ILLICIT ARMS TRANSFERS DATASET

Coding Manual

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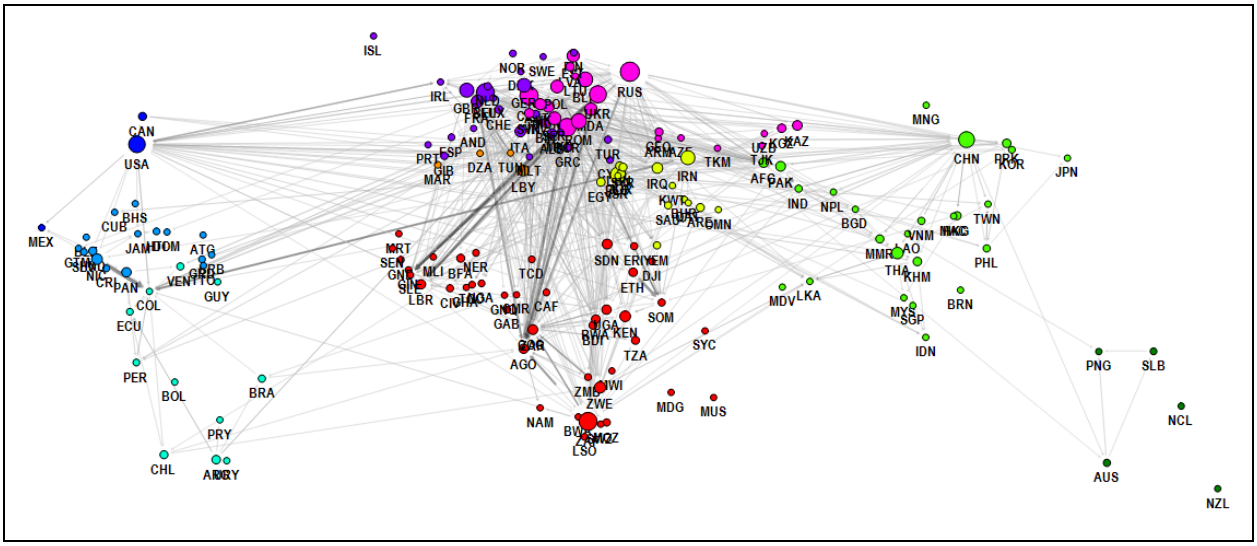

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Overview of the Dataset and Data Sources

The Illicit Arms Transfers dataset is an evolving datafile consisting of information gleaned from news reports of illegal arms shipments crossing one or more interstate borders. The goal is to systematize the large amount of information that exists about the international black market in armaments (mostly light weapons) so that some of these data might be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. The data collection effort is fairly labor intensive, involving scrutinizing written accounts of illegal arms shipments and extracting information according to the established coding rules set forth in this manual.

Unit of Observation

The datafile is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The unit of observation is the illicit arms transfer (IAT) *"event"*—that is, a shipment of arms from an originator to a recipient (possibly intercepted along the way). Each line (observation) in the spreadsheet consists of data describing that event, including the actors and locations involved in the shipment's journey from originator to recipient or interceptor. Each descriptor (variable)—the weapons, the actors and locations involved in the transfers, and their characteristics—is represented by a different column in the spreadsheet.

The raw data from which the dataset is constructed are contained in written reports describing the black market in arms. *There is no necessary correspondence between a written report and an event entered into the dataset*. Some reports contain no concrete information about specific arms shipments, while other reports describe multiple shipments. The unit of observation is the IAT event, not the news report.

Data Sources

Presently, the main source of raw data are the stories contained in the "Black Market File Archives" maintained by the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (see www.nisat.org). Other sources to be coded include two overlapping e-mail list archives maintained by David Isenberg, both called "Weapons Trade Observer" (see groups.yahoo.com/group/wepstrade/ and lists.topica.com/lists/sento). Each of these sources contains thousands of reports on the illicit arms trade, and they are continuously updated.

Both NISAT and Isenberg cull reports from multiple news organizations, as well as other organizations providing information on the black market arms trade. Consequently, IAT events

are often described in more than one report, although not always with the same degree of specificity. For purposes of initial coding, such events are simply entered into the dataset multiple times. The task of removing duplicate events comes later.

Variable Locations, Labels, and Descriptions

Each line in the dataset contains, when available, three broad categories of information: data pertaining to the coded article, the IAT event, and the coder. The core of each observation is the IAT event information, and these variables are further grouped as they pertain to (a) the *source* of the arms shipment, (b) those involved in the arms *deal*, (c) the *characteristics* of the arms shipped, (d) the *journey* that the shipment took after leaving the source, and (e) the shipment's *destination*.

Column	*Label*	*Description*
A	Event Number	Unique number for each arms-transfer event. A single article may document more than one event.
B	Article Code	Unique code for each article.
C	Cross-ref	Referencing codes of other articles documenting event.
D	Uncertain	"X" if article mentions uncertainty as to accuracy of information reported.
Article Information		
E	Article Title	Title of article.
F	No event	"N/A" if article contains no concrete data describing an event. Remaining cells are blank.
G	News Source	News organization reporting the information.
H	Date	Date of the news report.
Event Information		
	Arms Source	
I	Originator	Actor constituting the origin of the arms transfer—i.e., the owner of the arms at the outset of the journey.
J	Originator Type	Type of originating actor (e.g., arms manufacturer, armed forces, etc.)

Column	*Label*	*Description*
K	Originator Code	Two-letter code for the originator type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified OF official government official MI military decommissioned or stolen military equipment SE security intelligence or security service MA manufacturer arms manufacturer, unspecified MS state manufacturer arms manufacturer, state-owned MP private manufacturer arms manufacturer, privately owned PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
L	Originator Location	Where originating actor is located, as specific as possible (country and city, if available).
M	Originator Location Code	Code for country where originator is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
N	Originator Region Code	Code for global region where originator's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
	Arms Deal	
O	Unspecified Intermediary	Actor facilitating the arms deal in some unspecified way.
P	Intermediary Type	Type of unspecified intermediary actor.
Q	Intermediary Code	Two-letter code for the unspecified intermediary type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified OF official government official PC private company profit-seeking firm OP operative agent of a non-profit-seeking organization IN individual unaffiliated private individual PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group

Column	*Label*	*Description*
R	Intermediary Home	Home base of intermediary actor (country and city, if available). This is not necessarily where the intermediary transaction was made, nor is it the Transshipment Location.
S	Intermediary Location Code	Code for country where intermediary is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
T	Intermediary Region Code	Code for global region where intermediary's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
U	Arms Dealer	Actor who bought and sold the arms. The dealer's transaction may have been with the originator, the recipient, or some other dealer.
V	Dealer Type	Type of actor functioning as an arms dealer.
W	Dealer Code	Two-letter code for the dealer type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified OF official government official PC private company profit-seeking firm OP operative agent of a non-profit-seeking organization IN individual unaffiliated private individual PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
X	Dealer Home	Home base of arms dealer (country and city, if available). This is not necessarily where the deal was made, nor is it the same as the Transshipment Location.
Y	Dealer Location Code	Code for country where dealer is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
Z	Dealer Region Code	Code for global region where dealer's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe

Column	*Label*	*Description*
AA	Arms Broker	Actor who facilitated the arms deal, without actually buying or selling the arms. The broker's transaction may have been with the originator, the recipient, or an arms dealer.
AB	Broker Type	Type of actor functioning as a broker.
AC	Broker Code	Two-letter code for the broker type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified OF official government official PC private company profit-seeking firm OP operative agent of a non-profit-seeking organization IN individual unaffiliated private individual PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
AD	Broker Home	Home base of arms broker (country and city, if available). This is not necessarily where the deal was brokered, nor is it the same as the Transshipment Location.
AE	Broker Location Code	Code for country where broker is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
AF	Broker Region Code	Code for global region where broker's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
AG	Shipping Agent	Actor who facilitates transportation of the arms, without actually transporting them. The shipping agent's transaction may have been with the originator, the recipient, an arms dealer, or an arms broker.
AH	Agent Type	Type of actor functioning as a shipping agent.

Column	*Label*	*Description*
AI	Agent Code	Two-letter code for the shipping agent type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified OF official government official PC private company profit-seeking firm OP operative agent of a non-profit-seeking organization IN individual unaffiliated private individual PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
AJ	Agent Home	Home base of shipping agent (country and city, if available). This is not necessarily where the deal to transport was made, nor is it the same as the Transshipment Location.
AK	Agent Location Code	Code for country where agent is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
AL	Agent Region Code	Code for global region where agent's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
	Arms Characteritics	
AM	Arms Type	Generic type of arms shipped (e.g., rifles, surface-to-air missiles). Multiple types contained in same shipment separated by semicolons.
AN	Began Legal	Arms transfer began as a legal transaction.
AO	License Violation	Illegal transfer involved a license violation (e.g., forged user certificate).
AP	Battlefield Recovery	Arms were recovered from a battlefield.
AQ	Arsenal Theft	Arms were stolen from a government arsenal.
AR	Military Personnel	An unauthorized purchased from regular military personnel.
AS	Sanctions Violation	Government transfer, or government-sanctioned transfer, in violation of international arms embargo.
AT	Rogue Regime	Government transfer, or government-sanctioned transfer, to rogue regime.
AU	Refurbished	Arms were used or refurbished.
AV	Model	Model of weapon(s).

Column	*Label*	*Description*
AW	Manufacturer	Manufacturer of arms. May be same as Originator if Originator Type is an arms manufacturer.
AX	Price	Price of shipment. If subtotals are reported for multiple types of weapons, price information separated by semicolons.
AY	Quantity	Quantity of arms shipped. If quantities are reported for multiple types of weapons, quantity information separate using semicolons.
	Arms Journey	
AZ	End User Cert	Intended recipient according to end user certificate.
BA	Transporter	Actor transporting the arms. Multiple transporters separated by semicolons.
BB	Transporter Home	Home base of transporter (country and city, if available). This is not necessarily a Transshipment Location.
BC	Transship Location	Specific location of transshipment points (country and city, if available). Multiple transshipment locations separated by semicolons.
BD	Transship Location Code	Code for country where transhipment occurred. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
BE	Transship Region Code	Code for global region where transshipment occurred: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
BF	Intercepted	Shipment was intercepted before arriving at the intended destination.
BG	Interceptor	Identity of actor intercepting the shipment (e.g., rebel group, border guard, etc.)
BH	Interceptor Code	Two-letter code for the interceptor type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified CU customs customs official or border guard PO police national or local law enforcement official SE security intelligence service personnel MI military regular military personnel PA paramilitary paramilitary personnel IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
BI	Intended Recipient	Identity of intended recipient of intercepted shipment.

Column	*Label*	*Description*
BJ	Interception Date	If intercepted, date or time period of interception.
BK	Intercept Location	If intercepted, the location where the interception occurred (country and city, if available).
BL	Intercept Location Code	Code for country where interception occurred. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls
BM	Intercept Region Code	Code for global region where interception occurred: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
BN	Shipment Date	Date or time period of the arms transfer.
	Arms Destination	
BO	Recipient	Actor receiving arms not intercepted.
BP	Multiple Recipients	Two-letter code for multiple recipients. *Code* *Definition* CC multiple countries CS country(ies) and sanctuary group(s) SS multiple sanctuary groups
BQ	Recipient Type	Type of receiving actor (e.g., rebel army, paramilitary, drug cartel, etc.)
BR	Recipient Code	Two-letter code for the recipient type. *Code* *Label* *Definition* GO government national government, unspecified PO police national or local law enforcement SE security intelligence or security service MS state manufacturer arms manufacturer, state-owned MI military regular military PA paramilitary paramilitary group IS insurgent anti-government insurgent group SA sanctuary group guerrilla/terrorist group receiving sanctuary CR criminal criminal organization OT other other group
BS	Recipient Location	Where receiving actor is located (country and city, if available).
BT	Recipient Location Code	Code for country where recipient is located. Three-letter country code used by the World Bank. See ctry_codes.xls

Column	*Label*	*Description*
BU	Recipient Region Code	Code for global region where recipient's country is located: *Code* *Region* 1 Sub-Saharan Africa 2 Africa (excluding Sub-Saharan 3 Middle East 4 Asia 5 Oceania 6 South America 7 Central America 8 North America 9 Europe
Coder Information		
BV	Comment	Comment by coder, including pertinent information not entered elsewhere.
BW	Coder ID	Initials of coder.

Coding Procedures

Articles

The articles to be coded are sorted into folders named for each country. Each report is an HTML file, which you can open in a browser window alongside your spreadsheet window. Once the article has been coded, rename the HTML file so that your initials appear immediately before the .html file extension. Thus, the file <2002.03.14-Romanian Daily Investigates Victor Bout.html> becomes <2002.03.14-Romanian Daily Investigates Victor Bout.dk.html>. This will make it easy to keep track of which articles have been coded and which have not.

Articles are often duplicated and placed in folders for each of the countries involved in the IAT. If you encounter a file that you have already coded, you need not code it again. Simply add your initials to the filename and move on. If you cannot recall whether the article has been coded, you can use the search function in Windows Explorer, which will list all files with a particular filename; check to see if any file extensions contain your initials. If you mistakenly code an article a second time, the duplicate entry will be eliminated at a later stage.

Nonevents and Inferred Events

Many articles have no concrete information about an IAT event and are therefore uncodable. A quick skim will tell you whether you have opened such an article. Some reports consist of general descriptions of the black market arms trade, or its consequences, but no descriptions of

actual arms transfers. For such articles, enter information into cells in columns A, B, E, F, G, H, and BW, and leave the remaining cells empty.

Some articles describe in general terms the activities of particular arms dealers—Victor Bout, for example, has been a popular subject among journalists. Often these articles contain concrete and obviously codable information about specific IAT events. Sometimes, however, the information is more general, taking the following form: "Bout has been implicated in the shipment of anti-aircraft weapons from Russia to the Sudan." Although this statement does not describe a particular event, there is enough information here for you to *infer* at least one shipment of anti-aircraft weapons from Russia to Sudan—therefore, one event can be entered into the dataset. More specific information as to the date of the shipment, quantities, transshipment locations, and so on are not available; those cells will remain empty.

An article will often describe multiple discrete IAT events. You should enter the multiple event data in multiple lines, duplicating the article information for each event/line. Sometimes you will come across a statement like this: "Bout was implicated in at least seven shipments of anti-aircraft weapons from Russia to the Sudan during the summer of 1999." Here, although the multiple IAT events are not described separately, you can infer seven—but not more than seven—discrete shipments from Russia to Sudan. In this case, enter the information and duplicate the line six more times. The *Shipment Date* (column BN) for each event would be "summer 1999." Include as a *Comment* (column BV) something like "report says 'at least seven shipments'."

Cross-referencing

Because the IAT dataset is being compiled from multiple sources, it is often the case that a particular event is described in more than one article. If you recognize the event being described as one you have already coded, enter the data as usual—but only the data as gleaned from the account you are currently reading. Some accounts provide more factual details than others; only code the details contained in the current article. When you have finished coding the IAT event, find the line in the spreadsheet describing the previously coded event, and then enter the current *Article Code* (from column B) in the *Cross-ref* cell (column C) for the previously coded event. Then return to the event/line you are currently working on and enter the article code for the previously coded event to the Cross-ref cell in that line. Repeat this every time you encounter what is clearly the same event described by multiple sources.

The end result will be that each coded event line will contain in the Cross-ref cell a list of all other articles that describe that event. In the process of coding, you will not always recognize IAT events as having been previously coded, but if you do then keep track by cross-referencing the articles from which they came.

Actors and Their Functions

Those involved in illicit arms transfers serve multiple and distinct functions and the IAT dataset attempts to distinguish them when the information is available. The *Originator* (column I) is the owner of the weapons at the outset of the journey described by a particular article. The *Recipient* (column BO) is actor to whom ownership is transferred at the end of the journey—unless the arms shipment is intercepted, in which case an *Interceptor* (column BG) has taken possession of the weapons.

In between the originator and recipient (or interceptor), other intermediary actors may serve three different functions. *Dealers* (column U) are those middlemen who buy and sell the arms, in effect taking temporary ownership of the weapons along the way. *Brokers* (column AA) are those who facilitate the arms deals. They bring parties together, perhaps helping with financing, and they usually profit from their brokerage, but they do not take possession or ownership of the arms shipment en route. *Shipping Agents* (column AG) are those who help arrange transportation of the arms, but who do not do the actual transporting. If an article mentions an intermediary (or intermediaries) without identifying the actor as a dealer, broker, or shipping agent—and their function cannot be inferred—then enter the intermediary's information as *Unspecified Intermediary* (column O).

Actor Types

Several types of actors—originators, unspecified intermediaries, dealers, brokers, shipping agents, interceptors, and recipients—are to be named, described, and coded. For example, suppose the source of an IAT is identified as Israeli Aircraft Industries. "Israeli Aircraft Industries" is the *Originator* (column I); "manufacturer" is the *Originator Type* (column J); and "MA" is the *Originator Code* (column K). Israeli Aircraft Industries happens to be a private manufacturer; if you know that or if the article mentions it, you could enter "MP" instead of "MA" as the originator code.

The rule of thumb for coding actor types is to use the most specific code available for the information contained in the article. In many instances, the article may indicate (or allow you to infer) nothing more than that the actor involved was the government, in which case you use the code "GO." But if the article is more specific—say, that the military or the security service was involved—then use more specific codes.

When a description of an IAT event uses the passive voice, it may not be possible to identify originators, intermediaries, interceptors, or recipients at all (beyond their location). Thus, "four shipments of machine guns arrived in Liberia from Romania" provides no codable actor information. However, from the statement "Romania supplied four shipments of machine guns to Liberia," you can infer that the Romanian and Liberian governments were the actors involved. It may be that the Romanian and Liberian militaries or security services were engaged in the transaction, but you cannot safely infer this level of specificity, so the actor code is "GO."

Transporters and Transshipment Locations

Transporters (column BA) are those parties who actually move the arms from one geographic location to another. *Transship Location* (column BC) refers specifically to the geographical location where the cargo stopped en route to the intended recipient, usually in order to be moved from one transporter to another and/or one mode of transportation to another. This is different from *Transporter Home* (column BB), which is simply the home base of the transporter—although it is possible that arms are transhipped through a transporter's home country.

Coding Multiple Actors: An Example

This example is more complex than many of the arms transfer events you will encounter in the articles you code, but it serves to illustrate the different types of actors and their functions. The excerpt comes from the file <2001.03.19-Israeli Businessmen Suspected of Selling Arms to Angolan Rebels.html>:

> The United Nations is checking suspicions that Israeli firms and businessmen traded in arms and diamonds with UNITA rebels in Angola, in violation of the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. The impression of UN officials is that the Israeli Government is not very keen to cooperate in the investigation and is making no efforts to track down the suspects. A special monitoring committee set up by the Security Council in recent weeks approached the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem via Israel's UN Ambassador Yehuda Lancry.
>
> At the center of the investigation is Starco Investment and Trade of 13 Martin Buber St. in Haifa. The firm is suspected of having bought weapons for $156,000 from Romtechnica, Romania's government arms company, in March 1996. According to the end-user certificates obtained by Ha'aretz, the final destination of the shipment was Togo's armed forces in the capital of Lome.
>
> The shipment, flown aboard a cargo plane of the Bulgarian airline Avia-Service, consisted of 2,000 Kalashnikovs and pistols. However, the bill of goods stated that the shipment consisted of "technical equipment." A larger arms shipment from Romania to Togo three years later was again described as "technical equipment." This shipment included 40 RPG launchers and huge quantities of ammunition. The deal totaling $0.5 million was mediated by East European Shipping Corporation, a firm based in the Bahamas and represented in Europe by Trade Investment International Limited, with an address in Britain. This shipment was transported aboard Coraca, a ship flying a Panamanian flag and headed for Lome. A check by the UN investigators, assisted by forensic experts, revealed that the end-user certificates of both shipments were forgeries.

This article describes two discrete shipments, so there are two events occupying two lines in spreadsheet. For both events, the *Originator* is identified as Romtechnica, a Romanian government arms company (type MS). Starco Investment and Trade, based in Haifa, is the *Dealer* (type PC) involved in both events. The two shipments also had the same *Recipient*: the UNITA rebels in Angola. They both involved a UN *Sanctions Violation*. The first shipment—Kalashnikovs and pistols worth $156,000, transferred in March 1996—also involved a specified *License Violation*: a forged end-user certificate. Here, *End User Cert* is Togo, although it is apparent from the article that from the beginning the intended recipient was UNITA. (However, *Intended Recipient* is left blank in this case because the shipment was not intercepted.) The

Transporter of the arms is Avia-Service, an airline based in Bulgaria.

The second shipment—RPG launchers and ammunition worth $0.5 million, transferred in 1999—involved, in addition to the same Israeli dealer, two other intermediaries. The first was East European Shipping Corporation (type PC), based in the Bahamas. The second, "representing" the first, was Trade Investment International Limited (type PC), in Britain. It is not crystal clear from the article whether these intermediaries were brokers or shipping agents. However, it seems safe to code them as *Shipping Agents*, given that "Shipping Corporation" is in the first firm's name, and because the paragraph is generally devoted to describing the transportation of the cargo. The *Transporter* of the second shipment is the vessel Coraca, and since it flew a Panamanian flag, Panama should be entered as the *Transporter Home*. Although the article describes this event as a "shipment from Romania to Togo," we can assume that this was really a shipment to Angola; as with the first transfer, Togo is merely the "intended recipient" according to a forged end-user certificate.

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