

Small Arms Survey 2008

RISK AND RESILIENCE



The *Small Arms Survey 2008: Risk and Resilience* presents two thematic sections. The first examines the problem of diversion as related to stockpiles, international transfers, and end-user documentation. It includes a case study on South Africa and a comic strip illustrating the potential ease by which someone with access to forged documentation can make arrangements to ship munitions virtually anywhere. The second thematic section analyses the public health approach to armed violence, scrutinizing risk and resilience factors and considering related interventions. It includes an overview of the burden of armed violence, and two case studies of armed violence in El Salvador and the United States. A chapter on light weapons production rounds out the volume.

The *Small Arms Survey* is produced annually by a team of researchers based in Geneva, Switzerland, and a worldwide network of local researchers. Policy-makers, diplomats, and non-governmental organizations have come to value it as a vital resource for identifying small arms-related concerns as well as violence reduction strategies.

Praise for the *Survey* from Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs:

'The *Small Arms Survey 2008: Risk and Resilience* provides compelling evidence for expanding our approach to armed violence reduction from one focused on treating symptoms to one that also aims at prevention. This volume shines a light on public health-based efforts to identify risk and resilience factors of armed violence as well as a number of recent interventions. The 2008 *Survey* is a vital resource for policy-makers at all levels in our continuing collective work to protect populations at risk.'

Key findings

Production

- At least 51 countries currently produce light weapons. Forty-five countries manufacture complete light weapons, while an additional five states manufacture components or upgrades for these systems.
- At least 31 countries produce light weapons under licence, but 26 additional countries produce weapons of foreign design without any licence, with an expired licence, or in an unclear licensing situation.
- The value of the annual production of anti-tank guided weapons (just one of the eight types of light weapons described by the UN) from 2001 to 2005 was approximately USD 1.1 billion.

Surplus destruction

- About 430,000 military small arms are destroyed annually, probably fewer than are newly produced.
- Out of some 200 million military firearms worldwide, at least 76 million are surplus.
- The world harbours 100–140 million tons of military ammunition, of which some 20–30 million tons are for military small arms. Of the latter, at least two-thirds is surplus.
- Although the *UN Programme of Action* and other international instruments create a predisposition to eliminate surpluses through destruction, exports often are preferred in practice.
- The most systematic progress in surplus destruction involves MANPADS, where the United States has secured extensive cooperation.

Transfers

- The top exporters of small arms and light weapons (those with an annual export value of at least USD 100 million) were the United States, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Brazil, the Russian Federation and China.
- The top importers of small arms and light weapons (those with an annual import value of at least USD 100 million) were the United States, Saudi Arabia, Canada, France and Germany.

Transparency

- The 2008 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer finds that the most transparent major small arms exporters are the United States, Italy, Switzerland, France, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom. The least transparent are Iran and North Korea, both scoring zero.

Diversion

- Across the world, theft from civilian owners may result in the unlawful acquisition of as many as 1 in every 1,000 weapons.
- In northern Kenya, 40 per cent of ammunition on the illicit market has leaked from Kenyan armed forces.
- Following the implementation of the Firearm Control Act (2004–07) in South Africa, the average number of civilian firearms reported lost or stolen per year was 15,054, a decline of 24 per cent over the previous period. Increased penalties for failure to report loss and the new licensing and competency criteria, as well as pressure on firearms commerce in South Africa since 2000, probably had an influence in this decline.
- Exporting states rarely conduct any checks beyond the point of delivery of small arms shipments.
- Preventing diversion requires three broad categories of controls over the entire transfer chain and throughout the life cycle of the weapon: pre-shipment; in-transit and point-of-delivery; and post-delivery controls.
- Despite the importance of transfer controls in preventing diversion, recent studies suggest that implementation of even basic elements of an effective control system (e.g. authentication of end-user certificates, retransfer notification, and pre-license risk assessments) is partial at best. Until more states adopt strong transfer controls, diverted small arms will continue to find their way to terrorists, criminals and embargoed regimes.

The public health approach to violence reduction

- The availability of firearms, the lack of regulation of firearm possession and use, the carrying of firearms in public places, the presence of guns in the home, and improper storage of these firearms are all important factors increasing the risk of gun violence.
- Characteristics of successful intervention strategies to reduce armed violence include being evidence-based, credible, cooperative, tailored to the community and its context, aimed at both the supply and the demand of firearms, and publicly, politically, and financially supported at all levels.
- A criminal justice approach to reducing crime through targeted policing, arrests, and prosecution can be effective, but it is insufficient on its own to address violence.
- Understanding and preventing armed violence require better information about violent incidents. At present, current methods of obtaining data about armed violence are insufficient.
- Despite being at risk, many individuals in high-risk groups will never commit violent acts. It remains impossible to predict whether or when a particular individual will commit an act of violence.
- Important risk factors for violence change over the course of an individual's lifetime.

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Publication date: July 2008

Paperback: ISBN 978-0-521-70655-1

Hardback: ISBN 978-0-521-88040-4

Copies can be purchased via www.cambridge.org and online bookstores, including www.amazon.com.

Review copies available on request.