

An Assessment of the Role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in Preventing Arms Smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State

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Abstract

The increasing incidence of arms smuggling across Nigeria's international borders, particularly at the Jibia Control Post in Katsina State, has continued to undermine national security, fuel banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and other transnational organized crimes, thereby necessitating this study to assess the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in preventing arms smuggling. The study was guided by three objectives: to examine the roles of the NIS in preventing arms smuggling, assess its effectiveness at the Jibia Control Post, and identify the challenges affecting its operations. The study adopted the Rational Choice Theory because it explains that individuals involved in arms smuggling make calculated decisions by weighing expected benefits against potential risks, while effective border security measures increase the cost of engaging in such criminal activities. A qualitative research design was employed using secondary sources, including textbooks, journal articles, official government publications, policy documents, and reports from relevant security agencies. Data were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. The findings revealed that the NIS performs vital border security functions through surveillance, routine patrols, intelligence gathering, traveler screening, and collaboration with other security agencies, thereby strengthening border security and contributing to national stability. The study further established that the NIS has achieved considerable success through arrests, interceptions, security checkpoints, patrol operations, and inter-agency cooperation, although sustained effectiveness depends on improved technology, manpower, intelligence capabilities, and logistics. The findings also showed that manpower shortages, porous borders, inadequate surveillance technology, weak logistics, insecurity, corruption, poor intelligence sharing, organized criminal networks, and increasing cross-border movement significantly undermine the NIS's capacity to effectively prevent arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post. The study recommends among others for increased government investment in modern surveillance technology, logistics, intelligence systems, and personnel capacity building, alongside strengthened inter-agency collaboration, intelligence sharing, anti-corruption measures, and enhanced community participation to improve border security and effectively combat arms smuggling.

Keywords: Nigeria Immigration Service, Arms Smuggling, Border Security, Jibia Control Post, Katsina State, National Security, Border Management.

INTRODUCTION

Border security has become a central concern in contemporary global security discourse due to the increasing mobility of people, goods, and illicit materials across international boundaries, particularly small arms and light weapons which continue to fuel conflicts, terrorism, and organized crime across regions. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

(UNODC, 2023), an estimated 85–90 percent of conflict-related deaths in some regions of Africa are linked to the availability and circulation of illicit firearms, highlighting the global nature of arms trafficking and its devastating consequences (UNODC, 2023). Historically, arms trafficking networks have evolved from localized smuggling routes into sophisticated transnational criminal enterprises, exploiting weak border systems and porous frontiers, especially in developing regions where enforcement capacity remains limited.

In West Africa, the proliferation of illicit arms has been intensified by post-conflict instability in countries such as Libya, Mali, and the Central African Republic, which have become major sources of diverted weapons into regional black markets. Small Arms Survey (2022) estimates that over 10 million illicit firearms circulate within West Africa, with porous borders facilitating cross-border movement between Sahelian states and coastal countries (Small Arms Survey, 2022). Nigeria, as the region's largest economy and most populous country, has become a major destination and transit hub for illegal arms, contributing significantly to internal security challenges such as terrorism in the Northeast and banditry in the Northwest.

In Nigeria, the persistence of insecurity linked to illegal arms circulation has severely undermined national stability, with reports indicating that armed banditry in the Northwest alone accounted for thousands of deaths and displacement incidents between 2020 and 2024 (Akinyemi & Bello, 2024). These arms are often trafficked through porous border corridors connecting Nigeria with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, where limited surveillance and weak inter-agency coordination allow smuggling networks to thrive. This situation underscores the critical importance of border management institutions in curbing the inflow of illegal weapons.

The Jibia border corridor, located in Katsina State along the Nigeria–Niger Republic frontier, represents one of the most strategic entry points in Northwestern Nigeria due to its high volume of daily cross-border movement for trade, migration, and informal exchange. The corridor has also become a known route for illicit trafficking activities, including arms smuggling, due to its extensive unmonitored pathways and difficult terrain. The presence of the Jibia Control Post therefore plays a crucial role in regulating movement and enhancing surveillance along this vulnerable axis.

The Nigeria Immigration Service is constitutionally mandated to enforce border security, regulate migration, and prevent transnational crimes, including arms smuggling, through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and inter-agency collaboration. Despite these efforts, persistent challenges such as inadequate manpower, limited technological infrastructure, corruption risks, and extensive porous borderlines continue to undermine operational effectiveness. Studies have shown that over 80 percent of Nigeria's land borders remain unofficial or poorly monitored, creating opportunities for illicit trade networks to flourish (Okonkwo & Hassan, 2023).

Given the strategic importance of the Jibia corridor, assessing the performance of the Nigeria Immigration Service at this control post is essential for understanding both operational strengths and systemic weaknesses in border security management. Despite increased deployment of personnel and periodic security operations, arms smuggling continues to persist, suggesting gaps between policy implementation and field-level realities. These gaps may include inadequate intelligence coordination, limited surveillance technology such as scanners and drones, and socio-economic factors that encourage local complicity in smuggling activities.

Therefore, this study becomes necessary to critically evaluate how effectively the Nigeria Immigration Service is fulfilling its mandate in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post and to identify the structural and operational constraints affecting its performance. The

research gap lies in the limited empirical focus on localized border posts like Jibia, as most existing studies concentrate on national-level assessments rather than site-specific operational analysis.

The primary objective of this study is to assess the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. However, the specific objectives are to: examine the roles of the Nigeria Immigration Service in border security; assess the effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post; and identify the challenges confronting the Nigeria Immigration Service in combating arms smuggling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews relevant literature on the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. It incorporates conceptual and empirical perspectives to enhance understanding of the subject and identify existing knowledge gaps requiring further investigation.

Arms Smuggling

Arms smuggling refers to the illegal movement, transportation, sale, or transfer of firearms, ammunition, and other weapons across national or international borders without authorization from the relevant authorities (UNODC, 2023; Nte, 2022). It is a form of transnational organized crime that involves the clandestine trafficking of small arms and light weapons to individuals, criminal groups, insurgents, terrorists, and other unauthorized actors. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023), arms smuggling undermines state security, fuels violent conflicts, and contributes to criminal activities. Similarly, Nte (2022) argues that illicit arms trafficking enables the proliferation of weapons in conflict-prone regions and weakens government efforts to maintain law and order.

Arms smuggling often occurs through porous borders, illegal trade networks, corruption among border officials, and weak enforcement mechanisms. The phenomenon has become a major security challenge in many countries, particularly in developing states where border surveillance and control systems are inadequate (Aning & Pokoo, 2021). The availability of illegally smuggled weapons increases armed robbery, banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts. Consequently, governments and international organizations continue to strengthen border management and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to combat the illicit flow of arms.

In this study, arms smuggling refers to the unlawful movement and trafficking of firearms, ammunition, and related weapons across borders without legal authorization. It also encompasses all illegal activities involved in the acquisition, transportation, concealment, and distribution of weapons through unauthorized channels.

Border Security

Border security refers to the measures, policies, technologies, and institutions established by a state to regulate, monitor, and protect its territorial boundaries against illegal activities and external threats (Bello, 2023; Salter, 2022). It involves the prevention of unauthorized entry and exit of persons, goods, weapons, and contraband while facilitating legitimate cross-border movements. According to Salter (2022), border security is a critical component of national security because it protects a state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Bello (2023) further explains that effective border security combines surveillance, law enforcement, intelligence gathering, and international cooperation to address emerging security challenges.

Border security encompasses the activities of agencies such as immigration services, customs authorities, border guards, and security forces. Modern border security relies on technological tools including biometric systems, drones, electronic surveillance equipment, and intelligence databases to detect and prevent illicit movements across borders (Okoli & Orinya, 2021). Effective border security reduces transnational crimes such as arms smuggling, human trafficking, drug trafficking, terrorism, and illegal migration. Therefore, strengthening border security remains essential for maintaining national stability, public safety, and economic development.

In this research, border security refers to the strategies, personnel, technologies, and institutional measures used to safeguard national borders from illegal crossings and transnational crimes. It also includes efforts by security agencies to detect, prevent, and respond to activities such as arms smuggling and other border-related threats.

Nigeria Immigration Service

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) is a key security and administrative agency responsible for managing migration, regulating the movement of persons across Nigeria's borders, and protecting the country's territorial integrity. According to the Immigration Act 2015, the Service is charged with controlling the entry and exit of persons, issuing travel documents and residence permits, and enforcing immigration laws (Onyeaku, 2024).

Historically, the NIS originated in 1958 when it was separated from the Nigeria Police Force and operated as the Immigration Department under the leadership of a Chief Federal Immigration Officer. It was formally established on 1 August 1963 through an Act of Parliament and later transformed into a paramilitary organization in 1992 to strengthen its operational capacity in migration and border management (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2025).

The mandate of the NIS includes the issuance of passports and other travel documents, regulation of foreigners' residence in Nigeria, migration management, and enforcement of immigration regulations. The Service also performs intelligence gathering and collaborates with other security agencies in combating transnational crimes such as human trafficking, irregular migration, and cross-border criminal activities (Amadi, 2024).

A major responsibility of the NIS is border control. Through border surveillance, patrol operations, and management of land, sea, and air entry points, the Service seeks to prevent illegal migration, smuggling, and other security threats. Its Border Management Directorate coordinates monitoring activities and ensures compliance with national immigration policies (NIS, 2025).

The legal framework guiding NIS operations is primarily the Immigration Act 2015, which repealed the earlier Immigration Act of 1963 and established a modern system of migration governance in line with international best practices. The Act is complemented by the Immigration Regulations 2017 and other policy instruments that provide guidelines for visa administration, border management, and migration control in Nigeria (Sijuwade, 2016).

However, Adebayo and Yusuf (2021) examine the role of border security agencies in combating transnational crimes along Nigeria's northwestern borders. The study was anchored on Border Security Theory. The study adopted a qualitative method through interviews with security personnel and border community leaders. Findings from the investigation show that border security agencies play a significant role in intelligence gathering, surveillance, and interception of criminal networks operating across borders. The study further reveals that

inadequate manpower and poor technological equipment reduce operational effectiveness. The study recommends increased funding, deployment of modern surveillance technologies, and enhanced inter-agency cooperation among security organizations.

Okeke (2022) investigates the effectiveness of security agencies in controlling illegal migration and cross-border criminal activities in Nigeria. The study was anchored on Systems Theory. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires and key informant interviews. Findings from the investigation show that security agencies contribute substantially to the reduction of illegal migration through border patrol operations, document verification, and intelligence sharing. However, corruption and porous borders were identified as major obstacles to effective border management. The study recommends strengthening accountability mechanisms, improving personnel training, and increasing investment in border infrastructure.

Ahmed and Bello (2023) explore the role of border management agencies in addressing insecurity along the Nigeria-Niger border corridor. The study was anchored on Security Governance Theory. The study adopted a qualitative research design using interviews and documentary analysis. Findings from the investigation show that border security agencies have contributed to the detection of smuggled goods, disruption of criminal movements, and enhancement of national security. The study also found that poor coordination among security institutions limits operational success. The study recommends improved intelligence sharing, regular joint operations, and stronger collaboration with border communities.

Ibrahim (2023) examines the effectiveness of border security agencies in curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in northern Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Rational Choice Theory. The study adopted a survey research design involving security personnel and residents of border communities. Findings from the investigation show that security agencies contribute significantly to reducing the movement of illicit weapons through routine patrols, checkpoints, and surveillance activities. Nevertheless, the study identified insufficient logistics and inadequate border monitoring technologies as major challenges. The study recommends the provision of advanced monitoring equipment, improved welfare packages, and continuous professional training for border personnel.

Usman and Garba (2024) investigate the challenges facing border security agencies in preventing cross-border crimes in Nigeria. The study was anchored on Institutional Theory. The study adopted a qualitative method through interviews and focus group discussions. Findings from the investigation show that border security agencies remain critical to national security through enforcement of immigration laws, monitoring of border movements, and prevention of criminal infiltration. The study further reveals that weak institutional capacity, poor funding, and difficult terrain negatively affect effective border control. The study recommends increased budgetary allocation, institutional reforms, and greater community participation in border security management.

Mohammed and Suleiman (2024) examine the role of security agencies in combating arms smuggling and other illicit cross-border activities in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Integrated Border Management Theory. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving surveys, interviews, and documentary analysis. Findings from the investigation show that security agencies have recorded notable achievements in intercepting illegal arms, dismantling smuggling networks, and improving border surveillance. However, the study found that the persistence of numerous illegal routes and inadequate technological support continue to undermine security efforts. The study recommends the deployment of advanced surveillance systems, improved inter-agency collaboration, and stronger border governance mechanisms.

Although the studies reviewed have contributed significantly to understanding the role, effectiveness, and challenges of border security agencies in preventing border-related crimes, important gaps remain. Adebayo and Yusuf (2021), Okeke (2022), Ahmed and Bello (2023), Ibrahim (2023), Usman and Garba (2024), and Mohammed and Suleiman (2024) concentrated largely on general border security operations, illegal migration, transnational crimes, and broad security challenges across Nigeria's borders. None of these studies specifically examined the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post in Katsina State. Furthermore, the studies did not provide detailed empirical evidence on how immigration personnel undertake border surveillance, document verification, intelligence gathering, and enforcement activities specifically targeted at preventing arms smuggling within the Jibia border axis. This gap creates the need for the present study, which focuses specifically on assessing the Role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in Preventing Arms Smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. By concentrating on a strategic border location and a specific security challenge, the study provides context-specific evidence that will enrich existing literature and support more effective border security policies and practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Rational Choice Theory as its suitable framework of analysis for examining the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. The theory was developed by James S. Coleman (1990) and further advanced by scholars such as Gary Becker (1968) and Anthony Downs (1957). Rational Choice Theory explains that individuals make decisions by carefully weighing the expected benefits and costs of available alternatives before choosing the option that maximizes their interests. The theory emerged from economics and later gained prominence in political science, criminology, and security studies as a useful framework for understanding human behavior and decision-making processes (Coleman, 1990; Becker, 1968).

The basic assumption of Rational Choice Theory is that human beings are rational actors who pursue actions that provide the greatest rewards while minimizing risks and costs. The theory assumes that individuals have clear objectives, possess some knowledge of available alternatives, evaluate the likely consequences of their actions, and choose the option that offers the highest expected benefit. Another assumption is that criminal activities occur when offenders believe that the gains from committing a crime outweigh the risks of detection, arrest, prosecution, and punishment. The theory further argues that increasing the costs and risks associated with crime can discourage individuals from engaging in unlawful activities (Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Akers & Sellers, 2013).

The relevance of Rational Choice Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain the decision-making process of arms smugglers operating through border areas such as Jibia. Arms smugglers often assess the level of border security before selecting routes for their operations. For instance, when smugglers discover that certain border corridors have weak surveillance, inadequate patrol presence, poor intelligence gathering, or limited technological monitoring, they may choose such routes because the chances of interception appear low. Conversely, where the NIS deploys regular patrol teams, modern surveillance equipment, intelligence networks, and effective border monitoring systems, the risks and costs of smuggling increase significantly, making the route less attractive. The theory also helps explain how corruption among some border personnel may reduce the perceived risks of detection, thereby encouraging smugglers to continue their illegal activities. For example, a smuggler may decide to transport weapons through a border route where officials can be compromised rather than through a route with strict enforcement measures. Therefore, the effectiveness of NIS

operations in increasing the likelihood of detection, arrest, and punishment can significantly influence the choices made by arms smugglers and ultimately contribute to reducing arms trafficking activities at the Jibia Control Post.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative research design because it provides an in-depth understanding of the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post in Katsina State. The design relied entirely on secondary sources of data, which were drawn from relevant academic and institutional materials. These sources included textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, policy documents, official reports of the Nigeria Immigration Service, reports from the Nigeria Customs Service, the National Bureau of Statistics, the Small Arms Survey, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), newspapers, conference papers, and other credible online materials. Relevant data were obtained from university libraries, government archives, official agency websites, online databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, and other scholarly repositories. These sources provided information on border security operations, arms trafficking trends, immigration control measures, and challenges affecting effective border management at Jibia. The collected data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis, whereby information from various sources was carefully examined, categorised, compared, and interpreted according to recurring themes and patterns relating to the role, achievements, challenges, and effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post.

THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIA IMMIGRATION SERVICE IN PREVENTING ARMS SMUGGLING

Border security against arms smuggling is a critical responsibility of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), especially at the Jibia Border Post in Katsina State, which serves as one of Nigeria's busiest gateways to the Niger Republic and the wider Sahel region. The Nigeria Immigration Service plays a major role in preventing arms smuggling through border surveillance, intelligence gathering, migration control, patrol operations, inter-agency collaboration, and the monitoring of persons and goods crossing international borders (Jaba, Musa & Matazu, 2025).

According to Ismail, Olayiwola, and Idris (2024), porous borders, particularly the Jibia International Border in Katsina State, have facilitated the movement of illicit arms into Nigeria, thereby threatening national security. At the Jibia Border Post, which serves as a strategic gateway between Nigeria and the Niger Republic, the NIS has intensified efforts to curb the influx of illegal arms. The Service operates border patrol units that monitor both approved and unapproved routes used by smugglers. In 2018, the NIS established a Border Patrol Base in Mazanya, Jibia, to strengthen surveillance, improve rapid response, and deter cross-border crimes, including arms trafficking. This initiative increased operational efficiency and enhanced coordination among security personnel operating in the area (Babandede, 2018). Furthermore, NIS officers conduct regular profiling and screening of travelers entering Nigeria to identify suspicious individuals and potential traffickers.

The effectiveness of the NIS is also demonstrated through intelligence sharing and joint operations with agencies such as the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services (DSS), and the Nigerian Armed Forces. Such collaboration has improved the detection of smuggling networks operating across the Nigeria–Niger border corridor. Jaba, Musa, and Matazu (2025) observed that border security agencies at Magama–

Jibia have increasingly relied on intelligence-led operations to combat arms trafficking despite challenges such as inadequate logistics and porous border routes.

Table 1: Analysis of NIS Roles in Preventing Arms Smuggling at Jibia Border Post

NIS Role	Activities Undertaken	Security Impact
Border Surveillance	Monitoring official and unofficial routes	Reduces illegal entry of arms
Border Patrol Operations	Mobile patrols around border communities	Detects smuggling activities early
Traveler Screening	Verification of identities and travel documents	Identifies suspicious movements
Intelligence Gathering	Collection and sharing of security information	Enhances interception of smugglers
Inter-agency Collaboration	Joint operations with Customs, DSS, and Police	Improves operational success
Border Patrol Base Operations	Deployment of personnel and logistics at Mazanya, Jibia	Strengthens border control capacity
Public Awareness	Engagement with border communities	Encourages reporting of suspicious activities

Source: Adapted from Ismail, Olayiwola, and Idris (2024); Jaba, Musa, and Matazu (2025).

Available statistics further demonstrate the significance of border security efforts. The Nigeria Customs Service reported that between 2018 and 2024, security agencies intercepted approximately 10,498 arms and 114,929 rounds of ammunition valued at about ₦9.58 billion across Nigeria's borders. Although these interceptions involved multiple agencies, the NIS contributed through border monitoring, intelligence support, and migration control functions that helped identify trafficking routes and suspects (Adeniyi, 2024). Studies indicate that Jibia remains one of the most sensitive border corridors because of its location and extensive cross-border movement between Nigeria and Niger Republic (Ismail et al., 2024).

Despite these achievements, the NIS faces challenges such as inadequate manpower, insufficient surveillance technology, difficult terrain, and numerous illegal crossing points. Jaba et al. (2025) noted that border porosity remains one of the most significant obstacles to effective arms-smuggling prevention in the Jibia axis. Nevertheless, the establishment of patrol bases, deployment of trained officers, use of intelligence-driven operations, and cooperation with local communities have strengthened the agency's capacity to address the threat.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NIS IN PREVENTING ARMS SMUGGLING AT JIBIA CONTROL POST

The effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post in Katsina State has become increasingly evident through intensified border surveillance, arrests, interceptions, intelligence gathering, and inter-agency cooperation (Ismail, Ayoola & Idris, 2024). Jibia Control Post is one of Nigeria's busiest international border crossings, linking Nigeria with the Niger Republic and serving as a major transit route

for both legitimate trade and transnational criminal activities. Due to its strategic location, the post has remained a critical frontline in Nigeria's efforts to curb the influx of illicit arms and ammunition used by bandits, terrorists, kidnappers, and other criminal groups operating in the North-West region.

The NIS has demonstrated considerable effectiveness through sustained border patrol operations across both official and illegal routes around Jibia. Following the political crisis in Niger Republic in August 2023, the Comptroller of the Jibia Special Border Command confirmed the deployment of additional immigration personnel to monitor all approved and unauthorized crossing points within the border axis. This operation significantly increased surveillance coverage and reduced opportunities for arms traffickers to exploit unmanned routes (Channels Television, 2023). The deployment of personnel across multiple entry points strengthened intelligence collection and improved the interception of suspicious movements along the border.

Arrests and interceptions constitute one of the strongest indicators of NIS effectiveness at Jibia. Through intelligence-led operations conducted jointly with the Nigeria Customs Service, the Department of State Services, the Nigerian Police Force, and the military, several suspected traffickers have been apprehended while attempting to move prohibited items across the border. Security reports indicate that the Jibia axis remains one of the most monitored border corridors in northern Nigeria because of its vulnerability to the smuggling of small arms and light weapons. The consistent interception of illegal migrants, undocumented travelers, and suspected criminal couriers by immigration officers has disrupted trafficking networks and limited the movement of arms suppliers into Nigeria. The Federal Government's border security operation between 2020 and 2024 resulted in the arrest of thousands of irregular migrants and smugglers across northern borders, with Jibia identified as one of the major operational points (CGTN, 2021).

Security checkpoints established and managed by the NIS have further enhanced arms-smuggling prevention efforts. Immigration officers conduct routine document verification, passenger profiling, biometric screening, and vehicle inspections at strategic checkpoints around the control post. These checkpoints have enabled officers to identify suspicious travelers and gather intelligence that has led to subsequent arrests and seizures. According to Ismail, Olayiwola, and Idris (2024), the presence of multiple security layers at Jibia has reduced the ease with which criminal groups previously exploited the border for illicit trafficking activities. The study further notes that immigration patrols have contributed significantly to disrupting the transportation of contraband goods and weapons across the Nigeria–Niger corridor.

One notable success achieved through strengthened border management is the reduction in unrestricted cross-border movement following the reopening of the Jibia border in April 2023. Although arms smuggling remains a challenge, the increased monitoring of travelers and cargo has improved detection rates. The effectiveness of immigration surveillance has been reinforced through collaboration with customs authorities and the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. In July 2024, Nigerian security agencies recorded the interception of a container carrying 844 rifles and 112,500 rounds of live ammunition, demonstrating the growing capacity of border security institutions to detect illicit weapons trafficking networks (NCCSALW, 2024). Although the seizure occurred outside Jibia, it reflects the broader security architecture within which the NIS operates and contributes intelligence.

Statistical evidence also highlights the impact of enhanced border enforcement measures. The Nigeria Customs Service reported that between 2018 and 2024, security agencies intercepted 10,498 arms and 114,929 rounds of ammunition from twenty major smuggling shipments entering the country, with approximately 60% of the seizures occurring in 2023 and 2024 due to intensified border monitoring and intelligence operations (Punch, 2024). Given Jibia's status as one of Nigeria's most active northern border corridors, immigration surveillance at the control post has played an important role in supporting these national outcomes.

However, despite these achievements, several areas require improvement. The Jibia border remains characterized by numerous unapproved routes stretching across remote communities, making comprehensive surveillance difficult. Ismail et al. (2024) observed that local collaborators often assist smugglers by providing information on security movements and alternative crossing routes.

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE NIGERIA IMMIGRATION SERVICE IN COMBATING ARMS SMUGGLING AT JIBIA CONTROL POST

One of the major challenges confronting the Nigeria Immigration Service at Jibia Control Post is the porous nature of the Nigeria-Niger border. Nigeria shares approximately 1,500 kilometres of border with the Niger Republic, while several unmanned routes exist around Jibia, making effective surveillance difficult. Ogbonna, Lenshie, and Nwangwu (2023) observed that weak border governance and inadequate monitoring of unofficial crossing points have increased transnational crimes, including arms trafficking. The existence of numerous illegal routes enables smugglers to evade immigration checkpoints and transport weapons into Nigeria undetected.

Another significant challenge is inadequate manpower. The number of immigration personnel deployed to Jibia Control Post is insufficient compared to the volume of daily cross-border movements. Haruna (2024) found that shortage of border personnel remains a major factor responsible for ineffective border management along the Nigeria-Niger frontier. The limited number of officers makes it difficult to conduct comprehensive inspections of travellers, vehicles, and cargo entering the country.

Insufficient surveillance technology also weakens the operational effectiveness of the NIS. Modern border security operations require advanced technologies such as drones, biometric scanners, CCTV cameras, electronic monitoring systems, and vehicle scanners. However, Jaba et al. (2025) reported that security agencies operating at the Magama-Jibia border continue to experience shortages of modern equipment and operational logistics. The absence of sophisticated detection systems allows smugglers to conceal weapons in vehicles, trucks, and goods crossing the border.

Corruption among some border officials constitutes another challenge. Scholars have consistently identified corruption as a critical factor facilitating illegal arms trafficking across Nigerian borders. Danjifari (2025) argued that weak accountability mechanisms and corrupt practices among border personnel contribute significantly to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Smugglers often exploit corrupt networks to secure passage for illicit weapons through official and unofficial routes.

The increasing activities of armed bandits and transnational criminal groups around Jibia further complicate the work of the NIS. Jibia Local Government Area has remained one of the most affected areas by armed banditry in Katsina State. Aliyu, Ahmed, and Mustapha (2024) revealed that persistent bandit attacks, kidnappings, cattle rustling, and violent crimes have overwhelmed conventional security measures in the area. These criminal groups maintain

strong cross-border connections and frequently use smuggled weapons to sustain their operations.

Poor inter-agency coordination also undermines efforts to combat arms smuggling. Effective border security requires close collaboration among the Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Customs Service, Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services, National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the Nigerian Armed Forces. However, overlapping responsibilities, intelligence-sharing gaps, and operational rivalries often reduce the effectiveness of joint border enforcement operations.

Another challenge is the growing volume of illicit arms circulating within West Africa. In July 2024, Nigerian authorities intercepted a shipment containing 844 rifles and 112,500 rounds of live ammunition, demonstrating the scale of weapons trafficking threatening national security. The availability of such weapons increases pressure on border security agencies, including the NIS, to detect increasingly sophisticated smuggling networks.

Socio-economic conditions in border communities also contribute to arms smuggling. High poverty rates, unemployment, and limited economic opportunities encourage some residents to collaborate with smugglers by providing information, transportation, storage facilities, and safe passage across illegal routes. Momoh, Adadu, and Caleb (2024) noted that socio-economic vulnerabilities in border areas continue to sustain trans-border criminal activities.

Additionally, inadequate funding remains a major institutional challenge. Limited budgetary allocations affect personnel recruitment, training, mobility, intelligence gathering, and acquisition of modern security equipment. Jaba et al. (2025) found that insufficient logistical support, including lack of operational vehicles and modern surveillance facilities, significantly constrains border security operations at Jibia.

The complexity of transnational arms trafficking networks further challenges the NIS. Criminal organizations operating across Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Libya, and other Sahel countries employ sophisticated methods, including forged travel documents, concealed compartments, and coordinated cross-border logistics. Ismail, Olayiwola, and Idris (2024) observed that Jibia border has increasingly become a strategic corridor for smuggling, drug trafficking, and other transnational crimes. Consequently, the combination of porous borders, manpower shortages, inadequate technology, corruption, insecurity, poor inter-agency collaboration, insufficient funding, and sophisticated criminal networks continues to undermine the capacity of the Nigeria Immigration Service to effectively combat arms smuggling at Jibia Control Post.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the findings was based on evidence obtained from secondary sources to assess the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State.

The first objective of this study seeks to assess the roles of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. The findings revealed that the Nigeria Immigration Service plays a vital role in combating arms smuggling through continuous border surveillance, regular patrol operations, intelligence gathering, traveler screening, document verification, and close collaboration with other security agencies operating along the border. The findings further indicate that the strengthened operational activities of the NIS at the Jibia Control Post have significantly improved border security by detecting suspicious movements, intercepting illegal border crossings, and reducing the infiltration of illicit arms into Nigeria. The study also found that effective information sharing

with sister agencies has enhanced coordinated responses against transnational criminal activities operating across the Nigeria–Niger border. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Adebayo and Yusuf (2021), who found that border security agencies play a significant role in intelligence gathering, surveillance operations, and the interception of criminal networks operating across Nigeria's northwestern borders. The similarity between both studies demonstrates that effective border surveillance and intelligence-driven operations remain essential strategies for preventing cross-border crimes, particularly arms smuggling. These findings equally support the assumptions of the Rational Choice Theory, which argues that criminals make deliberate decisions by weighing the potential benefits and risks before engaging in criminal activities. The visible presence of immigration officers, intensive patrols, intelligence-led surveillance, and effective screening procedures increase the perceived risk of detection, arrest, and prosecution. Consequently, the strengthened role of the NIS discourages potential arms smugglers from using the Jibia border corridor because the likelihood of successful illegal operations becomes significantly lower than the associated risks.

The second objective of this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. The findings show that the Nigeria Immigration Service has achieved considerable success in preventing arms smuggling through routine patrols, strategic security checkpoints, arrests of suspected offenders, document inspections, and effective collaboration with other security agencies. These operational measures have contributed to reducing the illegal movement of arms across the border and strengthening national security within the study area. However, the findings also revealed that the sustained effectiveness of the NIS depends on improved technological facilities, increased manpower, enhanced intelligence capabilities, modern surveillance equipment, and adequate logistics to address emerging security threats. These findings agree with Ibrahim (2023), who found that border security agencies contribute significantly to reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through routine patrols, checkpoints, and surveillance activities, although inadequate logistics and insufficient border monitoring technologies continue to undermine operational efficiency. The agreement between both studies confirms that while the NIS has made remarkable progress in combating arms smuggling, continuous institutional strengthening remains necessary for long-term effectiveness. The findings also reinforce the Rational Choice Theory by showing that frequent patrols, arrests, and effective security checkpoints increase the cost and risk associated with illegal arms trafficking. As the probability of interception becomes higher through strengthened enforcement measures, rational offenders are less likely to engage in smuggling activities because the expected consequences outweigh the anticipated gains.

The third objective of this study seeks to identify the challenges confronting the Nigeria Immigration Service in combating arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State. The findings revealed that the NIS faces several operational challenges, including inadequate manpower, porous and difficult-to-monitor border routes, insufficient technological facilities, poor logistics, insecurity, corruption, weak intelligence sharing among security agencies, organized criminal networks, and increasing cross-border human and commercial traffic. These factors collectively reduce the operational capacity of immigration personnel and create opportunities for arms smugglers to exploit existing security gaps. The findings further indicate that inadequate funding and limited surveillance equipment weaken effective border monitoring and delay timely responses to criminal activities. These findings are consistent with Okeke (2022), who identified corruption, porous borders, weak institutional capacity, poor funding, and difficult terrain as major obstacles to effective border management in Nigeria. The consistency between both studies demonstrates that structural and institutional weaknesses continue to undermine efforts aimed at securing Nigeria's international borders. These findings

equally support the Rational Choice Theory because offenders exploit situations where institutional weaknesses reduce the likelihood of detection and punishment. When border surveillance is weakened by inadequate manpower, corruption, poor logistics, and limited technology, criminals perceive the risks of smuggling as relatively low compared to the expected benefits. Therefore, addressing these operational challenges will increase the certainty of detection and punishment, thereby discouraging rational offenders from engaging in arms smuggling through the Jibia Control Post.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that the Nigeria Immigration Service plays an important role in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post in Katsina State through border surveillance, intelligence gathering, document verification, patrol operations, and cooperation with other security agencies. Although the Service has recorded successes in intercepting illegal movements and improving border security, its efforts are still affected by challenges such as inadequate personnel, limited operational equipment, insufficient funding, poor technological support, corruption, and the existence of numerous illegal border routes. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of border control and create opportunities for arms traffickers to operate. The study therefore concludes that strengthening the operational capacity of the Nigeria Immigration Service is essential for improving the prevention of arms smuggling and enhancing national security. Addressing these issues will help reduce the illegal flow of arms, promote public safety, and support lasting peace, stability, and socioeconomic development in Nigeria.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in preventing arms smuggling at the Jibia Control Post, Katsina State.

1. The government should recruit and train more Nigeria Immigration Service personnel to improve border surveillance and patrol operations.
2. Modern surveillance technology, including drones, scanners, and biometric systems, should be provided to strengthen the detection of illegal arms and improve screening efficiency.
3. The Nigeria Immigration Service should strengthen intelligence gathering and information sharing with other security agencies to ensure timely responses to emerging smuggling threats.
4. Adequate logistics, including patrol vehicles, communication equipment, and operational funding, should be provided to improve rapid response and sustain effective border operations.
5. Strong anti-corruption measures, regular personnel monitoring, and community engagement should be promoted to discourage illegal activities, improve public trust, enhance intelligence from border communities, and reduce the influence of organized criminal networks exploiting porous borders and increasing cross-border movements.

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