



NIGER

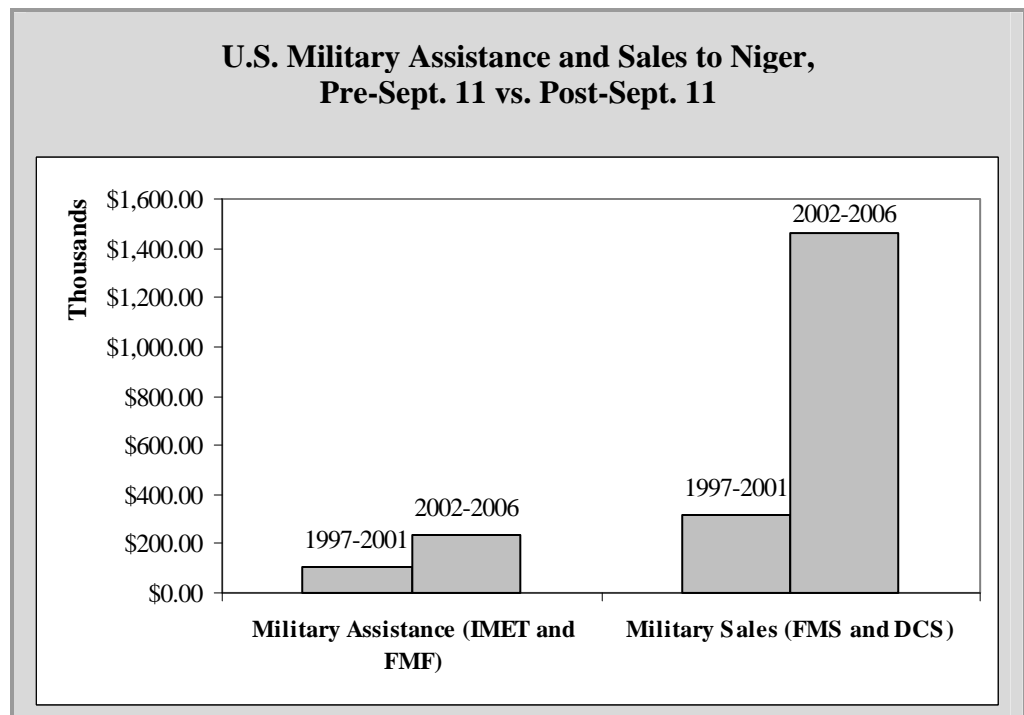
Background

Colonized by the French at the beginning of the twentieth century, Niger gained significant autonomy in 1946 – when the French Constitution opened the door for more decentralized control of its African colonies and by 1960, Niger had achieved full independence. As was the case with many former colonies in Africa, the first years of Niger’s self-rule were plagued by widespread instability, corruption, and

violence. Niger’s first civilian head of state, President Hamani Diori, was ousted in 1974 by a military coup amid accusations of corruption and mismanagement of a drought-induced famine. The military retained control of the government for the next 15 years, under Col. Seyni Kountche and his successor, Col. Ali Saibou.

In 1989, Saibou returned the government to civilian rule under a single-party system, and was subsequently elected president. Saibou’s presidency was short-lived, however, as a wave of strikes and demonstrations led to the drafting of a new constitution in 1991. Shortly thereafter, Saibou instituted a transitional government to guide Niger toward a more democratic political system. The country’s first multiparty elections were held in early 1993 but rivalries within the newly elected government led to deadlock and stagnated the democratic transition, resulting in another military coup in 1996 led by Ibrahim Bare Mainassara.

Mainassara’s military government derailed the political liberalization that had taken place over the past several years in Niger, banning political parties and restricting the powers of the legislature. Flawed



elections installed Mainassara as president and gave the vast majority of parliamentary seats to his supporters. The regime cracked down on all political opposition and committed serious human rights abuses against the population, leading most international donors to suspend all assistance to Niger. Mainassara was assassinated in 1999 during yet another coup, led by Maj. Daouda Mallam Wanke, who installed a National Reconciliation Council to create yet another constitution and to return Niger to democracy. This constitution – Niger’s fifth since independence – established a system based on France’s semi-presidential system and paved the way for greater political decentralization.

The 1999 presidential elections, noted by international observers as generally free and fair, brought Mamadou Tandja to the presidency. In November and December of 2004, successful presidential elections were held and Tandja was elected to a second term, the last term he is constitutionally allowed to hold. Legislative elections were also held in 2004 and Tandja’s party, the Social Party for Nigerien Democracy (PSDN), won a majority of seats in the legislature.

In its 2006 human rights report, the U.S. State Department noted that the government of Niger generally respected the rights of its citizens, although problems persisted in some areas. Security forces used excessive force against detainees and demonstrators, and such practices resulted in deaths and injuries during 2006. A lack of resources prevents the national police from maintaining control over all of Niger and from effectively prosecuting its own members who commit abuses against citizens. The judiciary is not completely independent; judges sometimes fear repercussions for returning verdicts unfavorable to the government and personal connections can sway verdicts.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are restricted. Journalists are intimidated, often with criminal charges, and most practice self-censorship in regards to criticizing the government. Despite a tradition of men voting in place of their wives, female turnout in national elections is increasing; in 2004 the turnout was higher than in 1999. Although corruption remains a problem in both the executive and legislative branches of government, during 2006 several officials were prosecuted for embezzlement and accepting bribes as part of governmental efforts to root out corruption. Slavery was only formally banned in Niger in 2003 and organizations report that thousands of people are still technically enslaved within the country.

The 2006 State Department Terrorism Report noted that the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), an Algerian terrorist group, “continued to operate in the Sahel region, crossing difficult-to-patrol borders between Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, and Chad to recruit extremists within the region for training and terrorist operations in the Trans-Sahara and, possibly, for operations outside the region.” Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department, the GSPC is a splinter group of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), one of the principal Islamist militant groups that fought against the government during the Algerian civil war. The GSPC allied itself with al-Qaida in September 2006, adopted the name al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and has begun adapting its tactics to those favored by insurgents in Iraq, including roadside bomb attacks. The U.S. military is currently embarking on a long-term initiative to counter what it sees as a growing terrorist presence in the predominantly Muslim regions of Africa, facilitated by ungoverned stretches of border and desert terrain. The Pentagon hopes to train thousands of African troops in counterinsurgency tactics and cross-border cooperation and communication as part of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which includes Mauritania as well as Algeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Throughout the 1990s, the government of Niger engaged in armed conflict with numerous rebel groups in the north of the country. In 1990, the nomadic Tuareg tribes launched a rebellion against the

government of Niger over their exclusion from the government and policies that infringed on their traditional land use. Other tribes residing in the north joined the Tuareg in fighting against the government for greater access to resources. The government of Niger signed peace accords with the rebels in 1995 and publicly burned rebel weapons to signify the end of hostilities in 2000.

U.S. Military Assistance Prior to Sept. 11, 2001

Niger has participated sporadically in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since its inception in 1992 but did not report any imports of major conventional weapons systems from the United States between 1990 and 2001.

Niger received Foreign Military Financing (FMF) totaling \$5.7 million between fiscal year 1990 (FY 90) and FY 93 and International Military Education and Training (IMET) totaling nearly \$2 million between FY 90 and FY 96. After FY 96, political instability led to the suspension of U.S. military aid.

Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) concluded with Niger's total of only \$162,000 between FY 90 and FY 01. By contrast, Foreign Military Sales (FMS) totaled \$5.9 million during the same period. Additionally, Niger received 10 cargo trucks through the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program in FY 93.

U.S. Military Assistance Since Sept. 11, 2001

Niger has not contributed troops or other support to U.S. operations in Iraq or Afghanistan but is a member of the African Union which, as an organization, vigorously condemns terrorism. The African Union has begun to coordinate counterterrorism activities for the continent, although resources and capacity are lacking. Before resigning as U.S. Secretary of Defense in late 2006, Donald Rumsfeld laid out his vision for an Africa Command that would be added to the existing U.S. military commands in order to maintain order and stability in the often overlooked continent. As such, the U.S. government has sought out African allies to train in counterterrorism due to the potential threat they could pose in the absence of such bolstered capacity. Niger's domestic uranium production also makes U.S. engagement in Niger highly strategic. However, U.S. engagement with Niger and the levels of military assistance provided to Niger since Sept. 11, 2001, have not been consistent and most assistance has come specifically from counterterrorism programs.

Although the dollar amount has been small, compared to other countries in this series, in the five years since Sept. 11, Niger has received more than double the amount of military assistance it received in the five years prior. Niger received over \$100,000 in IMET funding in both FY 02 and FY 03, but this funding ceased during FY 04 and FY 05. The American Service-members' Protection Act, passed in 2002, required all states' parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to sign a Bilateral Immunity Agreement (BIA) with the United States granting U.S. soldiers immunity from court proceedings or have military assistance withheld. As Niger had ratified the ICC and refused to sign a BIA with the United States, IMET and FMF were withheld, and Niger was not eligible to receive U.S. defense articles through the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program. In October 2006, however, President George W. Bush issued a waiver allowing 21 countries that had not signed a BIA to begin receiving military assistance again. The waiver occurred amidst criticism from the Pentagon that critical counterterrorism assistance was being curtailed by the ban and that China was training African

militaries in the United States' absence. No IMET was appropriated in FY 06, but smaller IMET allocations have been requested – \$45,000 for FY 07 and \$100,000 for FY 08. No FMF has been requested for Niger since FY 93.

Without FMF available to finance weapons purchases from the United States, FMS has been minimal – totaling only \$548,000 between FY 02 and FY 05 – and has consisted mostly of aircraft spare parts and non-lethal military equipment. However, when added to DCS, Niger has actually concluded over three times as many arms sales with the United States between FY 02 and FY 06 as it did between FY 97 and FY 01. The United States licensed a total of \$913,000 in DCS to Niger between FY 02 and FY 06, and more than \$400,000 more DCS is projected over FY 07 and FY 08.

Although funding through the five main military assistance programs has been less than robust, the United States has provided Niger with counterterrorism training and funding through other programs. Niger is a beneficiary of the Regional Defense Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) and received \$250,000 in FY 05, \$150,000 in FY 06 and \$100,000 is slated for FY 07. Since FY 05, Niger has also been eligible to receive funding to expand its counterterrorism capabilities through the Foreign Operations budget's Anti-Terrorism Assistance program (NADR-ATA), which is part of the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Activities account. Niger received \$1.4 million from this account in FY 05, and \$905,000 in FY 06, but no additional funding was requested for FY 08.

In 2003, the State Department launched the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), designed to foster counterterrorism cooperation among the United States and the Saharan countries of Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania. Under the PSI, the U.S. military trained local forces to work together to counter known terrorist incursions, as well as trafficking of people and illicit materials. In 2005, the PSI was expanded, funded with \$125 million, and renamed the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI). The TSCTI added five more countries to the list of participants (Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia) and intends to greatly augment the region's indigenous capacity to effectively fight terrorism. TSCTI commenced in June 2005 with Operation Flintlock, which trained 3,000 African soldiers from nine different countries alongside U.S. forces in skills ranging from basic marksmanship to human rights law. In FY 07, the TSCTI was added to the Foreign Operations budget for regular funding and received \$7.2 million from the NADR-ATA account, and \$16.8 million from the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account. The Section 1206 authority from the Operations and Maintenance title of the defense budget may also contribute funding to the TSCTI in FY 07.

U.S. Military Assistance and Sales to Niger, FY 90 - FY 08					
	IMET	FMF	DCS	FMS	EDA
1990	\$285,000	\$1,893,000	\$128,000	\$1,136,000	n/a
1991	\$438,000	\$2,576,000	\$1,000	\$685,000	n/a
1992	\$379,000	\$600,000	\$0	\$1,021,000	n/a
1993	\$349,000	\$600,000	\$27,000	\$686,000	\$84,580
1994	\$200,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$369,000	\$0
1995	\$189,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$142,000	\$0
1996	\$11,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,582,000	\$0
1997	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0	\$0
1998	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0	\$0
1999	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$33,000	\$0
2000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2001	\$102,000	\$0	\$0	\$285,000	\$0
1990-2001	\$1,953,000	\$5,669,000	\$162,000	\$5,939,000	\$84,580
1997-2001	\$102,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$318,000	\$0
2002	\$132,000	\$0	\$0	\$18,000	\$0
2003	\$103,000	\$0	\$0	\$274,000	\$0
2004	\$0	\$0	\$137,000	\$102,000	\$0
2005	\$0	\$0	\$650,000	\$154,000	\$0
2006	\$0	\$0	\$126,000	\$0	\$0
2002-2006	\$235,000	\$0	\$913,000	\$548,000	\$0
2007	\$45,000	\$0	\$75,000	\$0	\$0
2008	\$100,000	\$0	\$374,000	\$0	n/a

Sources

- U.S. Department of State, “Niger,” 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights, March 6, 2007. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78750.htm>.
- U.S. Department of State, “Niger,” Background Notes, May 2007. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5474.htm>.
- U.S. Department of State, “Africa Overview,” 2006 Country Reports on Terrorism, April 30, 2007. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82730.htm>.
- U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY 02-08.
- Defense Security Cooperation Agency, DSCA Facts Book, FY 99-05.
- U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Fact Book,” 2007.
- UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, “United National Register of Conventional Arms.”
- Mark Mazzetti, “U.S. Cuts in Africa Aid Said to Hurt War on Terror,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2006.
- George Gedda, “Bush Waiver Restores Military Training,” *Associated Press*, October 3, 2006.