

LEAD DEBATE ON NATIONAL COMMISSION AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND FOR RELATED MATTERS, 2020 (SB. 283).

Sponsor: Sen. Adeyemi, Smart (Kogi West).

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on the general principles of this very important Bill before us today. The Bill was read for the first time in this Senate on Wednesday, 18th December, 2020.

This Bill essentially seeks to provide for the establishment of the National commission against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons to coordinate and implement activities to combat the problems of small arms and light weapon in Nigeria in line with ECOWAS states on small arms and light weapons.

The objectives of the Bill includes:-

- To identify sources and main routes of these Small Arms, Ammunitions and Light Weapon;
- To identify why this illicit trade thrives in Nigeria;
- To liaise with the relevant Authorities, Agencies and Organizations with the aim of tackling these manace;
- To recommend possible ways to monitor, control, halt, and mitigate these nagging illegal activities of unscrupulous persons, companies and organizations;
- To itemize and identify promoters, users, patrons and reasons for these illegal activities;
- To explore all avenues to achieve adequate funding for this campaign;
- To train and build the capacity of the corps and others towards an effective enforcement of this mandate;
- To put in place all other machinery needed for successful prosecution of this campaign to combat illegal importation small arms, ammunition and light weapons;
- Enhance coordination and where possible harmonization of intelligence and information collection, analysis and dissemination among the intelligence organ and law enforcement agencies involved;
- Ensure prosecution of all smugglers of illegal weapons and goods caught;
- Help to disrupt and dismantle these organizations; and
- Enhance counter intelligence by sniffing out illegal routes of smuggling.

The Proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been a stricken issue in the international agenda since 1998. It is a pace of activities that is eating into the survival of emerging nations in the international scene especially in Africa. It is a phenomenon that is destabilizing the peace, development and threatening the national security of sovereign nations.

The complications of illegal arms and weapons of terror worldwide informed the United Nations (UN), to come up with a programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapon (SALW).

The local root causes of the conflicts are numerous and diverse. However, in nearly all of the conflicts, the diffusion of illegal arms and weapons of terror, particularly from the industrialized nations to the developing world, has played a decisive role in the escalation, intensification and resolution of these conflicts.

Small Arms and Light Weapons are readily available, easy to use and have been the primary or sole tool of violence in almost all conflicts in every part of the globe. These weapons of terror are in the hand of irregular troops operating with scant respect for international and humanitarian law, they have taken a heavy toll on human lives, with women and children accounting for nearly 80 percent of the casualties.

The proliferation of these weapons affects the intensity and duration of violence and encourages militancy rather than a peaceful resolution of unsettled differences.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, in Nigeria, this has become a serious security challenge. There is general insecurity as most parts of the country experience high level crimes perpetrated using illicit arms. The UN estimated a substantial percentage of illegal arms that is in circulation in West Africa are in Nigeria. This has fuelled violent conflicts as witnessed in the Niger Delta, Kidnapping in the South East, Armed robbery pandemic in the South West, Ethnic/Religious violence on the Plateau, and the Boko Haram operations in the North-East, a situation which has plunged the nation into a serious state of insecurity.

Uncontrolled arms have also impacted on the country's democracy and development negatively. Electoral violence by gun-wielding thugs and assassinations of several political leaders since 1999, have jeopardized free and fair elections in many states of the federation.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, there are numerous ways by which small arms can be smuggled into the country because of their light-weight and concealable nature. Trucks have been used to smuggle arms into the country, while a number of them are brought in on donkeys, camels and on foot. Similarly, SALW are transported through water ways, Boats load of arms from the great lake's conflict areas have been reported to have been discharged at Warri and Bonny towns of Niger Delta. Also Small Arms Survey (SAS) had reported on Malian arms smugglers packing small arms in water proof sacks. Attaching them into bottom of boats for transfer to countries along the River Niger.

The use of air craft to transport weapons internationally and regionally is also common in the West African sub region. Here Military planes, play active roles in large intercontinental illicit arms transfer arranged by international brokers. Such transfer are often complex, consisting of front companies, fake paperwork, and collection of brokers, financiers and corrupt state officials operating mostly from different countries. Though a combination of factors such as porosity of our borders, corruption of security and law enforcement officers and the existence of ready market in conflict flash-points in the country, such weapons are smuggled into Nigeria. This method of trafficking constitutes the most significant contributor to proliferation of arms. The illicit trade thrives because the return on investment is very high, if the smuggler is not caught.

The above effects of illegal arms and weapons of terror in Nigeria are self-explanatory and calls for a concerted effort by all and sundry to successfully prosecute this war against terror, the support, collaboration and involvement of all genuine stakeholders is a condition precedent to winning the war. It is within this framework that the proposition of certain organized private sector stakeholders like the Importers Association of Nigeria (IMAN) was accepted by Government to set-up a special task force to combat illegal importation of small arms, ammunition and light weapons into Nigeria.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, I believe that this Bill if passed into law will go a long way in curbing insecurity challenges in our country.

I therefore urge you all my Distinguished Colleagues to support the Second Reading of this Bill and committal to the relevant Committee for detailed consideration.

Thank you.

COMPENDIUM ON NATIONAL COMMISSION AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS BILL, 2020 (SB. 283).

Sponsor: Sen. Adeyemi, Smart (*Kogi West*).

TOTAL PROJECTIONS/ESTIMATES FOR THE RCURRENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING COMMENCEMENT

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1.	Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Salaries and allowances of Personnel)	230,176,123.36
2.	Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Maintenance of vehicles, management costs of offices and Other contingency)	N67,744,000.00
3.	Estimated Capital Expenditure (Office accommodation, furniture, etc)	160,000,000.00
4.	Estimated Capital Expenditure (Purchase of vehicles)	64,000,000.00
	Total Projected/Estimated Costs for First Year of	
5.	Commencement of the Board	N521,920,123.36

SURMISES

The forgoing compilation proffers a fair approximation of the financial implications for the establishment of the Commission in the first year immediately following commencement.

To all intents and purposes, the financial outlay estimated and projected for the Commission is a modest one. Appropriate for the effective discharge and performance of the duties contemplated in the Bill.