

How Child Soldiers Are Getting German Weapons

By [The Voice of Russia](#)

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With Germany being one of the largest arms exporters, many of the resources are going to the countries where children are used as exploiters in the military.

Michael D, one of the former soldiers, who is currently living in Berlin states: “We were mostly deployed for attacks. We were often the first to be sent into combat and had to dodge the flurry of bullets.”

Since he was a young boy, he was forced to become a soldier in his native country, Sierra Leone, where he was fighting against rebel groups for five years. During the period of 1991 till 2001 of civil war in West African country, thousands of kids were forced into war along with Michael.

During commemoration of Red Hand Day, Michael shared his story, “The children were lured away from their parents or kidnapped from school. We were made compliant with drugs and alcohol.”

Michael was lucky enough to escape; he fled to Germany and got to the country 13 years ago. Now he lives in Bremen and his aim is to fight against the abuse of children and engaging them in military activity.

Antje Weber, a child rights expert with the child emergency relief organization Kindernothilfe says, “Worldwide, more than 250,000 children are used as soldiers.” She adds that those children are often used for various reasons, they work as spies, fighters, and they get sexually abused. In the end, they live their lives with deep psychological issues.

However, Michael’s example is a lucky exception of leaving. Only few people manage to escape. Back in 2012, Germany accepted 4,300 refugees with 150 of them were child soldiers. There is a possibility that they used German weapons for fighting.

For instance, the G3 automatic rifle, which is made in Germany by Heckler & Koch is known for being used in the bloody civil war in Sierra Leone.

Andrew Feinstein who is an author of the book “The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade” states: “Heckler & Koch employs only about 700 workers, but it is one of the deadliest companies in Europe.”

Back in 2012, Germany approved the export of 66,955 small arms.

“German arms exports are stuck in a quagmire of corruption and kickbacks with extremely close ties between the arms manufacturers, dealers, the government, politicians and

political parties,” adds Feinstein.

Feinstein has devoted a lot of his time trying to get data on the arm trades between Germany and Africa. Back in the days, he was part of the African National Congress (ANC) in parliament in Pretoria. However, despite his attempts to get information on the data, he failed and thus rejected his position due to the lack of transparency in trades.

“We had spent \$10 billion [7.36 billion euros] on weapons we didn’t need and haven’t used up to this very day,” he said. Meanwhile, he added, Germany refused to provide drugs to almost 6 million HIV and AIDs patients due to the tight budget. According to the report, more than 365,000 people died as a result of that.

Feinstein confirms that various politicians in South Africa have benefitted enormously due to arms trading. His research provides with the sum of more than \$300 million in bribes.

Now Germany is the world’s third largest arms exporter. Saudi Arabia is one of its biggest customers. Saudi Arabia is also interested in purchasing German Leopard 2 tanks and submarines. There are currently negotiations taking place about buying 33 patrol boats. The official aim of Saudi Arabia of purchasing the boats is to secure borders and not to use it against its own people. However, Feinstein contradicts. The decision can be changed instantly, while providers have usually little say on what the country should spend the arms for once the purchase has been made.

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