



## WEST AFRICA UNDER ATTACK: DRUGS, ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM AS THE NEW THREATS TO GLOBAL SECURITY

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### **Abstract:**

The author provides an overview on the current situation in West Africa with regard to drug trafficking (cocaine, heroin and hashish), organized crime (from human trafficking to diamond trade and its link with terrorism financing) and terrorism.

**Keywords:** drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism, West Africa.

### **Resumen:**

*El autor ofrece una panorámica de la situación actual en el África Occidental con respecto al tráfico de drogas (cocaína, heroína y hachís), crimen organizado (del tráfico de personas al de diamantes y su vínculo con la financiación terrorista) y el terrorismo..*

**Palabras clave:** tráfico de drogas; crimen organizado, terrorismo; África Occidental.

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## Introduction

Drug trafficking in West and Central Africa is nothing more than the most visible symptom of a much deeper and destabilizing disease which is slowly but progressively affecting the bodies of African states and institutions.

Harsh economic and social conditions, widespread corruption, conflict and post conflict scenarios, porous borders, failing national administrations, and a growing culture of impunity feed the development of criminal practices in the region as well as the relevance of the West African region in international criminal ventures. The inability by State actors to systematically enforce the rule of law and guarantee the security of individuals and economic stakeholders provides the most conducive environment for the development of all sorts of criminal enterprises aimed at generating easy profits at the expense of human beings and societal security.

Differing according to their own ethnic situations, cultural backgrounds and endowments in natural resources, West African countries have some of the lowest standards of living in the world in common. Thirteen out of the fifteen members of ECOWAS<sup>2</sup> are among the last 30 bottom-listed countries in the UNDP Human Development index of 2006<sup>3</sup>. Wide inequality in the distribution of wealth, unchecked demographic growth associated to rapid, unplanned and often chaotic urbanization, are all features common to West African societies, and factors contributing to the increased relevance of crime and criminal activities as a viable and profitable option for breaking the cycle of poverty<sup>4</sup>.

The very structure of West African economies, based on exploitation of natural resources (mining or single crop export oriented agriculture), coupled with a patrimonial conception of the State, contribute too in creating an enabling environment within which disrespecting existing laws and using institutional prerogatives for private goals are not only justified, but considered as an indicator of power. All such factors also attract unscrupulous economic operators, facilitate the establishing and development of local and transnational criminal networks, and promote the rooting of a cultural model under which money can buy everything including impunity, political power, social consideration and respectability.

On the other hand, the control and regulation of cross-border activities are critical for ensuring peace and stability, and for promoting appropriate political and socio-economic activities needed to integrate West African economies. The movement of persons and goods is inevitable in undertaking these cross-border activities. Studies conducted have shown that between 4 and 5 million ECOWAS citizens ply the highways and frontiers of the Community's territory every month<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

<sup>3</sup> 2006 World Human Development Report, UNDP. The report lists 177 countries. Due to the lack of data, the listing does not include Liberia. As for individual ECOWAS countries: Benin (163), Burkina Faso (174), Cape Verde (106), Cote d'Ivoire (164), The Gambia (155), Ghana (136), Guinea (160), Guinea Bissau (173), Liberia (n.c.), Mali (175), Niger (177), Nigeria (159), Senegal (156), Sierra Leone (176) and Togo (147).

<sup>4</sup> Irregular migration, often facilitated by criminal organizations, is another prominent option offered to West African youth.

<sup>5</sup> Lamine, Cissé. "The ECOWAS and the Daily Events: The Present Realities of the Integration Process within the Sub-region", *Agenda* 2006, (GJA & FES: Accra), p. 47.



The porous borders of West Africa, however, continue to engender cross-border crime and instability in the sub-region, owing to the lack of an appropriate mechanism for the monitoring movements and illegal activities across the borders. Cross-border criminal activities obviously undermine good governance and security, with negative impacts on the Rule of Law, economic activities and growth, human rights and general societal and cultural advancement within the sub-region. Some of these activities involve the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons/ammunitions and human beings, especially women and children. Mercenarism and the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict, transnational syndicates involved in crimes such as peddling of narcotics, armed robbery and '419' activities<sup>6</sup>, and the smuggling of goods are other cross-border related crimes. These cross-border crimes are mostly symptomatic rather than as causes of instability in the region.

The 2004 UN Secretary-General's Report on ways to combat sub-regional and cross border crimes in West Africa identified major cross-border problems including the continued weakening of the security sector, proliferation of roadblocks, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, social exclusion, explosive remnants of war (ERW)<sup>7</sup>, mass refugee movements and forced displacement. Inequitable and illicit exploitation of natural resources, weak national institutions and civil society structures and violations of human rights, including the rights of women, were also identified as other serious problems afflicting the sub-region<sup>8</sup>.

Cross-border crimes in West Africa have been in existence since the 1970s. Initially, they were manifested in the form of individuals or groups of traders and businessmen and women smuggling goods across the borders. These activities eventually assumed alarming proportions when human trafficking, for the purposes of domestic slavery and illegal sexual activities, accompanied such activities as the peddling of narcotics and car-jacking among other things by transnational syndicates<sup>9</sup>. The outbreak of intra-state conflicts in West Africa, beginning with Liberia in 1989, added mercenarism, small arms trafficking and the recruitment of child soldiers and fighters to the cross-border crimes. West African criminal networks are generally characterized by their flexibility and their ability to take on different forms and modes of operation. The criminal enterprises in West Africa use similar techniques to that of the legitimate traders and business people, typical of lineage-based societies. The standard procedure entails a successful individual entrepreneur inviting one or more junior relatives or dependants to join him or her in an illegal business deal<sup>10</sup>.

Since the 1990s, cross-border criminal activities have become widespread and highly sophisticated. They have served as an industry for former combatants and transnational

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<sup>6</sup> '419' activities refer to advance fee fraud. For more information, refer to the Nigerian Criminal Code Act, Chapter 77, Laws on the Federation of Nigeria, Chapter 38 on "Obtaining Property by False Pretences: Cheating" Section 419 at <http://www.nigeria-law.org/Criminal Code Act-Tables.htm>

<sup>7</sup> On ERW, refer to K. Aning, "Liberia, Niger & Nigeria" in Richard Moyes, (ed.), (2005): *Explosive Remnants of War and Mines other than Anti-personal Mines – Global Survey 2003 – 2004*, London Landmine Action, at <http://www.landmineaction.org/resources>.

<sup>8</sup> "Report of the Secretary-General on Ways to Combat Sub-Regional and Cross-Border Problems in West Africa, S/2004/200", UN Security Council, (12 March 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Article 2(a) of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines a transnational organized criminal group as a "structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly a financial or other material benefit."

<sup>10</sup> (2005): *Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), New York, p. 15.



criminal syndicates who undertake illegal or criminal activities in the sub-region and in the process of undermine state security structures and abuse of human rights.

## **1. Types of Sub-regional cross-border crimes in West Africa**

Trans-border criminal activities in West Africa straddle weak borders into specific geographic locations in affected countries where state capacity to respond to the threat and challenges posed by these illegal activities is equally weak. The smuggling of goods, especially cocoa, timber, ivory, petroleum and diamonds across national borders is most prevalent along the Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana-Togo-Benin-Nigeria and Burkina Faso corridors of the sub-region. Ordinary businessmen and women, and sometimes rebels and criminal gangs involved in civil wars in the sub-region engage in the smuggling of there or other products. These goods are smuggled in vehicles or on foot, using secret and illegal routes across borders to evade special regulations, levies or taxes, thereby making more income through the transaction of these products.

For example, Nigeria, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire were named and shamed for allegedly fuelling the illegal ivory trade. Having largely wiped out their own elephant production, the three countries were believed to be importing and selling tones of ivory which has been poached in nearby countries, according to a new report from conservation watchdogs<sup>11</sup>.

Analysts and counter-terrorism experts point to the fact that the terrorist group, al Qaeda, is used, and is continuing to use, rough diamonds in West Africa. The think-tank Global Witness presented evidence<sup>12</sup> that confirms that al Qaeda has been involved in the rough diamond trade since the 1990s. Firstly in Kenya and Tanzania and then in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where they began to show an interest in diamond trading in 1998, following the crackdown on their financial activities in the wake of the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. This report argues that there are several reasons why al Qaeda has used rough diamonds:

- As a means of raising funds for al Qaeda cells;
- To hide money targeted by financial sanctions;
- To launder the profits of criminal activity;
- To convert cash into a commodity that holds its value and is easily transportable.

In this context, it would be worth highlighting the past and current use of diamonds by Hezbollah as a source of revenue and a mechanism for asset transfer. Western intelligence sources have examined the alleged links between a network of Lebanese diamond traders and their associated companies, and Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah, before briefly

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<sup>11</sup> Zhucker, Blerim: "Illegal Trading in Natural Resources in West Africa", *IRIUM*, (July 2007), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> "For a Few Dollars More: How al Qaeda moved into the diamond trade", *Global Witness report*, (April 2003), pp. 11-21.



considering the evidence of the past and recent involvement of Hezbollah and AMAL<sup>13</sup> in raising funds from diamond trading in West Africa. It is widely accepted that Hezbollah has been using the rough diamond trade throughout the 1980s and 90s to raise funds, and that it continues to derive financial support from it. Given that Hezbollah's involvement in the diamond trade was an open secret in the diamond trade and intelligence agencies for over a decade, the report from Global Witness states that governments and the industry should have recognized the significance of this and the clear precedent it set for the use of diamonds by al Qaeda, and taken appropriate measures to curb the conflict and illicit diamond trading networks. In July 2000 a Belgian military intelligence report about diamond smuggling from Angola into Antwerp and the part played by Belgium in this illegal trade concluded with the following statement<sup>14</sup>:

There are indications that certain persons, the 'Lebanese connection', mentioned in the diamond smuggling file, also put in an appearance in files on money laundering, the drugs trade and the financing of Lebanese 'terrorist' organizations such as AMAL and HIZBOLLAH. This finding gives a whole new dimension to the issue of diamond smuggling; we are NO longer dealing simply with white-collar crime.

The same goes for the trafficking of illicit arms and light weapons manufactured locally or imported from other parts of the world, drugs or narcotics and human trafficking. Some of these activities are made possible by common ethnic affiliations (in terms of language, beliefs, perceptions and support) at either side of the borders and intense economic activity undertaken along these corridors. Armed attacks and extortion at illegal check points, and '419' robbery and criminal activities experienced especially along the Benin-Nigeria corridor of the West African borders also constitutes common cross-border crimes.

Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso experience cross-border raids and attacks based on pastoral disputes between cattle herders and settler farmers.

<b>Predominant Border Crimes</b>	<b>Country / Border Zones of activity</b>	<b>Groups / Actors Involved</b>	<b>Transit States</b>	<b>Recipient States</b>
Narcotics/Drug Trafficking	Cape Verde, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo	Narcotics/Drugs dealers	Ghana/Togo/Benin/Nigeria	Spain, Portugal, UK, USA and South Africa
Internet Crime (Advance fee fraud/Money)	Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra	Advance Fee Fraud gangs or syndicates/Weal	Syndicates commute from the Western part of West Africa	Nigeria and other countries where the '419' fraudsters are

<sup>13</sup> Hizbullah and AMAL are Lebanese militias that have been rivals and during the 1980s outright enemies. During the 1980s AMAL fought against pro-Arafat Palestinians in South Lebanon and then against Hizbullah before reaching a Syrian brokered ceasefire with the latter in 1987. Their historical provenance is interconnected but complicated. To simplify, Hizbullah could be said to have grown out of AMAL.

<sup>14</sup> "Belgian intelligence, Un-classified. 7756/45", in: *For a Few Dollars More: How al Qaeda moved into the diamond trade*, Global Witness report, (April 2003).



Laundering)	Leone	thy businessmen	(Senegal) to the eastern part (Benin/Nigeria)	resident
Human Trafficking	All across West Africa but mainly around Benin/Nigeria/Côte d'Ivoire/Burkina Faso	Traffickers who serve sometimes as middle-men, trade and business partners	Mainly Ghana and Sierra Leone	Other West African countries, and in North America, Europe, and the Middle East
Fire Arms Trafficking	Ghana/Togo/Benin/Nigeria/Sierra Leone/Liberia/Guinea/Côte d'Ivoire/Senegal	Rebels, local manufacturers of fire smalls and middle-men	Togo/Benin/Guinea-Bissau and Gambia	Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire
Recruitment of Child Soldiers, Mercenarism	Mano River Union States including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire	Rebel groups (including LURD, MODEL, RUF, CDF, New Forces, MPCI, MPIGO & MPJ)	Same countries depending on where the conflict spills-over	Mano River Union States and Côte d'Ivoire
Smuggling of illegal goods, minerals and natural resources and cash crops	Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone	Individuals, businessmen and women, warlords/civil wars combatants	Mainly Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire	In Europe and North America

Source: UNODC, International Relations Institute of the University of Michigan.

The above table illustrates the predominant cross-border or transnational crimes in West Africa, showing crime patterns in terms of the countries or border zones for these crimes, the actors involved, some major transit points for the criminal activities, and some recipient States for these crimes.

### 1.1. Trafficking in Small Arms

Fire Arms trafficked across the sub-region are eventually used by rebel combatants and criminal gangs for either fighting civil wars, as in the case of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte





d'Ivoire among others, or used for armed robbery including vehicle theft and trafficking, and for committing highway robberies of passengers moving from one ECOWAS State to the other. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, President of the ECOWAS Commission puts the estimated amount of small arms in circulation in West Africa at 8 million<sup>15</sup>. The weapons are recycled between Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and among belligerents in other conflict zones such as the Casamance province and the rest of Southern Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau, typical cross border destabilizing activities stem from the circulation of small arms and movement of refugees, partly facilitated by the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars, and the secession between the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) in the Casamance region of Senegal.

Some of these arms are manufactured locally, while others are imported into the sub-region. In 2002 and 2003 for example, Côte d'Ivoire allegedly received several deliveries of military equipment, while Liberia received 49 deliveries in 2002 and 25 deliveries in 2003<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, some of the countries in the sub-region, but especially Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, have a flourishing artisanal industry of local arms manufacture<sup>17</sup>. These arms are smuggled out of Ghana through Togo, Benin to Nigeria, and used for violent crime. In this context, the Nigerian Customs Service reported the interception of small arms and ammunition worth more than 4.3 billion naira (US\$34.1 million) on their way into the country in the first six months of 2002. Important quantities of small arms have come through the border with Benin, and were brought into Nigeria either overland or by sea – in small boats. Equally active in this respect are the northern borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon<sup>18</sup>.

## **1.2. Recruitment of Mercenaries and Child Soldiers**

The countries in the Mano River Basin and Côte d'Ivoire have engaged in the use of mercenaries and recruited child soldiers to fight civil wars. The mercenary groups are usually contracted by the Government to beef-up its security and defense capabilities as was the case especially in the Sierra Leone civil war with the Executive Outcomes (EO), Sandline International, Branch Energy and the Gurkha Security Guards<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, both government and rebel forces engaged in civil wars also recruit or abduct child soldiers either in-country or in neighboring States to fight these wars. During the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme for Sierra Leone for instance, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) estimated that the majority of the 6,845 child combatants, including 529 girls, who had been demobilized by 2002 had been reunited with their families, and some 3,000 had been absorbed into a community education programme run by the United Nations International Children and Educational Fund (UNICEF). Some 1,000 women and

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<sup>15</sup> Zhucker, Blerim, "Trafficking in Small Arms in West Africa", *IRIUM*, (April 2007), p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> UNODC, (2005), *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, also see: Aning, E. K., "The Anatomy of Ghana's Secret Arms Industry", in: Florquin, N. and Eric G. Berman. (2005): *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, (Small Arms Survey, Geneva), pp. 79-102

<sup>18</sup> IRIN News "Nigeria: IRIN Focus on the dangers of cross-border crime", 2005.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on mercenaries, see: Musah, Abdel-Fatau and Kayode Fayemi (eds.) (2000): *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, Pluto Press, London.



girls who were not involved in the DDR programme were expected to be living with former rebel combatants<sup>20</sup>.

The report of the UN Secretary-General on ways to combat sub-regional and cross-border problems in West Africa highlighted the increasing use and proliferation of mercenaries, child soldiers and small arms in armed conflicts as a cause of instability in the sub-region<sup>21</sup>.

### 1.3. Human Trafficking

“Trafficking in persons” is defined in Article 3 of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

The scope of the human trafficking problem is widespread in West Africa. Child trafficking in particular spreads across eleven of the fifteen Member States of the ECOWAS including Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Mali. Available statistics indicates that the scale of the problem is enormous with an estimated 200,000 children experiencing this practice in both West and Central Africa<sup>22</sup>. In 1998, about 10,000 to 15,000 Malian children worked in plantations in neighboring Côte d’Ivoire while in Nigeria, in 1996, 4,000 children were trafficked from Cross River State to various parts within and outside the country. Benin registered over 3,000 children trafficked between 1995 and 1999<sup>23</sup>.

In a more recent human trafficking case, two Nigerians were suspected of trafficking Bangladeshi nationals to Ghana in transit to London in the United Kingdom and were arrested by the Ghanaian police. The victims reportedly paid US\$2,500 each to the Nigerians to support their upkeep and stay in the country. These transactions were undertaken through non-existent employment and placement agencies both in the UK and Ghana respectively<sup>24</sup>.

Probably one of the most popular child trafficking cases in the last decade is the “Ark of Zoé” incident, in which a French association tried to take 103 children to Paris, leading to believe that they were orphans from Darfur. International mutual legal assistance becomes essential in solving such kind of legal and operational imbroglios. In this case, Paris demanding that the Convention on Extradition between the two countries, signed in 1976, be applied. On this basis, the French detained in Chad would be prosecuted in France. But it is

<sup>20</sup> For more information refer to the *Abidjan Outcome Document and Final Report, UN.GIFT High-Level Expert Meeting on Trafficking in Children and Armed Conflict: Preventing and Combating the Illicit Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in West and Central Africa*, 26-(28 November 2007), at <http://www.unodc.org>.

<sup>21</sup> See: “Report of the UN Secretary-General on Ways to Combat Sub-Regional and Cross-Border Problems in West Africa, S/2004/200”, *UN Security Council*, (12 March 2004).

<sup>22</sup> “Human Rights Watch, *Borderline Slavery, Child Trafficking*”, *Togo*, Vol. 15, No. 8 (A) (March 2003), p.8.

<sup>23</sup> ILO, “Combating Child Trafficking in West and Central Africa”, *ILO World of Work*, No. 39, (June 2001), p.1.

<sup>24</sup> *The Ghanaian Daily Graphic*, 19 September 2005.





on the basis of this point that Chad's President, Idriss Deby has demonstrated his serious reservations: he would prefer a trial in Africa for the managers of the organization "Arch of Zoé", especially after having released all of those people not directly involved in the affair: the French journalists, the Spanish hostesses, the Belgium citizens and the other Spaniards.

#### **1.4. Drug trafficking in West Africa: the most profitable business venture**

The above scenario, unfortunately, provides the backdrop of the recent but predictable explosion of the drug trafficking issue in the region. Narcotics, particularly cocaine and heroin, are indeed very profitable items. The seizure conducted in April 2007 in Guinea Bissau of some 650 kg of cocaine was worth some US\$ 11.7 million at prevalent 2005 West Africa wholesale prices; the 2005 wholesale value of these 650 kilos of cocaine in Spain was some US\$ 26.6 million. Compared to data available for 2004, the added value resulting from shipping of the consignment from Guinea Bissau to Spain (e.g. US\$ 14.9 million) was equivalent to some 20% of all disbursed international development aid, to some 14% of exports and to 280% of all net incomes from foreign investments in the country.

##### ***A) Cocaine trafficking***

West African seashores and harbors have become the hub of transatlantic cocaine trafficking. Similarly, West African international airports have become major redistribution exit points towards the new cocaine markets of Europe, South Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

The analysis of the almost daily seizures conducted both in West Africa and destination markets indicate the presence and interaction of three different and complementary trafficking structures: the first, led by foreign operators<sup>25</sup>, move large, multi tons shipments of cocaine from Latin America (Colombia via Brazil and Venezuela) to West Africa by the use of ships, private yachts, and more recently private airplanes.

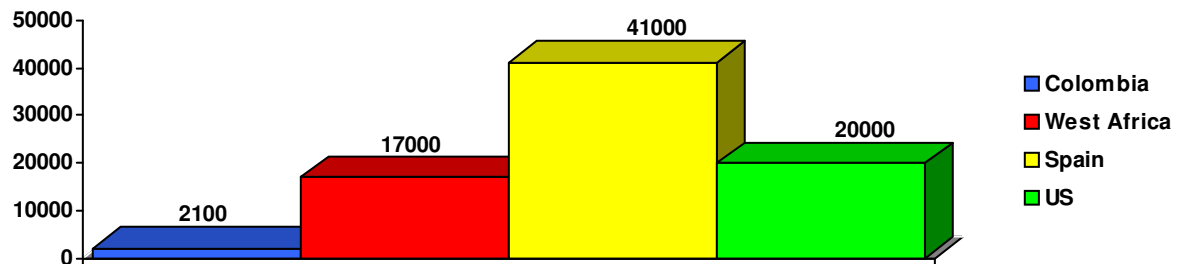
The second is operated by well established local trafficking networks, mainly Nigerian and Ghanaian, who buy directly from foreign drug trafficking networks shipments up to a couple of hundreds kilos of cocaine which is then either sold on regional markets or rerouted via human couriers to final destinations in Europe and South Africa. These trafficking networks which are able to mobilize dozens of human couriers on the same flight are the natural development of local drug trafficking entrepreneurs who started their operations in the region the late 80s and 90s and who progressively graduated from small subcontractors to larger regional independent entrepreneurs.

Finally, the wider availability of cocaine at wholesale level and the consequent development of a regional market have generated a new figure of operators, the "free lancers". These people, European and West Africans with valid resident permits in Europe, invest their savings in the purchase of a couple of kilos of cocaine with the objective of smuggling it to Europe.

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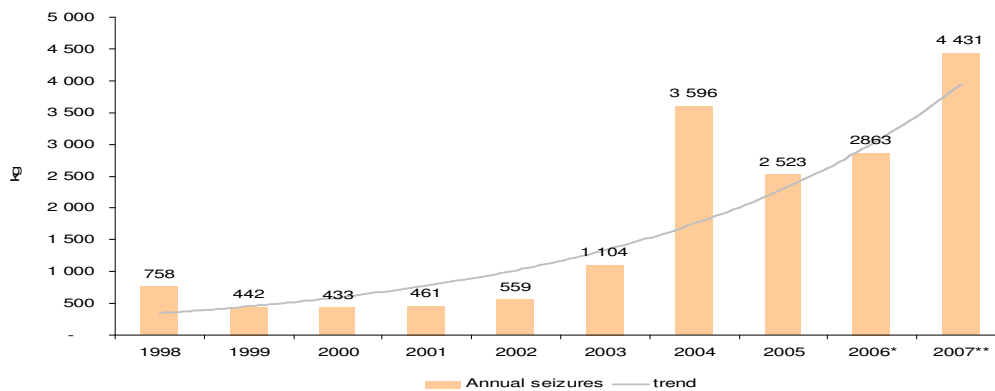
<sup>25</sup> Mostly Latin American from Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Brazil, in association with Spanish (Galicians), Italian (Calabrians and Sicilians), French and Lebanese nationals. Very recently, large seizures conducted in Mauritania, and Spain seem to indicate a growing role by Moroccan drug trafficking networks.

**Cocaine Wholesale prices USD 2005 – Source: UNODC**



**Evolution of cocaine seizure in Africa, 1995 – 2007, in kg – Source: UNODC**

*\* As per available official data at July 2007*



The recent cocaine seizures are being made by two entities: European law enforcement agencies operating in international waters and local African law enforcement agencies. The largest share of these seizures has happened on the high seas, although an increasing number share is being encountered on African soil. In the last three years, West African countries have made remarkable seizures of cocaine destined for or coming from the West African coast –some of the largest ever recorded in the world. Since these countries can dedicate only limited capacity to policing this vast region of ocean, it is likely that they are only scratching the surface. While maritime seizures linked to Africa and made by European law enforcement agencies are less in 2007 than the 2006 annual total, this is not believed to be indicative of any underlying trend, but rather representative of the spotty nature of interdiction in this area.

Given the limited law enforcement capacities of many West African States, it is also likely that only a small share of the cocaine trafficked through these countries is detected. In fact, the circumstances surrounding the best documented seizures suggest that most are made by chance<sup>26</sup>, and that, in many instances, the amount seized was much less than the amount

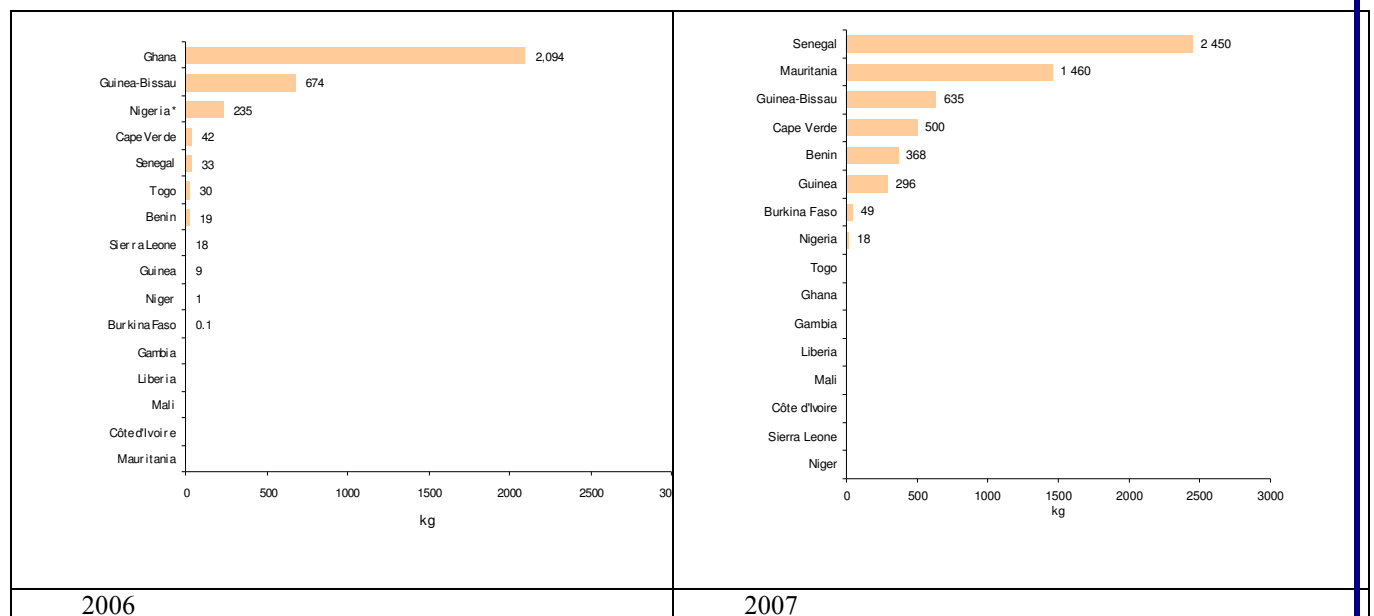
<sup>26</sup> For example, in May 2007, the airport authorities in Nouadhibou, Mauritania, noticed a group of people unloading a shipment from a small private plane. When they approached, the plane took off, leaving behind its load of cocaine. The plane later made an emergency landing on a road and the crew disappeared. In yet another example, in May 2006, the Ghanaian authorities seized 1.9 tons of cocaine after searching a van during a routine traffic stop.



trafficked<sup>27</sup>. But, despite this under-capture, seizures on African soil have also increased dramatically. West African cocaine seizures were over 60 times higher in the first three quarters of 2007 than they were in the year 2006. This would appear to be indicative of a dramatic increase in the underlying traffic.

UNODC estimates that the European cocaine demand is currently between 135 and 145 tons. Multi-ton seizures therefore represent a significant portion of the total annual supply. The 2006 maritime West African seizure total of 13 tons would be about 10% of cocaine consumed in Europe. Most of this massive amount was intercepted in just seven seizures – five at sea and two on the continent. It is likely that the un-seized flow represents a sizeable portion of Europe's cocaine supply.

**Figure: Cocaine seizures in Western African countries in 2006 and 2007 (in kg)**



\* *Nigeria 2006: A seizure of a mixture of cocaine and cement totaling 14,200 kg has been made in July 2006. The proportion of cocaine contains in the mixture is still unknown and is therefore not included in the annual total for Nigeria.*

Source: ARQ 2006 and UNODC Individual Drug Seizures database (based on data received as of October 2007)

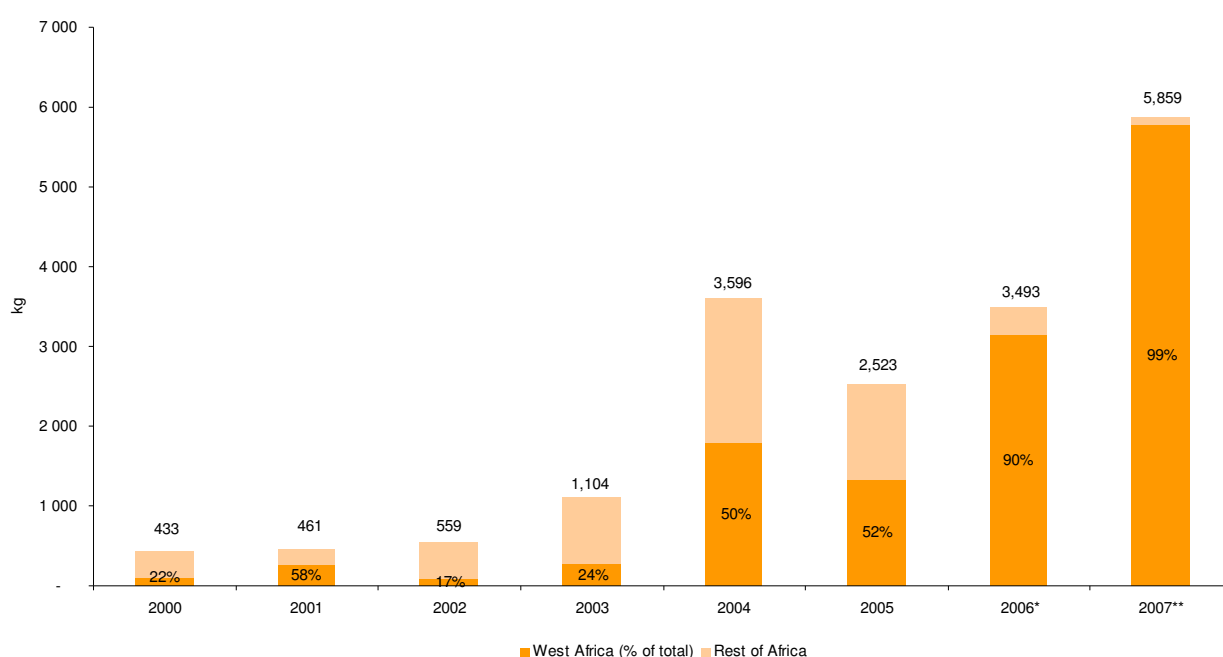
<sup>27</sup> For example, a consignment of around 635 kg of cocaine was intercepted by the Judicial Police of Guinea-Bissau near the capital city Bissau in April 2007. However, the traffickers escaped with the remainder of the consignment believed to total around 2.5 tons) because police did not have the manpower or vehicles to give chase.



Although cocaine is not produced in Africa, the rapid increase in seizures suggests that the continent, and in particular its Western region, is growing in importance as a transit area for cocaine trafficking between Latin American countries and Europe.

Since 2004, for the continent as a whole, the annual cocaine seizures in Africa have been above 2.5 tons, whereas between 1998 and 2003 annual seizures averaged about 0.6 ton. Preliminary data for the first three quarters of 2007 indicate a record level of 5.8 tons of cocaine seized in African countries, 99% of this having been seized in Western Africa.

**Figure: Annual Cocaine Seizures in Africa, 2000 – 2007 in kg – Source: UNODC.**



While these seizures represent only a small share of the underlying traffic, their value can easily exceed the entire budgets of the local agencies assigned to interdiction. A kilogram of cocaine typically wholesales at around US\$ 46,700 in many of the key European markets. A ton would therefore be worth just under US\$50 million on reaching its destination, and double that amount at retail level. The entire GDP of a small country like Guinea Bissau was only US\$304 million in 2006<sup>28</sup>, or the equivalent of six tons of cocaine at wholesale level in Europe. According to the IMF, the national budget of Guinea Bissau in 2006 was equal to 41.3% of its GDP, or US\$125 million, slightly more than the wholesale value of two and half tons of cocaine. Guinea Bissau is an interesting case in point, because indications are that this country is particularly utilized by traffickers. While eight West African countries have seized more than 100 kg of cocaine in either of the last two years, Guinea Bissau has done so in both of them.

<sup>28</sup> For more information refer to the following World Bank website: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile>.

*Why is cocaine being trafficked via West Africa?*

Numerous countries suffer from the adverse effects of lying between the sites of drug production and the most lucrative consumption markets. For example, Central America and the Caribbean have long suffered for being placed between South America's cocaine producers and the cocaine users of North America. Similarly, South East Europe has been affected by heroin trafficked from Afghanistan to West Europe via the so-called "Balkan route". These countries have had to dedicate substantial resources to combating a problem starting and ending elsewhere.

At first glance, trafficking through West Africa appears to make little market sense. To make use of the region as a way station, traffickers must add kilometers and this risk, to their traditional smuggling routes. There must be substantial incentives in favor of making this detour.

Most obviously, there is value in novelty – professional drug traffickers avoid interception by continually shifting operations away from routes known to law enforcement. But there are indications that in some instances, such as Guinea Bissau, South American traffickers have actually relocated to the West coast of Africa, an unfamiliar territory for them. The investment they have made suggests that this is more than just fleeting slight-of-hand. Trafficking via West Africa apparently offers long-term advantages over more direct routes.

*Why is this happening now?*

The bottom line is the shift of the cocaine market from North America to Europe.

Global cocaine markets are in flux. Since the mid-1980s, cocaine has been losing its appeal in the United States. Adult cocaine prevalence is currently 50% lower than it was two decades ago<sup>29</sup>. In the face of declining demand in the premiere market, cocaine traffickers have had to find new consumers elsewhere.

They found these new consumers in Western Europe. From the mid-1990s, cocaine markets in several European countries began to grow. In some areas, cocaine has become the club drug of choice, as ecstasy and related substances become passé. For example, according to the British Crime Survey, the prevalence of cocaine use increased more than four-fold in the last decade, from 0.6% of the adult population in 1996 to 2.6% in 2007. Spain, Italy, and France have all seen cocaine use levels double or triple in recent years<sup>30</sup>.

As a result, a growing share of the total cocaine production is shifting from markets in North America to markets in Western Europe, as reflected in the seizures figures. The declining value of the US dollar relative to the Euro may also be affecting traffickers' choice of preferred markets.

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<sup>29</sup> Further, recent forensic evidence from workplace testing indicates a sharp downward turn in use levels. See ONDCP, *Cocaine Use Declines Among U.S. Workforce*, press release 9 August 2007.

<sup>30</sup> *UNODC World Drug Report 2007*, UNODC, Vienna, (2007).



Another important factor is interdiction. After years of effort, the governments of the Western Hemisphere have scored significant gains in stopping cocaine supply to the United States. The crackdown on cartel leaders by President Calderón's administration in Mexico appears to have significantly affected trafficking<sup>31</sup>. Increased use of the military, among other things, has scored several record cocaine seizures and significantly hindered fast boat traffic.

### *Historic role of West African crime "networks" in drug trafficking*

There is also the historic role that nationals of West Africa have played in global cocaine and heroin markets. West African crime "networks" have long been key players in supplying cocaine to numerous European countries. While the relationship remains unclear, it is difficult to believe that there is no connection between the fact that West Africans are key cocaine distributors in Europe and the selection of West Africa as a staging ground for cocaine importation.

### *How is it being done?*

What can be learned from the major seizures about the way that cocaine is being moved from South America to West Africa and from there to West Europe? With regards to the leg between South America and West Africa, it appears that both sea and air traffic are involved.

The maritime shipments tend to involve large commercial fishing or freight "mother ships" often specially modified for cocaine storage. These same ships are likely to ply the other maritime routes to Europe. According to a September 2007 Europol Report<sup>32</sup>:

Three main sea routes to Europe have been identified: the Northern route, leading from the Caribbean via the Azores to Portugal and Spain; the Central route from Latin America via Cape Verde or Madeira and the Canary Islands to Europe and, more recently, the African route from South America to Western Africa and from there to Spain and Portugal.

These ships discharge their cargo at sea to fishing vessels from the West African coast. According to Europol, the crews of these smaller vessels are West African, with Spanish or South American "controllers"<sup>33</sup>.

Air shipments have also been detected, often using relatively small aircraft modified for the trans-Atlantic voyage by the inclusion of additional fuel tanks. Seizures of these craft have been made in both Latin America<sup>34</sup> and in Africa<sup>35</sup>.

## ***B) Heroin trafficking***

<sup>31</sup> Cook, C. "Mexico's Drug Cartels", Congressional Research Service, Washington D.C., (16 October 2007).

<sup>32</sup> "Cocaine Trafficking Trends", Europol Report, (September 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Europol 2007, *op cit*.

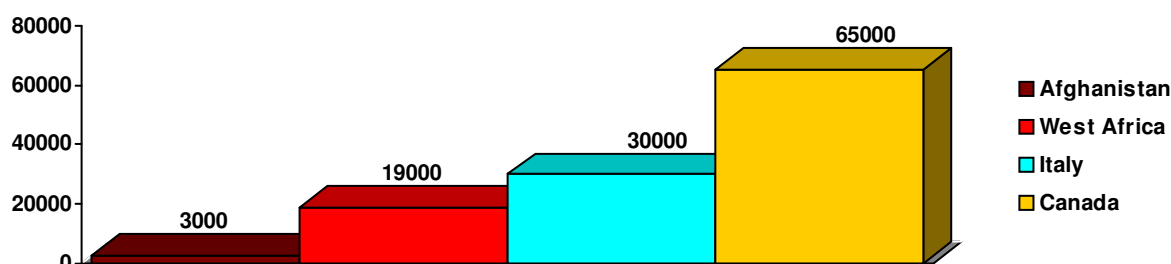
<sup>34</sup> On 10 July 2007, 2.5 tons of cocaine were seized in Venezuela. The traffickers were loading the drug in a private plane bound for Sierra Leone.

<sup>35</sup> On 1 May 2007, in Mauritania 630 kg of cocaine compressed into bricks were seized on board of a 2-engine Cessna 441 aircraft. The GPS-record of the aircraft revealed the plane had left a small airstrip in Venezuela. In July 2007, the Moroccan Narcotic Control Board reported the seizures of similar cocaine bricks.



Contrary to what is happening with cocaine, heroin trafficking through West Africa seems to be experiencing a downward trend. The reason of this trend may be found in the relative stabilization of the heroin market in Europe and the US, and the consequent reduced premium achievable to traffickers.

### Heroin Wholesale prices USD 2005 – Source: UNODC.



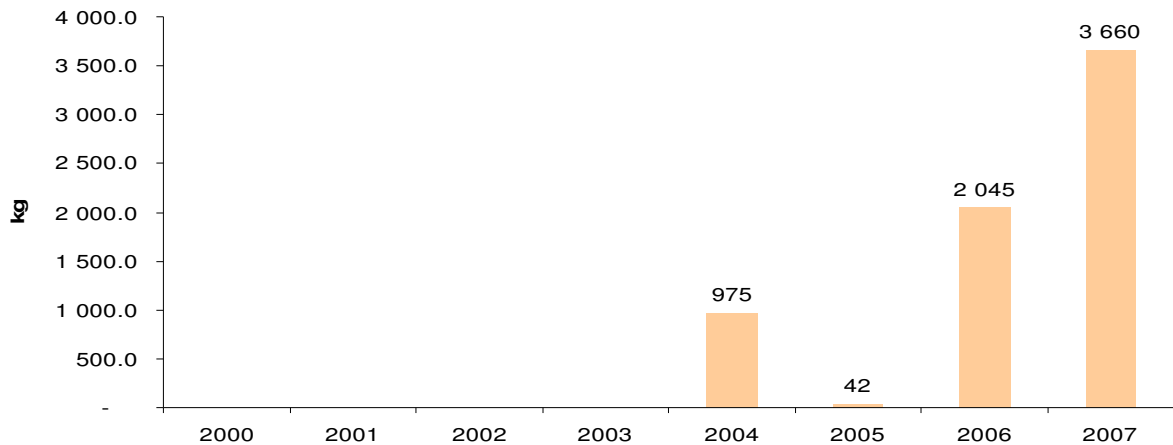
The situation may however change in the short run, because of both the overproduction of heroin in the main heroin world supplier, Afghanistan, and the resumption of direct flights from West Africa to North America. In this context, it is indicative that one of the major seizures of heroin conducted in the US in recent years (70 kg), the heroin came via West Africa.

Heroin reaches West Africa via air couriers using the direct flights linking West African major international airports to East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya), the Arabian Peninsula, and Pakistan. Two large seizures conducted by the Dutch in 2005, and the Senegalese in 2006, of several tons of Pakistani hashish hidden in containers rerouted from Dakar indicates, however, the existence of a trafficking route able to move tons of heroin from East Asia to Europe and the United States.

### C) Hashish trafficking: the Sahelian band

Compared to cocaine and heroin, hashish is not a profitable item for trafficking in West Africa. Nevertheless, recent events in Niger at the beginning of 2007 have indicated the existence of a well established trafficking route running from Morocco through Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and ending up either in Sudan or in Egypt. Quantities seized, coupled with the *modus operandi* of traffickers do, however, justify renewed attention to the phenomenon because of its possible implications in terms of the stability of the region and the potential with respect to terrorism financing.

### Hashish seizures in Niger in kg, 2002 –2007 (up to 30 April) – Source: UNODC.



#### D) Drug Abuse in general

Hard drugs smuggled through West and Central Africa are not only trafficked out of the region but increasingly consumed in deadly homemade cocktails: cocaine and crack cocaine are available almost in every major town of the region at affordable prices<sup>36</sup>; in Liberia, child soldiers reported the consumption of locally-made crack cocaine mixed with gun powder. Heroin abuse is also reported to be on the increase.

### 2. Local criminal organizations: a West African success story

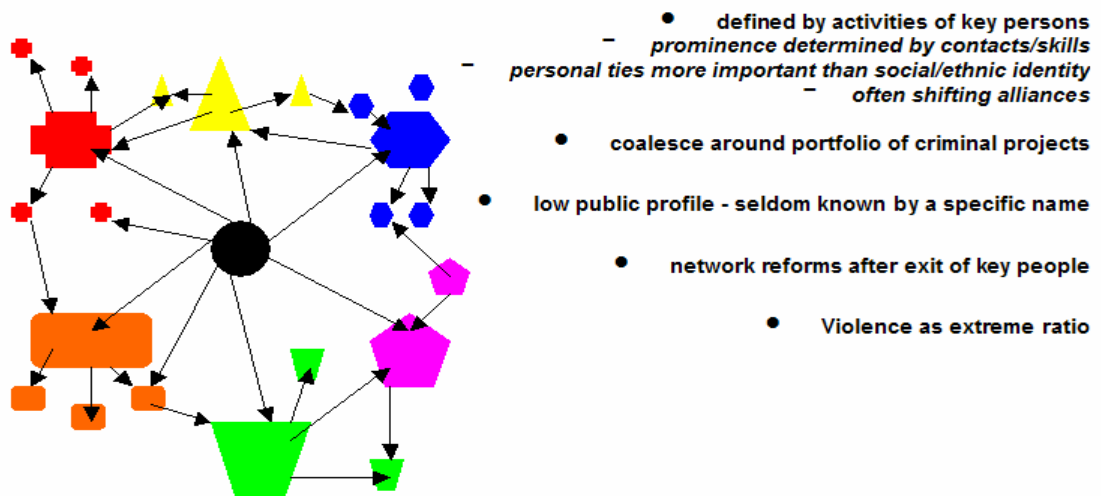
West Africa and West Africans are not only an attractive location and partners for foreign criminal networks but are gradually building up and exporting their own criminal network model. Besides the well-known Nigerian networks, new ones are developing in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. Following the example of the Nigerian “network” type, such criminal organizations have in common the very loose, fragmented, and business oriented features which made them extremely successful in the global village of modern “disorganized” crime.

Traditional highly organized criminal models, such as the ones used by well-known criminal organizations like the Sicilian Mafia, the American *Cosa Nostra* or the Japanese Yakuza, would indeed hardly fit the lawless and “hit-and-run” conditions characterizing the overall African context where project-based, “business-oriented” structures prove to be highly successful. In this sense, criminal ventures in West Africa adopt structures, *modi operandi* and features typical of legitimate traders and business people of the region where a successful entrepreneur would invite one or more junior relatives or other dependents to join him/her<sup>37</sup> in the business as volume grows.

<sup>36</sup> The following prices have been recorded by the Narcotic Control Board of Ghana for 2005: Cocaine 1 gram USD 18.50, dose: USD1.32; Crack cocaine dose USD 0.55. Heroin 1 gram USD \$16. dose USD 1.10; Cannabis 1 cigarette USD 0.11 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2006*, US State Dept, (March 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Women criminal entrepreneurs seems to be predominant in the trafficking of girls for sexual exploitation from the Delta region of Nigeria to Europe.

### Organized Criminal Networks in Sub Saharan Africa : the network model



Source : IRIUM, April 2006.

Division of tasks within these structures occur in such a way that new recruits, generally personal acquaintances or relatives of original associates, hardly know the employers they are really working for, as well as how their tasks relate to assignments given to other members. Employment offered is generally limited to the project without any expectation of stable, or permanent links to the structure that, in fact, often disappears upon completion of the given project. Secrecy and total loyalty to the group involved in the venture is further ensured by cultural pressures (belonging to the same village, clan, and ethnic group) and by the use of religious, black magic rituals, threatening supernatural punishment in case of betrayal.

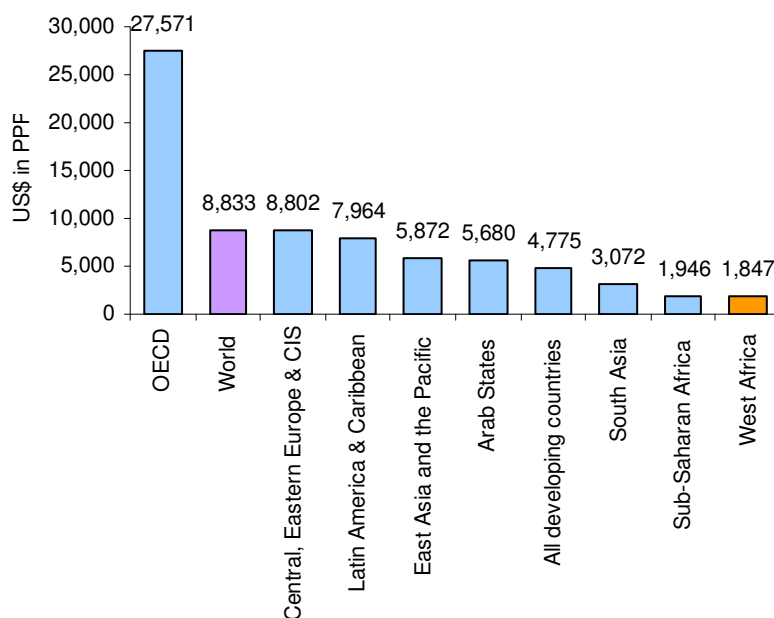
### 3. What is the profit that the cocaine trafficking industry generates in West Africa?

The illicit cocaine industry operates outside the law. Its 'companies' are not listed on any stock exchange, they are not valued by any private accounting firm, and the dynamics of the drug industry are not regularly pored over by analysts, economists and forecasters.

The overall value of the cocaine transiting through Western Africa represents only a small portion of the global value of the cocaine market. Yet, the illicit revenues estimated at US\$ 2 billion and in the hands of organized crime catalyzing the trafficking of cocaine through Western Africa is important by comparison of the licit revenues generated in the region. Its size pose a potential threat to a number of economies in terms of financial power generated. The funds generated by organizing the traffic of cocaine through Western Africa can be used to intimidate (including by means of violence) or corrupt government officials or, in some cases, political systems as a whole, as well as to crowd out licit economic activities, thus jeopardizing a country's future.

In per capita value, Western Africa is the poorest region in the world (thus the most vulnerable).

**Figure: Gross domestic product per capita in 2005 in US\$ (PPP) – Source: UNODC.**



Based on World Bank data and IMF forecasts, the 2007 GDP for Western Africa is estimated at US\$195 billion. Traffickers organizing the illicit trade of cocaine through the region have the potential to generate revenue of US\$2 billion, or 1% of the regional economy.

There are comparable examples in the case of Afghanistan with a 2007 total farm-gate value of opium production amounting to US\$ 1 billion, representing 13% of Afghan GDP. Similarly 2006 of farm-gate value of coca production amounted to US\$1.2 billion (0.5% of GDP in Colombia, 0.4% of GDP in Peru, and 2% of GDP in Bolivia.)

#### **4. Terrorism in North and West Africa**

Terrorism is not new to North and West Africa. The region as a whole has been affected by a range of ethno-nationalist and religious conflicts, a number of which have been accompanied by highly destructive campaigns of terrorism. The civilian carnage wrought by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria is one of the more graphic examples, although more limited campaigns have also been associated with the Christian/Muslim communal conflict in Nigeria, Tuareg insurgent violence in Mali, and the Casamance struggle in Senegal. While much of the terrorist violence in the region revolves around specific catalytic events (such as the annulment of the Islamic Salvation Front's electoral victory in Algeria in 1992 and the institution of Shari'ah law in Nigeria's northern states in 2000), institutional weakness,



autocratic governance and economic marginality have all provided an environmental context that is highly conducive to political violence and extremism.

These various manifestations of terrorist violence have had a notable impact on stability throughout the sub-region. At the national level, it has played a prominent role in polarizing sub-national ethnic and religious identity, leading to highly divisive societies that have been unable to forge institutional structures for peaceful communal coexistence. Nigeria provides a graphic case in point, suffering over the last decade from an increasingly serious Christian-Muslim gulf borne of what is rapidly becoming an entrenched culture of extremist sectarian mobilization and violence<sup>38</sup>. Equally as indicative is Algeria, where viscous campaigns waged by the GIA, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and associated splinter groups over the last two decades have torn and, arguably destroyed, much of the underlying social fabric holding the country together<sup>39</sup>. Economically, terrorism has discouraged foreign investment and tourism as well as necessitated the re-allocation of scarce resources away from productive uses.

Regionally, terrorism and terrorist-infused armed campaigns have also had a marked impact, complicating bilateral interstate relations and often negatively interacting with other transnational threats to stability. External terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda are strongly suspected of having forged mutually beneficial links with West African crime networks, particularly in Nigeria, paying syndicates to facilitate everything from document forgery to people, weapons, diamonds and drugs trafficking<sup>40</sup>. Finally, the integrity of borders between neighboring countries has periodically been called into question as a result of population displacements and illicit commodity movements connected to, if not directly caused by extremist activity and/or repressive internal security drives.

Although for the most part terrorism in North and West Africa has manifested itself as a local phenomenon, there have been exceptions. The Algerian GIA, for instance, has carried out numerous attacks in France, benefiting from the overseas assistance of various diaspora communities scattered throughout southern Europe. More seriously and with particular salience to post-9/11 threat contingencies, the region has been directly connected to the global anti-western jihadist ambitions of Bin Laden. Al-Qaeda is known to have made logistical inroads into West Africa, seeking to radicalize regional Islamist sentiment, benefit from the pervasive influence of organized criminality that infuses states such as Nigeria and exploit the weak, porous borders and institutional structures that are characteristic of states throughout the Sahel and Maghreb<sup>41</sup>.

The turning point in the *modus operandi* of al-Qaeda terrorist groups in the inverted « L » merging the Maghreb with the Sahel and West Africa came on 11 December 2007, when the Algerian capital, Algiers, was rocked by two deadly bomb attacks, on the country's Constitutional Council and the offices of the United Nations.

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<sup>38</sup> Razzia, Sharik, "West Africa under the threat of Terrorism", *University of Michigan Discussion Papers*, Vol. V, (Spring 2007).

<sup>39</sup> "Terrorism Monitor", *The Jamestown Foundation*, Volume 3, Issue 15, (28 July 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Information obtained by UNODC from law enforcement and intelligence analysts in West Africa.

<sup>41</sup> For more information, refer to Timothy Docking, "Terrorism's Africa Link," *The Christian Science Monitor*, (November 14, 2001 Congress, 2002); and John Mackinlay, "Osama Bin Laden: Global Insurgent," *African Security Review* 10/4, (2001).



Intelligence and police sources revealed that the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) had planned several months ago to attack one of 11 December's targets<sup>42</sup>.

BBC Security Correspondent Frank Gardner stated that the manner of the bombings and choice of targets suggest the involvement of the group, which is now known as al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb<sup>43</sup>.

Many of the recent blasts in this region have been claimed by members of al-Qaeda's North Africa wing, calling themselves al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM), including a triple suicide bombing in Algiers in April 2007 which killed 33 people. The militant group was previously known as the GSPC, but changed its name when it reportedly joined forces with al-Qaeda last year.

### **Conclusion: Immediate Future Scenarios on Cocaine Trafficking and the Financing of Terrorism in West Africa**

#### *Social Impact*

The most likely short-term social impact of cocaine trafficking would be an increase in local drug use rates. Unfortunately, data on the use of cocaine trafficking in Western Africa is very limited. No survey has ever been conducted to estimate the prevalence of cocaine use among the general population. UNODC has supported a few surveys on the abuse of drugs in schools and populations deemed at risk, but it remains difficult to generalize on the basis of this data.

Data on the use of cocaine in Western Africa mostly come from three sources: the Annual Report Questionnaire returned by Member States to UNODC, some quantitative studies, and the analysis of data from drug treatment centers. From these three sources, it is possible to appreciate that cocaine is used to some degree in Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

According to the opinion of national experts, elicited in the Annual Reports Questionnaire, cocaine use among the general population was increased in Senegal and Guinea-Conakry in 2005, whereas the situation was reported as stable in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. The use of crack cocaine was reported in Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia. In any case, if the flow through the region is highly organized, it is unlikely that much cocaine will be "spilled" into local markets, as there are strong economic incentives to bring as much of the drug as possible to its highest value destination – the European Union particularly and more generally West Europe.

#### *Economic Impact*

The routing of cocaine through West Africa is probably too recent an occurrence for any economic impact to be measurable yet. All evidence suggests that the traffic only began to take off in the last five years, and many of the current social indicators are based on data older

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<sup>42</sup> BBC News, 11 December 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid





than that. However, there are a number of curious data trends in the region, and projections can be made on similar experiences in other parts of the world.

In the short term, drug trafficking could result in an unexplained influx of currency to the region. Just how much money is involved depends on the details of how much the market is organized. It is possible that Latin American groups are retaining ownership of the drugs until they enter Europe. If so, only a few local workers would need to be paid for tasks like loading and re-packaging, and a few key officials bribed. Latin American expatriates would stimulate the economy to some degree by their presence and spending, but in the end, the impact could be minimal.

In parallel, if parts of the region have become active as open wholesale markets, the influx of money could be considerable. Proceeds of drug sales in Europe would have to be transferred to the region in order to pay for more drugs. This could be done through wire transfers (remittances), though bogus commercial investments and transactions, or through the movement of bulk cash. While risky in such a volatile area, genuine investment of illicit money in licit businesses could occur. Some of this activity is likely to be captured in the recorded economy.

There are however three side centripetal effects of such illegal activity:

- (a) Unexplained increases of cash remittances: It would be worth highlighting that cash remittances from Europe have increased dramatically in recent years in a number of West African countries. This is best seen in the larger countries with better developed systems. In Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, there has been a doubling or tripling of remittances in the past several years. There are reports that Nigeria's remittances increased by 200% between 2005 and 2006. If part of the European wholesale market for cocaine has indeed moved from Colombia to West Africa, the movement of large amounts of hard currency to the region, representing the proceeds of retail cocaine sales reinvested in future supplies, would be expected.
- (b) Sudden increase of Foreign Direct Investment in Guinea Bissau: Aside from wire transfers, drug money could be moved into the region, through business transactions, perhaps showing up as foreign direct investment (FDI). After years of invisible or zero FDI, Guinea Bissau suddenly attracted US\$42 million in 2006, equal to nearly a sixth of GDP. Unlike remittances, FDI can suddenly jump as a result of a small number of transactions.
- (c) Appreciation of local currencies: One possible effect of a sudden influx of money into an area could be the appreciation in the value of the local currency. Many of the economies of the region are extremely small, with GDPs of less than US\$3 billion annually. Some of these countries are Members of the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine or the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale and so use their respective versions of the CFA Franc. Other countries have economies too large for sudden influxes to have much impact, such as Nigeria and Ghana. But others, such as the Gambia, are both small and maintain their own currency.

The Gambian currency, the Dalasi, after years of declines, has experienced a rapid appreciation of its value since the end of July 2007 which has left economists and local analysts puzzled. The appreciation has been most remarkable between 26 and 27 of



September 2007, where the Dalasi increased 25.9% in value against the dollar in one single day. Between mid-July and the beginning of November 2007, the Gambian currency had appreciated 37.9% against the dollar, 31.1% against the Euro and 34.5% against the British pound. This could be due to speculation or legitimate investment, but it could also be due to money laundering<sup>44</sup>.

Parallel to the previous lines of thought and analysis, what is al-Qaeda's economic strategy in Africa? Are there any links between terrorism financing and drug cartels operating in Latin America and West Africa?

Al-Qaeda's attacks over the past six years have had specific economic repercussions. Firstly, Osama bin Laden gleefully noted, in a speech addressed to the American people on 29 October 2004, that 'al Qaeda spent US\$500,000 on the event [11 September 2001] while America lost, in the event and its subsequent effects, more than US\$500 billion dollars; that is to say that each of al Qaeda's dollars defeated 1 million American dollars<sup>45</sup>.' The chain of al-Qaeda attacks had other economic repercussions: Arab investors, worried that their assets may be frozen, withdrew billions of dollars from Western financial institutions and invested them instead in the Muslim world, including West Africa. Huge oil revenues resulting from the vastly inflated current price of oil are also now being invested in the Gulf states resulting in an economic boom.

Regular insurgency attacks on oil pipelines and installations in Iraq have also already impacted on oil prices with the so-called 'terror premium' leading to the highest prices on record. Al Qaeda has frequently urged OPEC ministers to reduce oil production, resulting in higher prices which squeeze Western economies.

Similarly, the link between drug trafficking and terrorism financing in the Latin America-West Africa-European Union (EU) triangle has been analyzed by intelligent experts in the EU and the United States of America. In this context, it would be worth highlighting that on the Tri-Border Area (TBA) in Latin America where the frontiers of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay all meet, and which has figured heavily for the last two decades as a nexus for drug traffickers and even –in the last decade- for terrorists, there are strong suspicions that a number of drug cartels are operationally affiliated with Middle Eastern groups<sup>46</sup>.

The TBA is a nexus between two major points, and a drop off for air travel between those two points, and the region is economically important for legitimate business and illegitimate as well. According to the Brazilian government, US\$12 billion is laundered through the TBA each year, and that is just on their side. According to estimates by the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, James T. Hill, some US\$50 to US\$500 billion is laundered in the TBA, as the area is vibrant and alive with legitimate and specifically illegitimate businesses. Out of this has emerged a terrorism financing network, with several figures involved including merchant Assad Ahmad Barakat, who has been designated a key Hezbollah financier responsible for sending at least US\$50 million to Hezbollah since 1995<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> "Cocaine Trafficking from West Africa to Europe", *UNODC Report* presented to the UN Security Council, (November 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan (2006): *The Secret History of al Qaeda*, by, University of California Press, pp. 96-99.

<sup>46</sup> John Lombardi, Department of Defense, *Terrorism Financing & State Responses in Comparative Perspective*, Conference Report, Monterey, CA, 4-5 November 2004.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.



It goes without saying that the very same drug cartels acting in Latin America are now reaching the coasts of West Africa due to an enabling environment with weak legislation on all sides of the border, poor law enforcement, non-transparent financial institutions, poorly monitored borders beyond the checkpoints and easy access to illicit activities conducted by organized crime.

### *Governance impact*

Whatever the macroeconomic effects, drug flows of the magnitude seen in West Africa are highly likely to result in the higher incidence of corruption of law enforcement and the consequent undermining of the rule of law. In countries like Guinea Bissau, there are repeated allegations that high ranking officials in government and the military are complicit in drug trafficking and there have been a number of questionable judicial and executive decisions that appear to be corruption-related. Corruption of this sort cannot but undermine the already tenuous confidence many citizens of the region have in their governments. The example of Guinea Bissau, where 635 kg of cocaine have been seized in 2007, goes along with the seizure in Senegal in 2007 (2,450 kg), Mauritania (1,460 kg), and Ghana (in 2006 a total of 2,064 kg and in 2007 at least 333 kg in 2007 through the UK supported West Bridge operation alone).

Based on the international indicators, many of the countries of the region can scarcely afford to suffer a further loss in credibility. The World Bank establishes quantified governance ratings for countries throughout the world<sup>48</sup>. Governance ratings in West Africa are generally not high, with a few countries scoring about the international average for most indicators.

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<sup>48</sup> These are “a statistical compilation of responses on the quality of governance given by a large number of enterprise, citizens and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries, as reported by a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations.” See Kaufmann, D., Kraay and M. Mastruzzi, *Governance Matters VI: Governance Indicators for 1996-2006*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Policy Research, June 2007.



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