arabia to their respective allies in Yemen, could have particularly destabilizing consequences in the current context. Increasing instability in Puntland could allow commercial arms-trafficking networks to operate with even greater impunity, with cascading consequences for southern Somalia as well as neighbouring countries.

Ethiopia, in the midst of its own civil crisis centred around the Tigray region, is particularly susceptible to the destabilizing effects of cross-border illicit arms flows. Since the escalation of the Tigray conflict in late 2020, Ethiopia has further Balkanized, leading to the arming of ethnic militias throughout the country. The Ethiopian government itself has recognized the role of illicit firearms in fuelling conflict, and accordingly passed comprehensive firearms-control legislation in early 2020 aimed at banning the private trade and transfer of arms, and cracking down on illegal firearm ownership.⁴⁹ The country shares a long land border with Puntland, which threatens to become a major point of entry for illicit arms. This study has identified one border town in particular, Galgodob, which serves as a trafficking conduit for weapons into Ethiopia. The extent of illicit arms flows between Somalia and Ethiopia remains largely unknown, however, and necessitates additional study.

The war in Yemen continues to rage. In February 2021, the Houthis launched a fresh offensive aimed at capturing the oil-rich Marib governorate, leading the International Crisis Group to warn that the conflict would shift into a 'new and potentially bloodier phase'.⁵⁰ Early this year, Houthi ballistic missiles struck the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi, killing three people and bringing brutal reprisals from the Saudi-led coalition.⁵¹ The December 2021 maritime seizure of a dhow transporting some 1 400 assault rifles, along with other weaponry, demonstrated that Iranian arms transfers to the Houthis show no sign of abating.⁵² Saudi Arabia's arms supplies to its Yemeni allies are similarly unlikely to cease in the near term. This persistent dynamic is likely to ensure that the arms and ammunition fuelling the Yemen war will continue to be trafficked onward to Somalia and the wider region.

The GI-TOC has reported extensively on the sophisticated transnational criminal networks responsible for the maritime trafficking of arms from the Persian Gulf to Yemen.⁵³ These networks have demonstrated a high level of regional integration, with links to Iran, Oman, the UAE, Yemen and Somalia.⁵⁴ As the Yemen war drags on, these criminal networks are likely to expand and further entrench themselves. In the coming years, northern Somalia may well solidify its position as a major arms-trafficking corridor into the Horn of Africa region, and potentially beyond.

NOTES

- 1 The GI-TOC's November 2021 research report cited a total of 417 weapons documented over the course of the study. The current data set is slightly larger due to the processing of additional observations following the publication of the November 2021 report.
- 2 Jay Bahadur, An Iranian fingerprint?: Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, November 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia/>.
- 3 NAVCENT Public Affairs, U.S. Navy seizes 1,400 assault rifles during illicit weapons interdiction, 22 December 2021, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2882679/us-navy-seizes-1400-assault-rifles-during-illicit-weapons-interdiction/>.
- 4 Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa, Risk Bulletin 23, March 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-23/>.
- 5 The same weapon was documented in different contexts on 14 occasions over the course of the data collection.
- 6 Interview with an international arms expert, 25 January 2022, by phone.
- 7 Interview with an international arms expert, 17 August 2021, by text message.
- 8 Khristopher Carlson, Measuring illicit arms flows: Somalia, Small Arms Survey, October 2016, <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-Research-Note-61.pdf>.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Abdi Sheikh and Feisal Omar, Exclusive: Weapons stolen from UAE training facility in Somalia, sold on open market, Reuters, 25 April 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-arms-idUSKBN1HW26I>.
- 12 As a point of comparison, Small Arms Survey found that the average price of a Makarov (Russian-manufactured) handgun in Mogadishu was US\$1 681 in 2011–2012 and US\$1 700 in 2015. Khristopher Carlson, Measuring illicit arms flows: Somalia, Small Arms Survey, October 2016, <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-Research-Note-61.pdf>.
- 13 U.S. Army National Ground Intelligence Center, Identifying small arms and RPGs produced in Iran, 29 November 2004, <https://irp.fas.org/world/iran/smallarms.pdf>.
- 14 Analysis provided by international arms experts, November 2021. See also United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), 12 June 2018, <https://www.undocs.org/S/2018/602>; and Conflict Armament Research, Technical report: Iranian AM-50 12.7 × 99 mm anti-materiel rifle, September 2021, https://www.conflictarm.com/download-file/?report_id=3512&file_id=3519.
- 15 Analysis provided by international arms experts, November 2021.
- 16 Jay Bahadur, An Iranian fingerprint?: Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, November 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia/>.
- 17 Interview with a security guard in possession of an apparent KLF rifle, in Buhodle, 6 May 2021.
- 18 United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Somalia report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea submitted in accordance with resolution 2317 (2016), 8 November 2017, <https://www.undocs.org/S/2017/924>; and Conflict Armament Research, Maritime interdictions of weapon supplies to Somalia and Yemen: Deciphering a link to Iran, November 2016, https://www.conflictarm.com/download-file/?report_id=2444&file_id=2445.
- 19 United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Somalia report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea submitted in accordance with resolution 2317 (2016), 8 November 2017, <https://www.undocs.org/S/2017/924>.
- 20 Most of the serial numbers for the KLS rifles seized by FS *Provence* began with the prefixes 200- and 210-. The three KLS serial numbers documented by the GI-TOC in Somalia all began with the prefix 230-. The broad similarity in the serial-number prefixes provides some further support for the argument that the KLS rifles found in Somalia may have originated in a similar shipment from Iran destined for Yemen.
- 21 Our researchers documented one additional G3 rifle in northern Somalia. The weapon, manufactured under license in Portugal in 1965, was observed in Buhodle in May 2021.
- 22 Interview with an arms dealer based in Badhan district, Somalia, 27 June 2021.

- 23 Letter from the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, 14 September 2021.
- 24 Confidential security report, August 2021, on file with the GI-TOC.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 The 15 May 2021 seizure was discussed in detail in the GI-TOC's November 2021 report on the proliferation of Iranian-supplied rifles in Somalia. Jay Bahadur, An Iranian fingerprint?: Tracing Type 56-1 assault rifles in Somalia, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, November 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/iran-firearms-somalia/>.
- 28 Confidential security report, August 2021, on file with the GI-TOC.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 General Authority for Military Industries, We are GAMI, <https://www.gami.gov.sa/en/authority>.
- 31 A schedule of permissible materiel to import was set forth in the annex to UN Security Council resolution 2093 (2013).
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