

Small Arms Survey 2009: Shadows of War

Annexe 1.4 Small arms and light weapons transfers to Georgia¹

In August 2008, tensions between the Russian Federation and Georgia over the status of the disputed territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia boiled over into a brief but bloody conflict that left hundreds dead, thousands injured, and tens of thousands displaced (UNHCR, 2008; Council of Europe, 2008, paras. 14–15). The conflict gave rise to Russian complaints about arms transfers to Georgia, which, in turn, prompted significant national and international debate regarding arms flows to Georgia.

While data limitations preclude a definitive accounting of transfers of small arms, light weapons, and their parts, accessories, and ammunition to Georgia in the period leading up to the conflict, data submitted by Georgia and several other countries to the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database provides some indication of arms exports to that country (see Table A.1). It also illustrates the frequent and significant differences between data submitted by exporting and importing states, and the large holes in data on small arms and light weapons transfers, particularly with regard to military weapons. According to Georgia, its largest sources of small arms, light weapons, parts, accessories, and ammunition from 2001 to 2005 were Ukraine, USD 13,345,000, Bulgaria, USD 5,305,000, and Cyprus, USD 1,312,000.² This list differs significantly from the data provided by exporting countries, which covers two additional years and indicates that the top three exporters to Georgia were Croatia, USD 6,558,000, Albania, USD 3,009,000, and the Czech Republic, USD 3,014,000.³

As is often the case, data on the transfer of military firearms and light weapons to Georgia—a topic of great interest since the conflict with the Russian Federation—is particularly sparse, vague, and difficult to corroborate. Georgia provides data on imports of military firearms and light weapons but only until 2005 and only under commodity code 930100, which includes artillery and other conventional weapons. Furthermore, the two largest exporters of military firearms and light weapons identified by Georgia—Bulgaria and Ukraine—did not report to Comtrade on exports of military firearms and light weapons at all from 2001 to 2007. Other sources provide some additional data, but huge gaps remain.⁴

¹ Authors: Kristina Aronson, Patrick Herron, and Matt Schroeder.

² Georgia did not report to Comtrade on its imports of small arms, light weapons parts, accessories, or ammunition in 2006 or 2007.

³ In value terms, more than 90 per cent of these transfers were of small arms ammunition, Comtrade code 930630.

⁴ For example, Georgia's submission to the UN Register for calendar year 2006 includes detailed information on imports of military firearms and light weapons. According to the submission, Georgia imported 21,700 AKM and AK-74 assault rifles from Ukraine; 88 PK, PKM, and PKT 'sub-machine guns' from Ukraine and the Czech Republic; 35 12.7 mm machine guns from the Czech Republic; 64 grenade launchers from Ukraine; and 75 60 mm and 82 mm mortars from Bosnia and Herzegovina. These claims are only partially corroborated by data from exporters as, of those, only Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted detailed data to the UN Register for 2006 (UNODA, n.d.).

Bibliography

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UNODA (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs). n.d. *International Transfers of Small Arms and Light Weapons: Calendar Year 2006*. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/register_files/SALW2006booklet.doc>

Table A.1 Georgian imports of small arms, light weapons, their parts and ammunition, according to UN Comtrade, 2001–07

Types of weapons, parts, accessories, and ammunition		Exports, by exporter, year: value in USD thousands				Values (2001–07, in USD thousands)																					
		According to Georgia (G)		According to exporters (E)																							
Small arms and, some light weapon	Sporting and hunting shotguns and rifles, 930320; 930330	Austria, 2004–05: USD 21	Bulgaria, 2002–04: USD 36	Czech Republic, 2001–03: USD 26	France, 2005: USD 1	Germany, 2001–05: USD 141	Italy, 2002–03: USD 12	Russian Federation, 2001–05: USD 512	Slovakia, 2004: USD 17	Switzerland, 2003: USD 2	Turkey, 2001–05: USD 19	Ukraine, 2003–04: USD 65	United States, 2004, 2005: USD 17	Unspecified, 2001–04: USD 2	Austria, 2001–07: USD 49	Czech Republic, 2001–03, 2006: USD 19	France, 2002, 2003: USD 5	Germany, 2001, 2003–07: USD 131	Italy, 2002, 2003, 2007: USD 91	Russian Federation, 2001–06: USD 539	Slovakia, 2004: USD 5	Spain, 2002: USD 1	Switzerland, 2002, 2003: USD 13	Turkey, 2002, 2006, 2007: USD 32	United States, 2004, 2005: USD 25	USD 871, G USD 910, E	
	Pistols and revolvers, 930200	Austria, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005: USD 92	Azerbaijan, 2004: USD 15	Bulgaria, 2001–05: USD 580	China, 2005: USD 12	Cyprus, 2002: USD 11	Czech Republic, 2001–04: USD 537	Denmark, 2002: USD 10	Germany, 2001–05: USD 103	Israel, 2002–05: USD 565	Italy, 2001, 2002: USD 16	Russian Federation, 2001–03: USD 104	Serbia and Montenegro, 2003, 2004: USD 30	Slovakia, 2004, 2005: USD 146	Turkey, 2003–05: USD 20	Ukraine, 2001–04: USD 390	United States, 2002: USD 21	Czech Republic, 2001–03, 2007: USD 639	Germany, 2001–05, 2007: USD 137	Indonesia, 2002: USD 1	Italy, 2001: USD 20	Serbia and Montenegro, 2004: USD 12	Slovakia, 2004–05: USD 236	Switzerland, 2007: USD 1	Turkey, 2003–04, 2006–07: USD 130	United States, 2005: USD 13	USD 2,652, G USD 1,189, E
	Military firearms and light weapons other than pistols and revolvers, 930100; 930120;	Azerbaijan, 2004: USD 217 †	Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005: USD 200 †	Bulgaria, 2004, 2005: USD 1,240 †	Cyprus, 2004: USD 772 †	Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005, 2006: USD 377 †	Czech Republic, 2001: USD 309 †	Macedonia, 2004: USD 242 †	Poland, 2007: USD 2,654 †	USD 7,239, G † USD 4,485, E †																	

	930190†	Czech Republic, 2003, 2004: Israel, 2004, 2005: Macedonia, 2004: Turkey, 2001: Ukraine, 2004, 2005: United States, 2002, 2003:	USD 165 † USD 94 † USD 261 † USD 15 † USD 4,107 † USD 168 †	Serbia, 2005: United States, 2002, 2005–07:	USD 65 † USD 838 †	
Ammunition	Shotgun shells and air pellets, wads, etc., 930621; 930629	Austria, 2004, 2005: Bulgaria, 2002–05: China, 2005: Czech Republic, 2001–03: Germany, 2001–04: Israel, 2004: Russian Federation, 2001–05: Turkey, 2001–05: Ukraine, 2003, 2004: United States, 2005: Unspecified, 2002, 2004:	USD 1 USD 2,432 USD 82 USD 46 USD 25 USD 39 USD 476 USD 67 USD 1,462 USD 23 USD 1	Brazil, 2007: Germany, 2001–04, 2006, 2007: Italy, 2007: Spain, 2007: Turkey, 2007: United States, 2002:	USD 2 USD 105 USD 108 USD 18 USD 144 USD 37	USD 4,654, G USD 414, E
	Small arms ammunition, 930630	Azerbaijan, 2004: Bulgaria, 2001–05: China, 2005: Cyprus, 2004: Czech Republic, 2001–04: Germany, 2001–05: Israel, 2004: Russian Federation, 2001–04: Slovakia, 2005: Ukraine, 2003–05: United States, 2002, 2005: Unspecified, 2001–04:	USD 301 USD 1,012 USD 109 USD 529 USD 98 USD 21 USD 7 USD 101 USD 32 USD 7,314 USD 68 USD 1	Albania, 2006: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005: Canada, 2004: Croatia, 2006, 2007: Czech Republic, 2001–05: Germany, 2001–05, 2007: Macedonia, 2007: Slovakia, 2005: Switzerland, 2007: Turkey, 2004, 2007: United Kingdom, 2005: United States, 2005, 2006:	USD 3,009 USD 111 USD 5 USD 6,558 USD 2,044 USD 48 USD 293 USD 33 USD 2 USD 14 USD 20 USD 279	USD 9,593, G USD 12,416, E
Parts and accessories	Parts and accessories of revolvers and pistols, 930510	Bulgaria, 2002: Czech Republic, 2002: Denmark, 2002: Germany, 2005: Israel, 2005: Italy, 2002: Russian Federation, 2002: Slovakia, 2005: Turkey, 2004, 2005:	USD 1 USD 1 USD 1 USD 1 USD 2 USD 2 USD 1 USD 2 USD 4	Czech Republic, 2002: Germany, 2001: Slovakia, 2005: United States, 2006:	USD 2 USD 1 USD 2 USD 15	USD 23, G USD 20, E

		Ukraine, 2004: USD 7 Unspecified, 2001–04: USD 1		
	Shotgun barrels, 930521	Less than USD 500	None reported	n/a, G n/a, E
	Parts and accessories of shotguns and rifles, 930529	Bulgaria, 2003: USD 4 Czech Republic, 2001: USD 2 Germany, 2001: USD 1 Israel, 2004: USD 46 Russian Federation, 2003: USD 1 Switzerland, 2003: USD 1 Unspecified, 2001–04: USD 1	Canada, 2006: USD 1 Czech Republic, 2001: USD 1 Turkey, 2007: USD 2	USD 56, G USD 4, E
	Parts and accessories of military weapons, 930590; 930591; 930599	Germany, 2005: USD 1 Israel, 2005: USD 16 Italy, 2002: USD 1 Russian Federation, 2001, 2003–05: USD 33 Turkey, 2001, 2005: USD 1 United States, 2002: USD 55 Unspecified, 2001–04: USD 1	Germany, 2002–03: USD 17 Poland, 2002: USD 113 Turkey, 2001: USD 26 United Kingdom, 2006: USD 2 United States, 2007: USD 901	USD 108, G USD 1,059, E

Notes: Cumulative transactions totaling USD 500 or less for a single country for a single year are not included. Values are rounded to the nearest thousand. Georgia reports data from 2000 to 2005.

G = imports reported by Georgia.

E = exports to Georgia reported by other countries.

† The following light weapons are included in Comtrade category 930120: rocket launchers, flame-throwers, grenade launchers, and missile launchers. This category also includes torpedo tubes and items shipped under the ambiguously labeled categories of ‘military rocket projectors and launcher’, ‘continuous-fire weapons’, and ‘projectors specialized for military use’. Comtrade category 930100, which was widely used until 2002 and is still used by a few countries—such as Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, and Serbia—includes all of the items currently categorized under 930120, along with several other items, including mortars, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, artillery, and the items categorized under 930190, military rifles, carbines, military shotguns, sub-machine guns, machine guns, and ‘infantry support weapons’. Since Comtrade data on military firearms and light weapons may also include artillery systems and other conventional weapons, it is possible that some of the above transfers were not small arms or light weapons.

Source: UN Comtrade (n.d.)