

## Checks and Balances

### Securing Small Arms during Peace Operations

#### Introduction

Since the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations released its seminal report in 2000, UN missions have grown considerably in size and complexity. As of November 2015, more than 100,000 uniformed personnel were serving in UN peace operations—a three-fold increase since 2000 and a 50 per cent rise since 2005 (UNDPKO, 2005; UNGA and UNSC, 2015b, p. 20). These troops, military observers, and police officers increasingly operate in large, underdeveloped countries, alongside violent armed groups that show little interest in political compromise and have few compunctions about attacking UN forces (UNGA and UNSC, 2015b, pp. 21–22). Succeeding in these environments requires that peacekeepers be well trained and well armed.

The shift from monitoring peace agreements in post-conflict settings to operating in countries ‘where there is no peace to keep’ (UNSG, 2014, p. 1) has broad and far-reaching implications, many of which have been thoroughly analysed by UN officials, scholars, and journalists.<sup>1</sup> Less well documented is the daunting challenge of safeguarding the tens of thousands of small arms and light weapons deployed during peace operations. This Issue Brief aims to improve understanding of this challenge by identifying and describing stockpile and transport security practices in current and recent UN peace operations, and by highlighting the many

barriers to implementing strong, standardized safeguards in increasingly complex security environments.

The Issue Brief builds on the Small Arms Survey’s previous research on small arms and light weapons in peace operations. In *Under Attack and Above Scrutiny?*, the Survey compiled documentation on the diversion of at least 750,000 rounds of small-calibre ammunition and more than 500 small arms and light weapons that took place during peace operations in Sudan and South Sudan (Berman and Racovita, 2015). These figures are extremely conservative and significantly underestimate the amount of arms and ammunition that was seized or lost during this time period.

Incidents of diversion in Sudan and in other mission areas highlight the importance of strong stockpile security, movement control, record-keeping, and reporting on contingent-owned small arms and light weapons that are seized or collected during peace operations. This Issue Brief summarizes recent efforts by UN peacekeepers to secure these weapons and explores the barriers to universal implementation of robust control measures.

The main findings of this Issue Brief include the following:

- Stockpile security, record-keeping, and reporting practices vary significantly from mission to mission, and oftentimes within the same mission.
- The system through which the UN manages contingent-owned equipment (COE) provides the framework

for rigorous mission-level stockpile security regimes.

- ‘Temporary’ small arms storage structures are sometimes used in peace operations that last for ten years or longer. Transitioning to more robust structures, including purpose-built depots, may be warranted in many of these cases.
- The United Nations has developed detailed policies, procedures, and guidelines on securing arms and ammunition during peace operations. These safeguards are laid out in numerous documents, many of which are not publicly available. A consolidated, readily accessible compilation of these safeguards would be useful not only to UN and contingent staff, but also to other organizations engaged in peace operations.

The Issue Brief begins with a brief overview of the types of weapons and ammunition used by troops and police forces during UN peace operations, and the mechanisms through which these items are deployed and managed. The Brief then identifies current policies and practices related to stockpile security, record-keeping, reporting, and transport security, drawing on information collected from UN documents and interviews with current and former UN and government officials. Challenges to the full implementation of these policies and practices are then analysed. The Brief concludes with a recap of key findings and observations. Box 1 summarizes key terms and definitions.

## Box 1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this study, **small arms** consist of the following items:

- revolvers and self-loading pistols;
- rifles<sup>2</sup> and carbines;
- shotguns;
- sub-machine guns; and
- light machine guns.

The term **light weapons** refers to:

- heavy machine guns;
- mortar systems of calibres of 120 mm or less;
- hand-held, under-barrel, and automatic grenade launchers;
- hand grenades;
- recoilless guns;
- portable rocket launchers, including rockets fired from single-shot, disposable launch tubes; and
- portable missiles and launchers, namely anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs) and man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS).

Also included in the scope of this Issue Brief are parts, accessories,<sup>3</sup> and ammunition for small arms and light weapons.<sup>4</sup> In keeping with Survey practice, the items listed above are collectively referred to as 'small arms'. The term **diversion** refers to 'the unauthorized change in possession or end use of authorized weapons, ammunition, parts, or explosives originating in holdings or transfers, both domestically and internationally' (Berman and Racovita, 2015, p. 13). This definition is largely consistent with the use of the term by relevant UN agencies.<sup>5</sup>

The Survey uses the term **physical security** to refer to measures aimed at 'provid[ing] the capability to detect, assess, communicate, delay, and respond to an unauthorized attempt at entry' into a weapons storage facility (King, 2011, p. 2). **Stockpile management** refers to the 'safe and secure accounting, storage, transportation, and handling of munitions' (Bevan and Wilkinson, 2008, p. xxx). This broad category includes control measures ranging from record-keeping requirements to on-site inspections. To limit the use of acronyms, the term **stockpile security** is used instead of **PSSM** to refer to control measures commonly categorized as physical security and stockpile management.

Several of the terms used throughout this report are specific to UN operations. The UN defines **contingent-owned equipment** (COE) as 'major equipment, and minor equipment and consumables deployed, and operated by the troop/police contributor's contingent in the performance of peacekeeping operations' (UNGA, 2014, p. 16). **Major equipment** is defined as 'major items directly related to the unit mission as mutually determined by the United Nations and the troop/police contributor' (p. 18). Items categorized as 'major equipment' range from elbow, knee, and shoulder protection for riot control police to main battle tanks (pp. 162, 165). All of the light weapons listed above are considered 'major equipment', with the exception of hand grenades.<sup>6</sup>

Most small arms are not explicitly categorized in the UN's manual on COE (UNGA, 2014). A representative from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations told the Survey that '[t]hese armaments are usually regarded as "**personal weapons**", which are reimbursed as "**personal equipment**" under the Troop/Police personnel reimbursement system'.<sup>7</sup> Ammunition for small arms and light weapons is categorized as a **consumable** (UNGA, 2014, p. 16). The UN's categorization scheme is important because inspection and reporting requirements vary from category to category in the COE system.

The terms **dry lease** and **wet lease** also appear frequently in UN documents on COE. A 'dry lease' is defined as 'a contingent-owned reimbursement system where the troop/police contributor provides equipment to the mission and the United Nations assumes responsibility for maintaining the equipment'. A 'wet lease' is when the troop- or police-contributing country 'provides and assumes responsibility for maintaining and supporting deployed major items of equipment, together with the associated minor equipment' (UNGA, 2014, p. 18).

In Liberia, for example, guidelines for troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs) 'dictate that contingents should hold six basic loads (first lines) of ammunition for each type of weapon' (UNMIL, n.d., p. 2).

Many units, and particularly formed military units, also deploy with heavier weapons, including a variety of (crew-served) light weapons, such as grenade launchers, machine guns, mortar systems, and rocket launchers. Prior to deployment, the UN, TCCs and PCCs, and the host country jointly determine what types and quantities of small arms, light weapons, and other materiel are to be available to military and police units during peace operations. Most weapons and equipment are supplied by individual governments, which are reimbursed by the UN according to predetermined rates established by the UN General Assembly through its COE Working Group. The amount of reimbursement and the form that it takes depend on the item, how the UN categorizes it, and whether it is provided under a wet lease or dry lease. To ensure that TCCs and PCCs adhere to their commitments regarding the quantity and serviceability of deployed equipment, the UN established a system of verification and control consisting of various inspection and reporting requirements. These requirements, which also serve an important role in stockpile and transport security, are described in more detail below.

## Securing small arms during peace operations

This section summarizes current policies and practices that help to prevent diversion of arms and ammunition during peace operations, with a particular emphasis on physical security, stockpile management, transport security, and record-keeping and reporting practices. While much of the focus is on contingent-owned equipment, controls on weapons seized and collected during peace operations are described in Box 2.

## Background

Understanding diversion of small arms in peace operations and the efforts to prevent it requires a basic awareness of the types of small arms and light weapons typically provided to peacekeepers, and the system through which these items are supplied. Formed

military units generally deploy with their personal firearms, most of which are self-loading pistols and rifles. While the makes and models vary, common variants include AK, FAL, G3, INSAS, and M16 rifles (Berman and Racovita, 2015, p. 40). Mission-specific guidelines indicate the quantity of ammunition to be deployed with each weapon.

Several UN documents provide guidance on storing, securing, transporting, and managing contingent-owned small arms and light weapons. These documents include the:

- *Manual on Policies and Procedures Concerning the Reimbursement and Control of Contingent-owned Equipment of Troop/Police Contributors Participating in Peacekeeping Missions* (hereafter 'COE Manual') (UNGA, 2014);
- *Guidelines for the Field Verification and Control of Contingent-owned Equipment and Management of Memorandum of Understanding* (hereafter 'COE Verification Guidelines') (UNDFS, 2015);
- *Movement Control Manual* (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014); and
- *International Ammunition Technical Guidelines* (IATG) (UNODA, 2015e).

In addition to these documents, some missions publish their own standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. The promulgation of SOPs is a mission-level prerogative,<sup>8</sup> however, and most of the SOPs and related documents generated by the missions are not readily available to the public. Most missions do not post these documents online and, since the missions are not required to provide copies to UN Headquarters, there is no central repository.<sup>9</sup> The Survey was able to acquire SOPs and other mission-level documents describing the practices of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) but was unable to obtain comparable documentation from other missions.

The Survey also conducted more than 20 interviews with current and former officials who are familiar with UN-wide and mission-specific policies and practices.<sup>10</sup> Many of these officials have first-hand, field-level experience implementing or assisting with the implementation of stockpile security practices since 2005. The information and insights provided by these officials are critical to fully understanding UN policies and practices and how they are implemented in the field. Audit

reports also provide some insight into how the COE systems and movement control operations function at the mission level.

## Physical security for contingent-owned small arms

The structures in which weapons and ammunition are stored during peace operations, and the physical security measures employed at storage sites, reflect the transient nature of these operations and the environment in which many missions are deployed. As summarized by a former UN official:

*The UN presence is always temporary. The mission's footprint has to be light and the mission's forces have to be mobile. Thus, the mission's weapons are not stored in armouries comparable to the purpose-built storage facilities in their home countries.<sup>11</sup>*

While these and other constraints apply to some degree to all of the missions studied, there is considerable variation in how missions respond to them.

Weapons storage structures used in the missions studied ranged from refurbished buildings to steel shipping containers and tents. 'The type of structure is directly related to where the troops are located and the type of infrastructure that is available,' notes Gen. Sikander Afzal, UNMIL force commander from 2009 to 2010.<sup>12</sup> Officials from two other missions indicated that the storage facilities of some contingents participating in those missions were minimal or non-existent. 'Troops carry their personal weapons with them at all times,'<sup>13</sup> 'according to one of the officials. Another official from a different mission stated that, while most weapons were stored in pre-existing buildings, some contingents continued to 'store ammunition in tents and vehicles. The quantities are not large but there is enough to cause concern.'<sup>14</sup>

In several of the missions studied, contingents kept their weapons in shipping containers,<sup>15</sup> some of which

were modified to improve security.<sup>16</sup> Examples of modifications include covering the containers in earth, reinforcing their sides with sandbags, and surrounding them with razor wire.<sup>17</sup> One former high-ranking UN official described the containers as 'pretty robust', adding that they 'were about as secure as possible in that environment'.<sup>18</sup>

Some contingents in other missions store their weapons and ammunition in pre-existing buildings. Like the shipping containers, some of the structures are modified to make them more secure. In one African country, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and its contractors improved security at buildings used for storing COE by bricking over windows, installing new doors, and adding fire prevention equipment, among other renovations.<sup>19</sup> In other countries, UN officials indicated that few, if any, modifications had been made to buildings that were used as storage facilities.<sup>20</sup>

Physical security measures at weapons storage facilities also vary. Measures employed in the missions studied include one or more of the following: perimeter fencing, external lighting, controlled access, guards, locks, storage of firearms in racks, and separate storage of firearms and ammunition.<sup>21</sup> In at least one case, a contingent brought and installed an electronic security system that included video monitoring.<sup>22</sup> These measures—as implemented by the contingents—include a mixture of standard controls prescribed in international best practice guides<sup>23</sup> and improvised alternatives that reflect the transient nature of peace operations and the challenges of managing and securing materiel in austere environments.

The following is a description of storage procedures for firearms adopted by contingents that are serving in UNMIL:

*Locks, keys, and chains [were] used to secure COE firearms. The firearms were stored in*



*stands, some of which were brought into the country by contingents while others were made by the troops when they arrived. Rifles were stacked upright on the stand. A chain was passed through the trigger guard and the chain was locked. The key [was] kept with the senior-most soldiers deployed at the facility.<sup>24</sup>*

Former UN officials interviewed for this study indicated that there are notable differences between physical security at central storage facilities and at other sites. In Liberia, for example, small troop detachments often stored their weapons in a sectioned-off corner of their accommodations (such as a side wall of a barracks). ‘The weapons would be separate from sleeping quarters, if separate quarters are available,’ explained Gen. Afzal. ‘However, if only one room is available then one wall of the same accommodation [would be used for weapons storage].’<sup>25</sup> Similarly, munitions at forward operating bases are sometimes stored in tents, which are inherently less secure than other, more solid storage structures.

The security environment and nature of the deployment also affect physical security. As noted by another former high-ranking official who served in a UN mission in Africa, ‘sometimes soldiers keep their personal weapons and ammunition with them but this is exceptional and is usually the result of high tempo operations [or] high readiness requirements.’<sup>26</sup>

Interviews also reveal that physical security practices sometimes improve over time. A former high-ranking UN official recalled that when the mission he led was first launched, contingents stored their weapons in canvas tents with little or no security. ‘This was due to a total lack of infrastructure,’ the official pointed out. By the end of his tenure with the mission several years later, the contingents had proper weapons storage facilities with external lighting, fencing, and other physical security measures.<sup>27</sup>

## **Inventories and inspections of contingent-owned small arms**

Regular inventories and inspections of small arms holdings are an essential element of any effective stockpile management system. The IATG recommend ‘stocktaking’ (inventories) of ammunition at least every three months for smaller stockpiles, and continuous (rolling) inventorying of large stocks (UNODA, 2015b, p. 13). Similarly, the COE Manual requires frequent inspections of certain contingent-owned equipment, including crew-served weapons, throughout the deployment cycle. Rather than focusing on physical security or stockpile management, however, the COE Manual requires inspections that emphasize mechanisms for ensuring that the type, quantity, and serviceability of the weapons and materiel supplied by governments conform to memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the TCCs or PCCs and the UN. Nonetheless, the inspections and related record-keeping and reporting requirements provide a framework for potentially rigorous monitoring of stockpile security practices.

The COE Manual lists four types of inspections: arrival inspections, operational readiness inspections, periodic inspections and spot checks, and repatriation inspections (UNGA, 2014, pp. 28–30). Instructions for conducting these inspections are provided in the COE Manual, the COE Verification Guidelines, and mission-specific documents (UNGA, 2014, pp. 28–30; UNDFS, 2015, pp. 6–10).

Arrival inspections are to occur shortly after delivery of equipment to the mission area. ‘Major equipment’, which includes most light weapons, must be inspected within a month of arrival. Personal firearms and other items categorized as ‘personal equipment’ must be checked within six months (UNGA, 2014, pp. 28–29). These requirements also apply to ‘re-hatted’ troops—contingents that are transferred from regional peacekeeping operations to UN-mandated operations (UNDFS, 2015, p. 24).<sup>28</sup>

Prior to the arrival inspection, a contingent is to prepare a list of its major equipment, personal weapons, ammunition, and explosives. Inspectors are to check all of these items, along with the ‘adequacy of the contingent’s storage arrangements for ammunition and explosives’ (UNDFS, 2015, p. 26). After completing the inspection, the COE unit is to submit a verification report that summarizes findings and includes inventories of the above-mentioned items (pp. 25–26).

At least once every six months, weapons and ammunition are to go through operational readiness inspections. The purpose of these inspections is to ensure that the number of items in the unit’s inventory matches the quantity specified in the MOU and that the items are serviceable, meet operational requirements, and are being used appropriately (UNDFS, 2015, p. 8). Spot checks are described as ‘random’ and ‘unscheduled’, and operational inspections ‘may be conducted with little notice when conditions exist that give rise to concern that the terms of the MOU are not being met’ (UNGA, 2014, p. 28).

Prior to each inspection, a contingent is to prepare a briefing package that includes a detailed list of all major equipment and personal weapons. For each item categorized as major equipment, the unit is to include the following information: item description, equipment category, serial number, colour, and primary physical location. The list of personal weapons (small arms) is to include the type and serial number of each item (UNDFS, 2015, p. 38).

During inspections, contingent personnel are to present all major equipment and personal weapons for inspection. Weapons are to be displayed with ‘ancillary equipment’, such as magazines, sights, and spare barrels (UNDFS, 2015, p. 49). Inspection team members check each weapon against their records and verify that the items are operational and serviceable. Notably, the COE Verification Guidelines also task ammunition technical officers

(ATOs) to 'inspect and assess all natures of ammunition and explosives stocks held by Contingents/Units, including serviceability and storage arrangements' (p. 29). Contingent personnel are also required to make storage and maintenance facilities for other COE available to the inspectors, who are to be provided with an opportunity to inspect storage structures, check on physical security measures, and evaluate stockpile management practices for weapons as well as ammunition (pp. 29–32). The COE Verification Guidelines also instruct contingents to provide a list of all weapons that are out on duty at the time of the inspection. Inspectors and contingent staff are tasked with conducting follow-up checks of such weapons.

The missions (and individual contingents or units) are expected to conduct additional inspections and spot checks<sup>29</sup> in between operational readiness inspections. COE units are to conduct 'periodic inspections' of major equipment, personal weaponry, and ammunition on a quarterly basis (UNDFS, 2015, pp. 36–37).<sup>30</sup> The requirements for these inspections are similar to those for operational readiness inspections. The results are to be summarized in verifications reports and submitted to UN Headquarters (UNGA, 2014, p. 30; UNDFS, 2015, p. 8).

Inspectors perform a final repatriation inspection on all major equipment before it leaves the mission area. The focus of this inspection, as specified in the COE Manual and the COE Verification Guidelines, is to ensure that items to be repatriated do not include UN-owned equipment and to confirm that the departing unit is complying with hazardous waste disposal, environmental clean-up, and UN equipment accounting requirements (UNDFS, 2015, pp. 8–9).

The inspection regime established by the UN Mission in Liberia sheds light on how these requirements are implemented by individual missions. As specified in its Standard Operating Procedure for Verification and Control

of Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives Deployed by Military and Police Contingents, UNMIL requires military and police units to conduct monthly inspections of all weapons, ammunition, and explosives<sup>31</sup> and to submit reports on these inspections to mission headquarters (UNMIL, n.d., p. 3). COE and ATO units are to check 100 per cent of contingent-owned weapons during UN-mandated operational readiness inspections.

Interviews with former UNMIL officials offer additional insight into how inspections were conducted in practice. Gen. Afzal provided the Survey with the following description:

*COE inspectors working under DMS (the Director of Mission Support) are responsible for two things: monitoring the serviceability of COE and taking inventories, which occur every quarter and are 100 per cent inventories by serial number. They are supposed to be 100 per cent but they never reach that goal because some percentage of weapons are always checked out. The inventories take place over three–four days and usually the inspectors are able to check about 80 per cent of weapons. COE inspector[s] who conducted the inventories were assigned by DMS and were not the same individuals responsible for storage of the weapons.*<sup>32</sup>

An important feature of this system is the linkage of the inspections to reimbursement for deployed COE. Failure by contingents to comply with inspection requirements can result in lost or reduced compensation for TCCs and PCCs—a powerful incentive to cooperate with inspectors.<sup>33</sup> The following statement by a former high-ranking UN official illustrates how mission leadership can use this leverage to monitor stockpile security practices and, whenever necessary, intervene to improve them:

*Implementation was overseen by the ATO, a [Northern European]*

*colonel who would get on a contingent quickly if they failed to comply with the requirements. Noncompliance resulted in a report of degraded mission capability through the chief of mission support, which led to a reduction in compensation for COE [ . . . ]. There were no penalties applied for physical security and stockpile management violations; however, these were brought to [the leadership's] attention—normally by the ATO—and corrected.*<sup>34</sup>

Other officials who were interviewed for this study also viewed reimbursements as a potential source of leverage.<sup>35</sup>

When implemented in the ways described above, the inspection regime serves as an important tool for detecting theft and loss of contingent-owned small arms, and for ensuring that stockpile security and reporting practices conform to international standards. But not all missions implement COE inspection requirements the same way. 'The UN is not responsible for safeguarding personal firearms and ammunition,' noted one former official who is familiar with the practices of a different UN mission in Africa. He added: 'COE staff checks to make sure that the required equipment is available and in working order but it is not their responsibility to do inventory checks by serial number.'<sup>36</sup> This (more limited) approach to COE inspections is also evident in statements by officials from other missions. 'Since personal firearms are not an inspectable item in the COE Manual', explained an official from another mission in Africa, 'there is no requirement to inspect them. COE unit staff check on the serviceability and quantity of weapons [ . . . ] but they do not inspect the storage facilities.'<sup>37</sup>

An audit of COE management practices in eight field operations published in 2013 provides additional (albeit limited) insight into mission-level implementation of these practices, including inspection requirements.<sup>38</sup>

The auditors conducted interviews and reviewed MOUs, visit and verification reports, and other UN- and mission-level documentation. Based on this review, the auditors concluded that COE units in the eight audited missions usually conducted inspections ‘in accordance with policies and procedures established in the Guidelines’ (UNOIOS, 2013, p. 5).<sup>39</sup> The auditors found that inspections were conducted even in insecure mission areas, although not always by mission personnel (UNOIOS, 2013, p. 6). Violations documented by the auditors consisted primarily of delays in conducting arrival and operational readiness inspections, and improperly completing inspection worksheets (p. 5).

Interviews with other current and former UN officials paint a bleaker picture, however. Some contingents ‘lack even basic [physical security and stockpile management] practices’, according to one UN official.<sup>40</sup> Another official noted stark differences in the stockpile security standards among contingents serving in the same missions. Some of the contingents ‘operate at a very high level’, while

contingents from other countries serving in the same missions have not achieved the same standards. ‘This is not to denigrate the contingents’, the official clarified, adding that ‘often they are setting up camps in places that are too cramped or simply do not have the necessary infrastructure, and they simply lack the resources to put it in place’.<sup>41</sup>

### Preventing the accumulation of surplus and unserviceable ammunition

Inspections also help mission staff to identify stockpiles of surplus, unserviceable, and obsolete weapons and ammunition, which are sometimes vulnerable to diversion and accidental explosions. The UN takes several steps to prevent the accumulation of excess or unserviceable ammunition, including pre-deployment consultations with TCCs and PCCs to determine the appropriate type and quantity of ammunition (UNDPKO, 2002, p. 1). The UN also limits overstocking of contingent-owned equipment to 10 per cent of agreed quantities (UNGA, 2014, p. 202);

systematically checks verification reports for surplus stockpiles; and, through COE units, ‘initiate[s] remedial actions’ when surpluses or shortages in COE are detected (UNDFS, 2015, p. 6).

In 2002, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations published a set of Guidelines on Levels of Ammunition for Peacekeeping Operations (hereafter ‘Ammunition Guidelines’)—the results of a collaborative effort between UN officials and representatives from TCCs and PCCs (UNDPKO, 2002, p. ii). The Ammunition Guidelines serve as a baseline for determining operational levels of ammunition and explosives for military and police units. Estimates are listed in terms of the minimal number of rounds per weapon (or person) for a 12-month period. Examples of these estimates for small arms and light weapons are listed in Table 1.

The levels specified in the Ammunition Guidelines are only a starting point for more detailed, mission-level needs assessments. The specific ammunition requirements of a given contingent depend on numerous factors, including the mission’s tasks and tempo of operations, the methods of operation of individual contingents, the type and level of threats confronting the mission, the capacity to store ammunition safely, and logistical constraints (UNDPKO, 2002, p. ii).<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that the Ammunition Guidelines do not include estimates for training ammunition, the use of which varies depending on, among other factors, host country restrictions and access to firing ranges.<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, it is not possible (or advisable) for the UN to issue one-size-fits-all requirements for ammunition levels that are applicable to all missions. More refined guidelines that reflect mission-specific needs and constraints are developed by mission staff (UNDPKO, 2002, p. 2).

Interviews with UN officials reveal several factors that shape a mission’s capacity to prevent the accumulation of surplus and old ammunition, and to ensure the timely and safe disposal

Table 1 Minimum ammunition requirements in UN missions

Weapon type (calibre)	Minimum number of rounds per weapon/ per person for 12 months of operations
Grenade, hand, high-explosive (HE)	1.4*
Launcher, grenade (40 mm)	10
Light anti-tank weapon—disposable (up to 66 mm)	4
Machine gun, light	4,800
Machine gun, medium	8,400
Missile, anti-tank	16
Mortar, HE (up to 61 mm)	170
Mortar, HE (62 mm to 81 mm)	300
Pistol or revolver	120
Rifle or carbine	720
Rifle, sniper	360
Shotgun	100
Sub-machine gun	700

Note: \* Minimum number of rounds per person for 12 months of operations.

Source: UNDPKO (2002)



of stocks that become unserviceable. Clear guidelines on the quantity, type, and condition of ammunition to be deployed by TCCs are essential, as are regular inspections of weapons and ammunition stocks by well-trained inspectors.

Another key factor is the mission's willingness and ability to properly dispose of surplus and unserviceable ammunition when it is identified. Disposing of weapons and munitions can be time-consuming, costly, and onerous, even under favourable conditions, as evidenced by the recent experience of one long-standing mission in a relatively stable African country. The mission had acquired stockpiles of old small-calibre rounds that 'numbered more than three times the [country's] population', which was excessive given the low risk of significant armed conflict in that country, observed a former mission official.<sup>44</sup>

Mission leadership decided to eliminate the stockpiles, aware that this step would require a significant investment of time and resources. The first major task was sorting through the ammunition, which was complicated by the fact that the markings on the rounds (and packages) were often difficult to interpret. 'We spent a fair amount of time determining which rounds were smoke, explosive, et cetera', remarked a former mission official. After identifying the unserviceable and obsolete ammunition, mission officials spent several months developing a disposal plan with the host government; the plan's implementation was paid for with mission funds. Mission staff also had to obtain replacement stockpiles from TCCs and, in the interim, arrange for the redistribution of available ammunition to prevent operational deficits.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, even the seemingly straightforward task of identifying and disposing of surplus ammunition in a stable country with a cooperative host government can be a significant undertaking. In active conflict zones or in countries where host governments are

less cooperative, the proper disposal of surplus or unserviceable ammunition is even more difficult.<sup>46</sup>

## Record-keeping and reporting on contingent-owned small arms

Thorough and consistent record-keeping is the *sine qua non* of effective stockpile security programmes. Without accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible records of small arms stockpiles, it is not possible to systematically track the location and use of weapons and ammunition. Thorough record-keeping also deters theft, aids in the detection of stolen and lost weapons, and enables the tallying of diverted weapons that are recovered and that remain missing.<sup>47</sup> Reporting requirements are also important in that they help to ensure proper oversight of stockpile security practices.

The COE Manual and related documents require missions to compile and maintain records on small arms and report on small arms holdings from the time the weapons arrive in the mission area until they are returned to the UN or contributing country. Data on COE, including small arms, is stored in the ECOE database—a 'web-based database intranet application used to support COE operations in UNHQ and the field' (UNDFS, 2015, p. 13). As noted above, the COE Verification Guidelines instruct missions to collect data on the type and serial number for each small arm (or personal weapon), and the item description, equipment category, serial number, colour, and primary physical location of each light weapon (or major equipment) (p. 38).

Record-keeping requirements adopted by some missions are more extensive. UNMIL, for example, requires all contingents to record the type, calibre, factory serial number, and location of all weapons, including personal firearms. Contingents are also required to mark each of their weapons with a 'national/unit number' to be 'painted on the "butt" or an easily visible area' (UNMIL, n.d., p. 3). For ammunition and explosives, contingents are

supposed to record the type, quantity, lot number, date of manufacture, date of expiry, and location (p. 3).

The reporting requirements for contingent-owned small arms are also extensive and cover the entire duration of their deployment. As noted above, COE units are required to submit detailed verification reports after all inspections, which begin shortly after a contingent's equipment arrives in the mission area and continue until it is repatriated. These reports contain, among other information:

- detailed lists of all small arms and light weapons, including their location and their serviceability;
- an assessment of ammunition storage arrangements by the mission's ATO;
- notes on any light weapons (major equipment) that are absent, and the reasons for their absence;
- notifications regarding the arrival, departure, or inter-unit transfer of weapons or ammunition; and
- copies of operational ammunition expenditure certificates, which document the use of ammunition or explosives for which the contributing country is seeking reimbursement.

All verification reports are to be reviewed and signed by the chief COE officer and submitted to UN Headquarters no later than 45 days after the end of the reporting period. The COE Manual also includes separate reporting requirements for the seizure—or forced abandonment—of major equipment when the combined value of the lost items is USD 250,000 or greater. In these cases, the affected contingents (or TCCs or PCCs) must submit a detailed report to mission staff that describes the circumstances surrounding the loss and lists of all lost or damaged equipment. Upon receiving the report, mission officials are required to investigate the incident and verify the report. The COE Manual also requires that they 'immediately advise' UN Headquarters of any such incidents (UNGA, 2014, p. 135).

If mission officials determine that the loss was not due to 'wilful misconduct or negligence' (p. 134), the country that owned the equipment receives reimbursement for the loss from the UN.

There is no comparable reporting requirement in the COE Manual for losses of weapons and equipment valued at less than USD 250,000, as compensation for such losses is provided to contributing countries up front in the form of a 'hostile action/forced abandonment' factor that is applied to maintenance rates (UNGA,

2014, pp. 133–35). However, interviews with UN officials indicate that incidents of theft, loss, and seizure of weapons valued at less than USD 250,000 are also reported, at least in some missions. During his tenure as force commander of UNMIL, Gen. Afzal required contingents to report—verbally and in writing—all losses of arms and ammunition, regardless of the quantity or their value. These incidents were investigated by the contingent and the mission.<sup>48</sup> Incidents involving the seizure or loss of weapons during military

operations are also summarized in daily and weekly situation reports (SITREPs), special incident reports (SINCREPs), and other tactical- and operational-level reports.<sup>54</sup>

Through these and other reporting requirements,<sup>55</sup> mission leaders and officials at UN Headquarters have access to detailed, regularly updated data on each contingent's holdings of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition and any changes to these holdings; their serviceability and operational status (that is, whether any are missing or damaged); and expert assessments of facilities in which ammunition is stored. Furthermore, much of this data is stored electronically in the ECOE database and—assuming the system functions as intended—is instantly retrievable by designated mission staff and officials at UN Headquarters.

To the extent that actual practices conform to requirements in the COE Manual and the COE Verification Guidelines, reporting on small arms and light weapons by UN and contingent staff is consistent with international best practices for record-keeping, including the International Small Arms Control Standards.<sup>56</sup> As with other control measures, data gaps preclude a complete accounting of contingent record-keeping and reporting practices. Interviews with well-placed current and former officials suggest that many contingents are at least meeting basic requirements, even if their technical infrastructure is not as developed as the UN's ECOE system. 'Most of the major TCCs [. . .] are doing a good job', reported one former official, adding that '[m]any have very good serial number inventories, some of which are computerized'. The official did note that the practices of a small number of TCCs 'aren't as far along, aren't as mature'.<sup>57</sup>

## Transport security for contingent-owned small arms

Ensuring that contingent-owned equipment is safely and securely transported into, out of, and within

### Box 2 Controls on seized and collected weapons: Liberia as a case study

Not all small arms encountered during peace operations are contingent-owned. Peacekeepers routinely find weapons in arms caches, seize them during military engagements and cordon and search operations, and collect them during disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes. UN officials interviewed for this report indicated that the storage, management, and disposal of seized and collected weapons varies from contingent to contingent, and that the practices of some contingents are more rigorous than others.

According to UN officials, SOPs for DDR programmes, for example, do not provide detailed instructions on stockpile storage or management for collected weapons; most simply indicate that the weapons should be stored 'safely', without elaborating. In practice, storage of weapons varies from battalion to battalion, and 'some [storage practices] are better than others'.<sup>49</sup> There is similar variation in what happens to seized and collected weapons. Some are destroyed; others are returned to the individuals from whom they were seized, or transferred to the security services of the host countries (Berman and Racovita, 2015, p. 15).<sup>50</sup> There is little publicly available documentation on how these weapons are recorded, reported, stored, or transported prior to their disposal.

Through interviews with former officials and the review of mission documentation, the Survey was able to assemble a fairly detailed account of how one mission—UNMIL—manages and disposes of seized and collected weapons. Former Force Commander Gen. Sikander Afzal provided the following description of the management and disposal of weapons seized and collected by UNMIL during his tenure:

*Seized weapons are dealt with in two stages. During the first stage—immediately after the weapons are recovered, surrendered, or found—the TCC is solely responsible for safekeeping and storage. The TCC informs the UN of the weapons in post-op reporting and report[s] their serial numbers in the after-mission report. The only difference between seized weapons and COE is that seized weapons have to be stored separately. The second stage is when the seized weapons are turned over to a UN representative entity. The handover is supposed to take place as soon as possible. The storage of weapons when they are turned over is conducted by DMS.<sup>51</sup>*

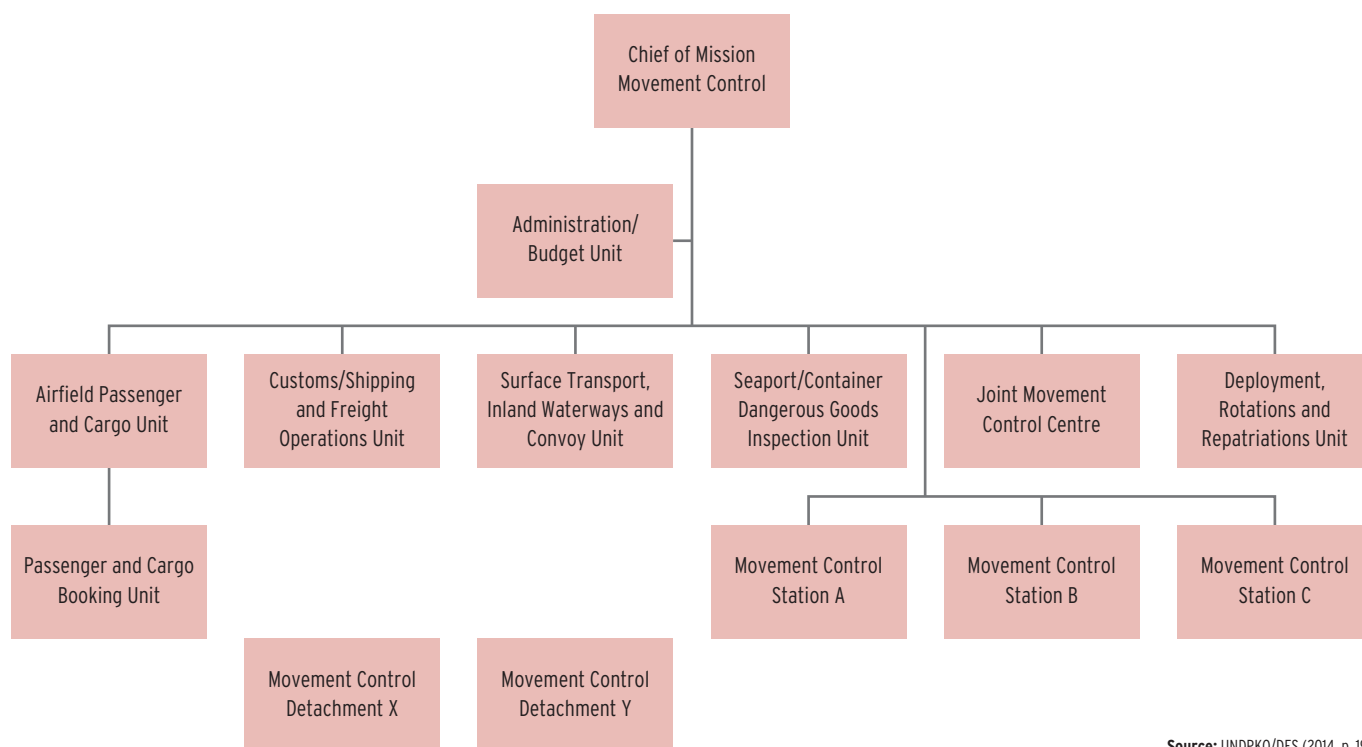
UNMIL's practices for the collection, handling, reporting, and destruction of ammunition are presented in the mission's SOPs for the reporting and destruction of small arms ammunition and unexploded ordnance (UXO) (UNMIL, 2005).<sup>52</sup> The SOPs require the immediate reporting of seized or found ammunition and UXO to UNMIL sector headquarters, which is assigned the responsibility of collecting, documenting, and disposing of the items. The wording regarding storage is vague: the SOPs indicate only that the recovered small arms ammunition and UXO 'will remain in a secure area under the charge of' UN sector military observers or security forces (UNMIL, 2005, p. 3). The SOPs do not define 'secure' or identify specific conditions that must be met for a storage area to be considered secure.

The SOPs are more specific in regard to requirements for record-keeping and reporting. Sector headquarters staff must document the ammunition in a situation report that is to be distributed to multiple offices. The report is to list the types of ammunition and UXO, serial numbers, years and locations of manufacture, lot numbers, and locations, and is to include one or more photos of the items. The SOPs include special requirements for mines, which may not be destroyed without approval from the Force ATO Cell unless the mines pose a 'direct and serious threat' to nearby troops or civilians. In this case, the mine may be disarmed or destroyed only after peacekeepers photograph the mines and record relevant details (UNMIL, 2005, pp. 3–4).

As with controls on COE, it is unclear whether and to what extent UNMIL's practices are similar to those of other missions.<sup>53</sup> Greater public access to documents that describe UN and mission-level policies, procedures, and practices would help to answer this and other questions regarding the storage, management, and disposal of seized and collected small arms and ammunition.



Figure 1 Structure of a generic mission movement control section



Source: UNDPKO/DFS (2014, p. 19)

the mission area is the responsibility of various offices and entities at UN Headquarters and in the field. The COE Manual, which provides broad guidance on roles and responsibilities for transport of arms and other equipment, specifies that the UN 'is responsible for the transportation of troops/police and COE upon deployment and repatriation' (UNGA, 2014, p. 9). This broad and complex mandate includes responsibility for overseas shipping of COE to the mission,<sup>58</sup> transport from the point of delivery to the headquarters camp of the recipient (UNDPKO, 2008, p. 11),<sup>59</sup> and 'coordination of all mission movement control operations, including obtaining the necessary permissions and authorizations from the appropriate authorities in the host country' (UNGA, 2014, p. 9).<sup>60</sup>

Transport of COE is organized and overseen by individuals and organizations at the international, regional, national, and local levels. These entities include the Movement Control Section at the UN Secretariat in New York, the Global Service Centre in Brindisi, Italy, regional transport and

movement centres, and numerous mission-level centres and units.

Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of a typical mission movement control section.<sup>61</sup>

Security and oversight of arms and ammunition shipments is built into every stage of the transport process—from decisions about modes of transport<sup>62</sup> to confirmation of receipt of arms shipments by the intended end user. Safety and security requirements for COE include numerous handling, labelling, packaging, reporting, and storage requirements for items categorized as 'dangerous goods'. This section focuses on several controls that are particularly relevant to preventing diversion.<sup>63</sup>

UN transport regulations include numerous physical security requirements for transported arms and ammunition. All weapons must be unloaded and packed in 'suitable hard boxes' (such as wood or steel), which must be locked and are to include packing lists with the serial number of each weapon in the boxes.<sup>64</sup> Magazines, ammunition, and 'working parts', such as breechblocks and firing pins, must be removed from the

weapon and packed separately, and all arms and ammunition are to be segregated from other types of cargo. The UN also requires that ammunition be inspected by an ATO; packed, marked, and certified in accordance with dangerous goods regulations; and accompanied by a dangerous goods certificate. All arms and ammunition must be included on the cargo manifest and should be inspected by movement control personnel prior to loading (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, pp. 58, 86).<sup>65</sup>

There are also physical security requirements for the airports and seaports through which weapons and ammunition are shipped. Cargo terminals must be configured to allow for the separation of arms and ammunition from other cargo 'in a way that complies with [dangerous goods] regulations and maintains their security' (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. 64). Missions are also advised to install CCTV in storage and cargo preparation areas (p. 66).

Military or security personnel escort at least some shipments of arms and ammunition to and from the airport, rail station, or seaport into which the weapons are imported—and within

the mission area. The Movement Control Manual contains several references to the assignment of escorts to arms shipments, although it does not specify whether they must be assigned to all shipments, regardless of mode of transport.<sup>66</sup>

During interviews with the Survey, former UN and government officials provided additional information on the accompaniment of arms shipments by mission personnel. One former high-ranking mission official described these escorts as ‘pallet riders’ and indicated that all shipments of arms and ammunition within the host country—regardless of the length of the trip—had to be escorted.<sup>67</sup> ‘This practice was sometimes onerous since pallet riders had to stay with the shipment despite months-long delays’, commented the official.<sup>68</sup>

UN regulations also include numerous record-keeping and reporting requirements for small arms shipments. These requirements range from the submission of the serial numbers to Movement Control staff ten working days prior to departure, to the collection and maintenance of records on shipments of COE by each mission’s customs unit (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, pp. B-7, 127).

For all air shipments, UN personnel are to create a ‘flight folder’—a collection of documentation on the flight that includes, among numerous other documents, the shipper’s declaration for dangerous goods and final cargo manifest. The folder is to be ‘kept on hand’ for a period of two years, after which it is to be archived (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. 61).

Also notable is the requirement for reporting on any discrepancies between an air shipment’s cargo and the items listed on its manifest. Whenever UN or mission staff discover a difference between the contents of a shipment and the list of weapons on its manifest, they are to file a movement discrepancy report. The report is sequentially numbered, registered, and distributed to all airports that may be able to help resolve the discrepancy. The Movement Control Manual provides a detailed list of circumstances in which a discrepancy report is to be filed:

- **overshipments:** when cargo or mail received from a flight is not listed on the cargo manifest;
- **short shipments:** when cargo or mail is listed on the cargo manifest but is not received;
- **damaged shipments:** when cargo is received but the outer container shows obvious signs of damage. The report is required even if the contents have not sustained any actual damage;
- **pilfered shipments:** when cargo is received in a condition that indicates it has been—or is suspected to have been—tampered with, and some or all of the contents are missing; and
- **found shipments:** when cargo in an arriving aircraft contains no markings or identifying labels and is not on the manifest (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, pp. 62–63).

A similar reporting requirement is triggered when UN staff or contingent personnel discover any other problems that are ‘deemed to warrant an

investigation, revision, remedial action and/or have security or safety implications’ (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. 63). Details about the incident are documented in a movement incident report, which is to be filed with the chief of movement control for the mission within one working day. The chief’s office is to review the report and take any necessary action (p. 63).

Interviews with current and former officials and mission-specific documentation shed some light on how UN transport security requirements are implemented at the local level (see Box 3 for a related discussion). As revealed in various SOPs and guidelines, UNMIL requires all contingents to ‘formally notify UNMIL of all [weapons, ammunition, and explosive] shipments in and out of the mission area of responsibility’ (UNMIL, n.d., p. 2). Each notification must include the type, quantity, and serial or lot numbers of the weapons and ammunition, and the anticipated arrival date and mode of transport of the shipment.<sup>69</sup> When the shipment arrives, the movement control unit at the port of entry is to notify seven different offices, including the mission movement control chief, the mission COE unit, and the ATO (UNMIL, 2010, p. 4).

After the shipment is processed by the customs unit, representatives from various offices conduct an ‘on-the-spot’ inspection of the shipment and its contents. Release of the shipment requires the signatures of three authorized individuals whose sample signatures are on file. Until the shipment is released and leaves the port, it ‘is to be guarded at all times’ (UNMIL, 2010, p. 4). UNMIL also requires shippers to notify mission staff of movements of arms and ammunition within the mission area (p. 2).

A former US official who worked closely with a different mission in Africa provided the Survey with a description of that mission’s movement control operations. According to the official, the main operations

### Box 3 Protecting modes of transport: UNMAS in South Sudan

Closely related to movement control is the protection of transportation assets, which are frequently targeted by armed groups in some mission areas. UNMAS representatives in South Sudan have taken several steps to address this threat. For example, they have stopped using the Toyota Land Cruiser Buffalo because it was particularly attractive to armed groups.

UNMAS has also installed GPS tracking systems in its multi-purpose vehicles in South Sudan. According to UN officials, the installation of the tracking systems cost USD 950 per vehicle (a one-time payment). The monthly subscription fee for 38 vehicles was USD 960, not including maintenance, vehicle repairs, or spare parts.

Source: author interview with UN officials, 27 July 2015; author correspondence with UN officials, 28 and 29 July 2015

centre in the country is comprised of individuals from multiple TCCs, and UN staff members provide oversight. All arriving arms shipments are ‘immediately placed in certified arms rooms’ and are monitored very closely until they are received by the intended end user, who is quickly alerted. ‘When my company has shipped in ammunition’, noted the former official, ‘we have received a call within minutes.’<sup>70</sup>

The imported weapons are then escorted to their destination by personnel equipped with GPS and communications equipment. These safeguards, along with the multinational and inter-organizational composition of the operations centre staff, make it extremely difficult to acquire transported weapons illicitly. ‘To divert a weapon shipment coordinated by the centre’, observed the former official, ‘the trafficker would have to coopt people from multiple organizations’—a scenario that he described as highly unlikely.<sup>71</sup>

Whether and to what extent these practices reflect those of other missions is difficult to determine; SOPs and other documentation that stipulates how individual missions should implement UN policies on movement control are not publicly available. Greater access to these documents would help researchers and policy-makers to better understand these policies and practices, and the extent to which they conform to international standards.

## Barriers to securing small arms during peace operations

Systematically assessing implementation of small arms control measures by the many contingents participating in the 16 current peacekeeping operations is extremely difficult. Publicly available information on mission-level stockpile security and other small arms control policies is limited, and data on day-to-day implementation of these policies is not available.

Nonetheless, interviews with UN officials and internal UN audits suggest

that there are notable differences between missions in regard to the implementation of key control measures for small arms, and that the controls implemented by some contingents are significantly less robust than others.<sup>72</sup> These data sources also highlight several barriers to fully implementing best practices in stockpile security, record-keeping and reporting, and transport security.

Shortcomings in small arms control measures are attributable, in part, to inadequate resources, including infrastructure and expertise. Several officials cited significant resource shortages, particularly during the first few years of the missions in which they served. A former high-ranking official who worked in an African mission noted that, when the mission first started, most of the contingent-owned small arms and ammunition were ‘stored in canvas tents without basic security arrangements,’ which, he explained, ‘was due to a total lack of infrastructure.’ The mission eventually transitioned to more physically robust storage facilities, though ‘it took a long time,’ according to the official.<sup>73</sup>

When resources are scarce, peacekeepers are sometimes more reluctant to provide UN officials with access to their arsenals. One official explained that when missions lack the means to right-size stockpiles or improve storage facilities, ‘pointing out that their ammunition is stored dangerously is not viewed as helpful [. . .]. The tendency is to “batten down the hatches”, rather than face criticism.’<sup>74</sup> This problem goes hand in hand with the lack of knowledge of proper storage procedures in some contingents. Personnel who do not realize that their storage and management practices are inadequate often do not recognize the dangers posed by these shortcomings. As a result, they may be less receptive to UN offers of assistance with stockpile security.<sup>75</sup> One official remarked that in some cases, even when troops receive training in stockpile security, ‘there is a tendency to forget certain

controls because of the difficulty of putting them into place’.<sup>76</sup>

Some contingents also lack expertise in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD). The need for well-trained EOD units is particularly acute in mission areas that are experiencing—or recovering from—long-running armed conflicts. Peacekeepers operating in these areas often encounter large quantities of UXO, illicit arms caches, and surplus government weapons and ammunition. Yet the ability to secure and safely dispose of these items varies from mission to mission, with some contingents having little or no EOD capacity, according to current and former officials from several different missions.<sup>77</sup>

Shortages in expertise are sometimes exacerbated by the unauthorized substitution of untrained for trained personnel. According to one UN official:

*A lot of people originally selected and trained for a mission never arrive in country. Since individuals earn more money while on UN deployment, slots are reportedly sometimes filled by individuals who pay to be there rather than those originally selected.*<sup>78</sup>

Gaps in mission-level expertise also have an impact on control measures in some missions. As another UN official working in Africa observed:

*Mission staff should be responsible for ensuring that contingents are meeting international standards but, since [the mission] does not have HQ-level ATOs at present, nobody is closely monitoring stockpile security practices other than UNMAS. [. . .] The COE unit does not pay attention to stockpile security practices. They do not have a specialist (ATO) and therefore they just count weapons and ammunition.*<sup>79</sup>

Another important factor is the institutional culture of the contributing militaries and police forces, which inevitably shapes the behaviour of



their members in the field. Contingents from institutions that are characterized by strong military discipline and that emphasize the importance of weapons security tend to display these attributes during peace operations. 'The military culture that I come from takes weapons security and safety extremely seriously', asserted one former high-ranking UN official. 'Those that share this military culture also take it very seriously.'<sup>80</sup> For members of these militaries, the loss of a personal weapon is highly stigmatized. 'The loss of a weapon is one of the most shameful acts a soldier can commit', noted Gen. Afzal.<sup>81</sup>

Other militaries are 'a bit more casual' about weapons security, explained another former high-ranking UN official, noting that '[d]aily weapon stock checks are not undertaken [by these militaries and] ammunition is not accounted for nor its issue adequately controlled'. These practices sometimes carry over into the field.<sup>82</sup> For the missions that oversee contingents with less rigorous controls, the capacity to monitor and enforce UN and mission-specific policies and procedures is particularly important and thus muddled or broken command chains can be a significant barrier to ensuring that stockpile security practices conform to UN standards. As one UN official pointed out, contingents from some TCCs frequently operate independently from each other and outside of the mission chain of command, undermining the authority and influence of the force commander.<sup>83</sup> Abrogation of the chain of command can have significant implications for UN oversight of stockpile security practices. For example, during the re-hatting of a regional African force to a UN operation, the force 'appeared to engage in outright obstructionism, refusing to allow any inspection of seized weapons to be carried out prior to the hand-over', recounted the official. He said that, to his knowledge, the inspection and inventory of the seized weapons was never conducted.<sup>84</sup>

Constraints on local travel also can have wide-ranging and profound implications for securing arms and ammunition. In some countries, insecurity, underdeveloped or damaged road networks, and limited air transport make travel within the mission area extremely difficult. With reference to his mission, one official commented: 'The logistical challenges in [the host country] are the worst I've seen in my life.' He added that the resulting inability to travel to contingent bases outside of the capital had hindered efforts to assess storage facilities and stockpile security practices, provide training in stockpile security and EOD, and assist with the disposal of unexploded ordnance.<sup>85</sup>

The absence of standardized, system-wide stockpile security requirements for small arms also contributes to disparities in policies and practices at the contingent level. In correspondence with the Survey, a spokesperson for the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations stated that '[t]here are no specific stockpile security requirements specified in the COE Manual [of] 2014 and the COE Field Guidelines for COE firearms'.<sup>86</sup> Instead, stockpile security requirements are laid out in 'mission-level policies and standard operating procedures',<sup>87</sup> the issuance of which is a mission prerogative.<sup>88</sup> Interviews with current and former UN officials indicate that not all missions have published SOPs for storage and management of contingent-owned weapons.<sup>89</sup>

The lack of a system-level emphasis on securing small arms is also apparent in other areas, such as pre-deployment visits to TCCs and PCCs. UN officials regularly visit TCCs and PCCs prior to deployment, so as to assess the operational readiness of the forces to be deployed and help them to prepare for the mission (UNGA, 2014, pp. 29, 203). However, UN officials are not required to evaluate stockpile security practices and, consequently, they do not always confirm that the deploying contingents have received adequate training in stockpile and transport

security.<sup>90</sup> Requiring the evaluation of stockpile security policies and practices during pre-deployment visits would help the UN to identify and address resource gaps and problematic stockpile security practices before contingents arrive in a mission area.

## Conclusion

As discussed above, data gaps preclude a comprehensive assessment of controls on small arms during UN peace operations. Authority for storing and managing contingent-owned small arms is largely decentralized to missions, TCCs, and PCCs, and the SOPs and other documents describing mission-specific procedures and practices are rarely available in the public domain.<sup>91</sup> This lack of data limits the ability of external analysts to assess current practices.

What is clear is that the UN's COE and movement control systems provide a framework in which effective regimes for managing, storing, transporting, and disposing of small arms can be constructed. Some missions have availed themselves of this opportunity, as evidenced by the policies and practices outlined in mission-level documents and described by current and former officials interviewed for this study. Others have not, for a variety of reasons, including resource limitations, differences in the cultures and practices of TCCs and PCCs, and breakdowns in mission chains of command. Several officials underscored the link between contingent-level leadership and discipline on the one hand, and the strength of the contingent's small arms security practices on the other. Many of the shortcomings identified in this Issue Brief could be overcome through a combination of greater emphasis on—and harmonization of—system-level requirements for controls on small arms, along with more technical assistance from agencies such as UNMAS. These steps would help to mitigate the risk of small arms diversion during peace operations. ■

## List of abbreviations

ATO	Ammunition technical officer
COE	Contingent-owned equipment
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DFS	United Nations Department of Field Support
DMS	Director of mission support
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
IATG	International Ammunition Technical Guidelines
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
PCC	Police-contributing country
SINCREP	Special incident report
SITREP	Situation report
SOP	Standard operating procedure
TCC	Troop-contributing country
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
UXO	Unexploded ordnance

## Notes

- 1 See, for example, UNGA and UNSC (2015a; 2015b).
- 2 This category of small arms includes all military and civilian rifles.
- 3 The Small Arms Survey defines an 'accessory' as 'an item that physically attaches to the weapon and increases its effectiveness or usefulness but, generally speaking, is not essential for the basic, intended use of the weapon'. For more information, see Grzybowski, Marsh, and Schroeder (2012, p. 245).
- 4 Also included are hand grenades and landmines, which are categorized as 'ammunition and explosives' by the UN. See UNGA (1997, p. 12).
- 5 In its widely used International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs defines diversion as 'the shifting of weapons, ammunition or explosives from the legal market or owner to an illegal market or owner as a result of losses, theft, leakage or proliferation from a stockpile or other source'. See UNODA (2015a, p. 10).
- 6 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the

- Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS), 13 November 2015. See also UNGA (2014, p. 165).
- 7 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 13 November 2015.
  - 8 According to DPKO, a mission 'assesses whether it requires to develop its own Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) based on the IATG' (author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 23 December 2015).
  - 9 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 23 December 2015. The officer notes that '[i]t is not required for missions to file the SOPs with UN Headquarters and some missions have developed their own SOPs which are stored and shared within their mission context'.
  - 10 A representative of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) declined a request for information about the mission's stockpile security policies and practices for COE, citing 'UN rules and regulations' as the reason (author correspondence with a UNOCI spokesperson, 3 December 2015).
  - 11 Author phone interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015. The IATG include a sub-set of guidelines for ammunition 'under temporary storage conditions', which are defined as operations in which 'appropriate and safe depot storage infrastructure is not available, or when that infrastructure has decayed to a condition where it provides no effective protection to either ammunition stocks or the local civilian community' (UNODA, 2015d, pp. 5, 7). The IATG state that temporary storage is appropriate for 'operations of a long period or in post conflict environments' but also note that 'ammunition should not normally remain under temporary storage conditions for more than five years, before being moved into permanent storage facilities' (UNODA, 2015d, p. iv).
  - 12 Author phone interview with Gen. Sikander Afzal, former UNMIL Force Commander, 28 August 2015.
  - 13 Author interview with a UN official, 17 December 2015.
  - 14 Author interview with a UN official, 3 December 2015.
  - 15 These containers also commonly referred to as 'ISO containers', 'ocean freight containers', and 'sea containers' (USDOJ, 2010).
  - 16 Author interview with a former State Department official, 29 September 2015.
  - 17 Author interviews with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015; with a former UN official, 1 September 2015; with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015; with a former UN official, 28 September 2015; and with a UN official, 12 December 2015.

- 18 Author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015.
- 19 Author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 20 Author interview with a UN official, 3 December 2015.
- 21 Author interviews with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015; with a former UN official, 1 September 2015; with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015; with a former UN official, 28 September 2015; with a UN official, 3 December 2015; and with a UN official, 12 December 2015.
- 22 Reference to use of electronic security systems is limited to a Chinese contingent deployed to an African country, where the members reportedly set up 'a 24-hour/day guard system, with cameras'. Author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015.
- 23 See, for example, OSCE (2003) and UN CASA (2012).
- 24 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015.
- 25 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015.
- 26 Author interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015.
- 27 Author interview with a former UN official, 13 December 2015. The official described the storage facilities as 'UN provisioned hard-wall[ed] accommodation[s]'.
- 28 As noted in the COE Verification Guidelines, equipment deployed as part of a national command or support element is also subject to arrival and repatriation inspections, and possibly to periodic inspections. See UNDFS (2015, p. 11).
- 29 'Spot checks' are described as 'random unscheduled inspections to investigate the status of any [major equipment] and [self-sustainment] categories' (UNDFS, 2015, p. 36).
- 30 Periodic inspections for major equipment consist of, among other things, (1) 'confirm[ing] the initial/previous classification of the equipment [. . .] verify[ing] that the agreed quantities and types [. . .] are available in serviceable condition and are being used for the operational requirement as intended'; (2) '[identifying] shortfalls/deficiencies and determin[ing] whether the absence or non-functionality of major equipment results from reasons beyond the control of the TCC/PCC'; and (3) '[identifying] any additional [major equipment] which may be required or has become surplus to operational requirements'. Instructions for personal equipment, including personal firearms and ammunition, are less elaborate; the guidelines simply call for verification that the items are 'present and in serviceable condition' (UNDFS, 2015, pp. 36–37).

- 31 In an email to the author dated 1 November 2015, Gen. Afzal confirmed that ‘all weapons, small or big, are inventor[ie]d by UN COE inspectors including side arms, i.e. pistols/revolvers, or personal weapons like rifles and shotguns’.
- 32 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015.
- 33 See UNGA (2013, pp. 2–3).
- 34 Author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015.
- 35 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015. The official stated that ‘[t]he safeguarding of ammunition is a national responsibility and so the contingents are not required to adhere to specific policies and procedures. However, contingents have to let the head of COE inspect their inventories regularly or they won’t get paid for the weapons and ammunition they have deployed [ . . . ]. The inspector’s access to COE is a potential opportunity to identify the need for improvements in [physical security and stockpile management] and require that the contingent make any necessary changes before they receive reimbursement.’
- 36 Author interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015. Some language in the COE Manual appears to discourage additional checks by inspectors. One such passage reads: ‘At every stage of peace-keeping operations, time and manpower are short, and excessive time cannot be spent beyond that required to determine that the minimum requirements have been met by the troop/police contributor or the United Nations in each area’ (UNGA, 2014, p. 28).
- 37 Author interview with a UN official, 12 December 2015. Commenting on inspections performed in a different mission in Africa, a former UN official observed that COE inspectors ‘will look into an inventory and make sure there are 30 rifles for 30 soldiers, and the appropriate number of (UN paid-for) support weapons’ (author interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015).
- 38 These operations were the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH); the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); the African Union–UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID); the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL); UNMIL; the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS); UNOCI; and the UN Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA) (UNOIOS, 2013, p. 2).
- 39 The UN’s Office of Internal Oversight Services (UNOIOS) conducted a similar audit of policies and practices in the United Nations Interim Security Force of Abyei. See UNOIOS (2015).
- 40 Author interview with UN officials, 27 July 2015.
- 41 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 42 See also Berman and Racovita (2015, pp. 43–44).
- 43 Author correspondence with a former UN official, 7 December 2015.
- 44 The official identified two primary reasons for the excess stockpiles: COE reimbursement policies and the continuous rotation of troops and their equipment into and out of the mission area (author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015).
- 45 Author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015.
- 46 Author interview with a UN official, 17 December 2015.
- 47 Author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 48 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015. A former US official familiar with reporting requirements in a different African mission also indicated that incidents of seized or stolen small arms are ‘reported up through the chain of command’ (author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015).
- 49 Author interview with a UN official, 4 September 2015.
- 50 Author interviews with UN officials, 4 and 14 September 2015.
- 51 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015.
- 52 It should be noted that the version of the SOPs obtained by the Survey is from 2005. It is possible that some of the procedures have changed.
- 53 UNOIOS performed an audit of MONUSCO’s disarmament, demobilization, repatriation/resettlement, and reintegration activities and found that ‘arms and bullets were only handled by experienced military personnel and were securely stored’ (UNOIOS, 2014, p. 5). It is unclear, however, how the auditors arrived at this conclusion and what they mean by ‘securely stored’.
- 54 For a brief description of SITREPs, SINCREPs, and related reports, see UN (2010, sec. 4.1, p. 9).
- 55 There are numerous other mission-specific reporting requirements. In Liberia, for example, UNMIL officials require TCCs to notify them at least 30 days in advance of any plans to deploy or repatriate weapons, ammunition, or explosives. The notification letter is to include the type and quantity of all items, weapon serial numbers, ammunition lot numbers, the expected date of arrival, the mode of transport, and the bill of lading (UNMIL, n.d., p. 2).
- 56 See UN CASA (2012, pp. 17–18).
- 57 Author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 58 The UN may ‘request the troop/police contributor, or consider a request from a troop/police contributor, to provide this service via a letter of assist’ (UNGA, 2014, p. 9).
- 59 The TCC is expected to assist by providing operators and drivers (UNDPKO, 2008, p. 11).
- 60 TCCs are expected to arrange for transport related to the resupply of minor equipment and consumables (UNGA, 2014, p. 9).
- 61 For more information on the various entities that coordinate movement of COE, see UNDPKO/DFS (2014, pp. 14–24).
- 62 One high-ranking mission official noted that his mission ‘typically would not ship ammunition by ground in order to minimize the potential for loss’ (author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015).
- 63 For a more complete account of safety and security requirements for the transport of arms, ammunition, and explosives, see IATA (n.d.); IMDG (2014); UNDPKO/DFS (2014); and UNECE (1957).
- 64 The Movement Control Manual includes the following exception: ‘Alternatively weapons, such as rifles, may be wrapped in a suitable material (e.g. Hessian) sufficient to provide protection to the weapon. Securely bundled weapons should not exceed a quantity of 5 per bundle’ (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. 86).
- 65 The Movement Control Manual also includes the following note about unaccompanied weapons and ammunition: ‘While the carriage of weapons and ammunition as unaccompanied cargo is permitted under international cargo and dangerous goods regulations, the significant majority of carriers refuse to accept such consignments. Consequently, wherever possible, weapons and ammunition must be carried on the same flight as the personnel to whom they belong. Failure to comply with this recommendation may result in the weapons and ammunition being stranded at their point of origin’ (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. 86).
- Gen. Afzal describes UNMIL’s practices as follows: ‘[Weapons] have to be safely secured in boxes, steel lockers, wooden crates, and the containers have to be sealed. The captain of the aircraft has to see that they are sealed. Weapons and ammunition transported by sea have to be shipped in containers that are sealed before they are loaded onto the ship. Any explosive cargo (including ammunition) has to be declared as such’ (author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015).



- 66 The sample movement task order form in Annex B of the Movement Control Manual specifies that weapons that are being shipped by plane must 'be delivered to the airport in accordance with [movement control] arrangements, and are to be escorted by the departing Contingent until loaded into the aircraft hold' (UNDPKO/DFS, 2014, p. B-7). The Manual does not indicate whether this requirement also applies to other types of shipments.
- 67 Mission-specific guidelines obtained by the Survey appear to confirm claims that some missions require the assignment of escorts for all shipments of weapons, ammunition, and explosives.
- 68 Author interview with a former UN official, 1 September 2015.
- 69 Shippers are required to submit additional information to UNMIL's movement control seaport or airport units. See UNMIL (2010, pp. 3-4).
- 70 Author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 71 Author interview with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 72 Author interviews with UN officials, 27 July 2015; with a UN official, 14 September 2015; and with a former UN official, 28 September 2015. Recent UNOIOS audit reports indicate that some of the problems identified by the auditors have been adequately addressed (UNOIOS, 2013; 2104).
- 73 Author interview with a former UN official, 11 December 2015.
- 74 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 75 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 76 Author interview with a UN official, 17 December 2015.
- 77 Author interviews with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015; with a UN official, 3 December 2015; with a UN official, 11 December 2015; and with a UN official, 17 December 2015.
- 78 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 79 Author interview with a UN official, 3 December 2015. Another official in the same country made a similar observation (author interview with a UN official, 12 December 2015).
- 80 Author interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015.
- 81 Author interview with Gen. Afzal, 28 August 2015. This sentiment was echoed by another former high-ranking mission official, who stated: 'It is military sacrilege to lose your personal weapon. I cannot even imagine how a soldier could give up his weapon.' This

official also underscored the influence of combat experience on attitudes towards stockpile security: 'Combat-tested soldiers realize the value of a secure and reliable weapon system, as it becomes their sole protector in [battle]' (author interview with a former UN official, 13 December 2015).

- 82 Author interview with a former UN official, 28 September 2015.
- 83 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 84 Author interview with a UN official, 14 September 2015.
- 85 Author interview with a UN official, 17 December 2015.
- 86 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 13 November and 23 December 2015. The officer pointed out that '[e]ach peacekeeping mission is required to follow the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG)' but did not specify where this requirement is written. When queried, the public affairs officer provided the following response:

*'The MOU and the COE-Manual do not make a reference to the [IATG] since the focus of these documents is on reimbursement and not on operational/administrative issues. Part of the key tasks of the Senior Ammunition Technical Officer deployed in the Force Headquarters is to closely engage in the process of checking on weapons and ammunition and advise the Mission's Force Commander on all aspects pertaining to ammunition and explosives. Knowledge of United Nations weapon, explosive ordnance and unexploded ordnance safety criteria is a requirement in the job specification (all of which are listed under the IATG).'*

Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 19 January 2016.

- 87 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 13 November 2015.
- 88 Author correspondence with a public affairs officer, DPKO/DFS, 23 December 2015.
- 89 Author interviews with a UN official, 12 December 2015, and with a former UN official, 13 December 2015.
- 90 Author interviews with a former UN official, 28 September 2015, and with a former US State Department official, 29 September 2015.
- 91 A UNOCI representative declined a request for information about the mission's stockpile security policies and practices for COE (author telephone call with a UNOCI official, 3 December 2015).

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The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and civil society. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

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