

GHANA OBSERVES UN ARMS DESTRUCTION DAY

On the 9th of July 2004, the Ghana Independence Square in Accra was the venue for the symbolic destruction of arms to observe the UN Day of Small Arms Destruction.

Politicians, members of the diplomatic corps, various security agencies as well as students, teachers and the press, attended the event. A total of 200 cap and short guns, confiscated from the Nkonya and Alavanyo conflict areas in the Volta Region, were subjected to a comprehensive destruction of cutting, pressing and burning.

The Vice President of the Republic Ghana, Alhaji Aliu Mahama was the guest of honour and also the torch bearer to set ablaze the 200 weapons. Interestingly, only 5 of the weapons were imported and the remaining were all locally manufactured but with an impressive finish. According to Chief Superintendent K. Gyamera-Yeboah of the Ghana Police Service in charge of confiscated weapons in the southern sector, there are still an impressive number of such weapons in the armoury which they intend to destroy on an annual basis, first to mark the UN Small Arms Destruction Day and also to keep reminding Ghanaians about the negative impact of illicit weapons. The event served as the first elaborate arms destruction day. It was observed with pomp and pageantry and music provided the Ghana Police Band.

In July 2001, on the same day, 874 retrieved weapons from operation “*atou mu ye soum*” (a joint police military operation set up to retrieve illicit weapons in public hands) were destroyed but that event lacked the colour and political attention this year’s event received.

FOSDA was present with its messages calling on the government to support the Arms Trade Treaty.

As if the Ghanaian leaders were responding to this message. All the speeches at the Independence Square on 09/07/04 decried the incessant flow of illicit weapons into the hands of non-state actors in the West African sub-region. Alhaji Aliu Mahama assured Ghanaians of the government’s support of the ECOWAS Moratorium and that the government would work towards a more legally binding document that would control the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in the region.

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