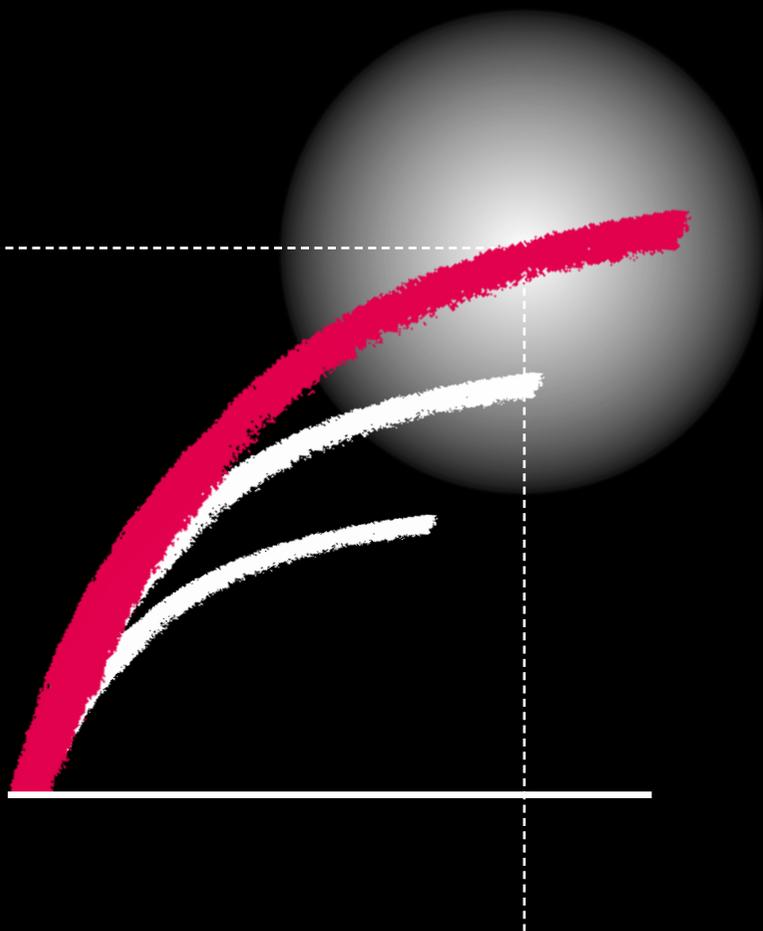


# SMALL ARMS SURVEY 2001

*Profiling the Problem*



OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

A Project  
of the Graduate Institute  
of International Studies, Geneva

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Small Arms Survey 2001: *Profiling the Problem*

---

It is no exaggeration to say that small arms and light weapons are the world's 'real weapons of mass destruction'. Every day they cause more than 1,300 deaths. At least 500,000 people each year are killed by small arms in a variety of ways: in wars, civil conflicts, gang fights, or government-condoned violence; and as victims of suicide, homicide or random violence.

Small arms are cheap and easy to move. The trade in these weapons is extremely difficult to trace or monitor. Small arms and light weapons are widely used in 'peacetime' to terrorize, to control, subdue and influence, for profit and to maintain power. The result is pervasive insecurity, exacerbated by self-perpetuating cultures of violence.

Governmental and non-governmental efforts are now focusing on the problems associated with the proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of small arms. Yet effective policy requires reliable and comprehensive information and analysis on all aspects of the problem—something rare to date. The *Small Arms Survey* is intended to fill this gap. It examines:

- the nature and number of these weapons
- the legal and the illicit trade in such weapons
- the relationship between weapons and insecurity, deprivation and conflict

Finally, it reviews the international community's attempts to tackle the problems associated with the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Small arms are a new issue on the international agenda, so it is not surprising that there is little agreement on the contours of the problem. It encompasses such diverse perspectives as arms control, human rights, public health, economic development, post-conflict disarmament, terrorism, and criminality. Bringing these together is a major goal of the *Small Arms Survey*, demonstrating, in the words of UN Secretary-general Kofi Annan, that:

“Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is an issue of human rights and development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian law. It threatens legitimate but weak governments and benefits terrorists, as well as the perpetrators of organized crime.”

This is the first annual edition of the *Small Arms Survey*. The seven chapters of this year's *Survey* address many of the most prominent issues relating to small arms proliferation and provide a broad overview of the current state of knowledge on the different dimensions of the small arms problem.

## Chapter 1

---

### Small Arms, Big Business: *Products and Producers*

The production of small arms is a global business. The number of legal manufacturers has tripled from less than 200 firms in 1980 to more than 600 today, spread among at least 95 countries. While the number of producers has grown, the absolute size of the industry has declined.

It appears that at least 347 million small arms were produced between 1945 and 2000. From 1980 through 1998, global production averaged some 6.3 million small arms annually. By 2000, however, annual production was around 4.3 million weapons. The combined value of legal small arms and ammunition production in 2000 was estimated to be worth about US\$4 billion.

At least three countries qualify as major producers: China, Russia and the United States. The United States is home to over half the world's legal small arms manufacturers. But small arms production is a minor part of the American economy, employing 16,770 people and shipping US\$2 billion worth of guns and ammunition in 1997. Shrinking demand and the growth of new suppliers has hurt even well established firms in North America, and many producers are now experiencing financial difficulties.

In Western Europe and Latin America, production is distributed among a number of medium manufacturers, as it is in Central and Eastern Europe. The biggest exception is Russia, a major producer about which relatively little is known. In other regions of the world, such as Asia and Africa, little is known about production besides the names of manufacturers and their products.

## Chapter 2

---

### Half a Billion and Still Counting: *Global Firearms Stockpiles*

There is a minimum of 550 million firearms around the world. This figure includes weapons belonging to police, government armed forces, insurgencies and some private owners. It does not include a large proportion of the world's privately owned guns, notably those in major countries like China, France, India and Pakistan. Nor does it include illegal firearms in the hands of individuals and groups. A comprehensive total would be greater by tens of millions or even hundreds of millions of firearms.

The most visible small arms usually are police weapons, but they account for only some 3 per cent of all global firearms, roughly 18 million in all. Military small arms are far more numerous. There are at least 226 million military firearms worldwide, roughly 41 per cent of the known global total. The firearms of non-state actors and insurgencies are most destabilizing, but also the least common, amounting to roughly one million weapons.

The legally owned weapons of private individuals are extremely difficult to estimate. United Nations data and public surveys reveal at least 305 million privately owned guns, a little over 55 per cent of the known global total. But this figure is far from complete. Even less is known about illegally owned private firearms.



*Reuters/Dimitar Dilkov*



*Reuters/Emmy Nurabani*

## Chapter 3

---

### Fuelling the Flames: *Brokers and Transport Agents in the Illicit Arms Trade*



*SIPA Press Agency/P. Errard*

Brokers and other intermediaries are critical to the legal and illicit trade in small arms, facilitating deals on behalf of suppliers and recipients for personal profit. Most work with the complicity of public officials or exploit inadequacies in national regulations. They fuel the illicit arms trade and sustain conflict, often working with combatants, creating relationships with traders smuggling conflict goods such as diamonds, minerals and timber. Air cargo firms also have become increasingly important as a result of the role they play in shipping weaponry to regions and zones of conflict.

Arms brokers are able to work with little oversight because national armaments laws do not directly address their activities. Of the 28 countries surveyed for this chapter, only seven regulate brokers. Only the United States requires official authorization for all brokering.

In many countries, lax customs inspection and corrupt border officials prevent effective monitoring and oversight. But due to the multi-national nature of arms brokering, no single state is fully capable of control. National regulatory reform and international coordination is essential to better control.

## Chapter 4

---

### A Thriving Trade: *Global Legal Small Arms Transfers*



*Associated Press/Peter Andreus*

Approximately 80 to 90 per cent of all small arms are sold legally to recipients such as governments, brokers, private firms and citizens. Even small arms with legal origins, however, often find their way into the hands of criminals, insurgent groups, sanctioned governments and other prohibited recipients. Legal transfers worsen instability through uncontrolled cascading, as new purchases release old models for re-sale. Legal transfers often go to recipients with little interest in disciplined stockpile management, contributing directly to the black market.

Of the roughly 95 small arms producing countries, at least 60 are involved in the legal export of small arms. Fewer than 30 of these provide any public information on their small arms exports. The global trade in small arms and ammunition constitutes about five per cent of the international arms trade, and is estimated to be worth US\$4 to US\$6 billion annually. The largest confirmed exporting countries in the late 1990s were, in descending order, the United States, Germany, Brazil and Russia.

## Chapter 5

---

### Crime, Conflict and Corruption: *Global Illicit Small Arms Transfers*

It is the illicit trade in small arms, more than any other aspect of the global arms business, which exacerbates civil conflict, crime and violence. The problem includes the illegal black market where law is clearly violated, and the illicit but technically legal grey market, where governments support covert transfers. The illicit trade in small arms and other light weapons is worth approximately US\$1 billion annually, constituting 10 to 20 per cent of the total trade in small arms. This is significantly less than previous estimates.

The grey market is larger than the black market, serving non-state actors and sanctioned governments. With important exceptions, the black market caters more to individuals and organized crime. The greater significance of the grey market points to the conclusion that illicit small arms transfers are, above all, a problem of governments being unwilling to acknowledge responsibility for their manufacturers and brokers. The most promising advances will come above all through strengthening official accountability.

## Chapter 6

---

### After the Smoke Clears: *Assessing the Effects of Small Arms Availability*

Small arms have a wide range of effects on human lives and suffering. They have direct effects, measured in deaths and injuries. From El Salvador to the former-Yugoslavia, small arms jeopardize civilians even after fighting ends. Elsewhere they exacerbate conflict and crime or increase murder and suicide. An estimated 300,000 intentional firearms deaths occur annually from armed conflict. Another 200,000 people are killed in countries that are 'peaceful'. Millions more suffer life-threatening injury. Less developed countries generally face higher rates of firearms homicide, while developed countries grapple more with firearm suicides.

Among indirect effects, the most immediate are medical expenses. In 1997, for every person killed by guns in North America, three were injured, with an average medical cost of US\$154,000 each. Including lost productivity, the total costs run over tens of billions of dollars annually. The proliferation of small arms also contributes to non-productive investment in private security services, expected to rise above US\$400 billion by 2010.

Armed conflict and social violence reduces or reverses economic progress. Farmers are forced off their land and urban people can no longer work. During 1998, armed violence cost Latin America some 12 per cent of its GDP. Everywhere it occurs, the unchecked spread of small arms damages the prospects for development, as human and social capital is destroyed and investors take their money elsewhere.



*Associated Press/Hussein Malla*



*Gérard Klijn*

## Chapter 7

### Tackling the Small Arms Problem: *Multilateral Measures and Initiatives*



*Associated Press/Amr Nabil*

A growing number of multilateral initiatives, at global, regional and sub-regional levels have been undertaken in recent years to tackle the problems associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Among the most influential multilateral responses has been the Inter-American Convention adopted by the Organization of American States in 1997 to 'prevent, combat and eradicate' the illegal trade in firearms, ammunition and explosives. Also important was the West African Moratorium, banning not just illegal transfers, but previously legal activity as well. It was endorsed in 1998, but implementation has been slow, with evidence of serious violations accumulating.

Other regions have made progress on the small arms issue. In southern Africa, the Southern Africa Regional Action Programme focuses on illicit trafficking, destabilizing accumulations, the destruction of surplus arms, and enhancing transparency. After a late start, East Africa is also moving to tackle the problem. South Asia remains inactive on the question. Southeast Asian nations, averse to a perceived infringement of sovereignty, have also been reluctant to deal with small arms issues. The European Union has been active on small arms issues since the 1997 EU Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms. An EU Joint Action, adopted in 1998, aims to reduce destabilizing accumulations of small arms. NATO stresses practical measures while the OSCE's Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons makes provision for better national control and export processes.

In the United Nations, action comes from two directions. Under the auspices of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention, work began in 1999 on a legally binding Firearms Protocol, similar to the OAS Convention. The other side of UN activity has centred on the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in New York in July 2001.

## The Challenges Ahead

---

This first edition of the *Small Arms Survey* raises as many questions as it answers. Future editions will be devoted to addressing them, and will: focus on particular issues and regions; refine the estimates and analysis of stockpiles and transfers; follow the development of regional and global initiatives; and highlight problem areas that warrant greater attention.

Two important issues the *Survey* will focus on in future are the humanitarian and developmental impacts of small arms proliferation and use. Future editions will also provide more detailed regional data, including data on larger, more sophisticated light weapons, and the tracking of weapons transfers. The *Survey* will also treat the growing problem of weapons brokering and the link to other lucrative activities like diamond and drug trading, as well as focusing on such questions as stockpile management and the tracing of domestic production chains.

Activities around the July 2001 UN Conference also will be examined in next year's edition. This groundbreaking conference is likely to shape policy initiatives and priorities for years to come. Ultimately, efforts in this important disarmament arena will be successful only if the use of such weapons in peacetime, conflict and war abates, and if individuals and communities can live their lives in greater safety and security. The role of the *Small Arms Survey* will be to monitor and report on these efforts, to raise awareness of their relevance, and to provide policy benchmarks in the years ahead.

---

Small Arms Survey  
Graduate Institute of International Studies  
12, Avenue de Sécheron  
CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: (41 22) 908 5777  
Fax: (41 22) 732 2738  
Email: [smallarm@hei.unige.ch](mailto:smallarm@hei.unige.ch)  
Website: [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org)

*'The Small Arms Survey is an important international transparency initiative. Its first edition highlights the destructive consequences of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and already fills several gaps in our knowledge.'*

Oscar Arias  
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

---

*'The Small Arms Survey will be an indispensable resource for policy-makers, officials, non-governmental organizations, and all those interested in this field in the months and years to come.'*

Ambassador Carlos dos Santos  
Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 UN Conference on the  
Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

---

## About the Book

The Small Arms Survey 2001 provides the first broad overview of major aspects of the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation contained within a single volume. Issues covered in this premier edition include:

- **Small arms, big business:** Products and producers
- **Half a billion and still counting:** Global firearms stockpiles
- **Fuelling the flames:** Brokers and transport agents in the illicit arms trade
- **A thriving trade:** Global legal small arms transfers
- **Crime, conflict, corruption:** Global illicit small arms transfers
- **After the smoke clears:** Assessing the effects of small arms availability
- **Tackling the small arms problem:** Multilateral measures and initiatives

## About the Project

The Small Arms Survey is an independent research project located at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. It serves as the principal source of public information on all aspects of small arms, and as a resource centre for governments, policy makers, researchers, and activists. The project has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, and sociology who work closely with a worldwide network of researchers and partner institutions.