Kyrgyz police officers drag away a demonstrator in Bishkek in November 2002. Police detained more than 100 protesters who demanded punishment of government officials responsible for the shooting deaths of five civilians in Aksy eight months earlier. (© Reuters/Valdimir Pirogov)

An Anomaly in Central Asia?
SMALL ARMS IN KYRGYZSTAN

10

INTRODUCTION

The southern regions of the former Soviet Union (the Caucasus and Central Asia) are widely viewed as forming an arc of instability fuelled by state weakness, economic decline, social fragmentation, civil conflicts, national and translational crime, and the spillover of conflicts from neighbouring regions. For all of these reasons, one would expect a high demand for and easy availability of small arms throughout the area.

A Small Arms Survey study carried out in mid-2003 (MacFarlane, Neil, and Torjesen, 2004), on which this chapter is based, indicates that the degree of small arms possession, use, and proliferation in Kyrgyzstan is less serious than appears to be the case in other Central Asian states. There is no firm evidence of a link between trafficking in small arms and that in drugs and people. Furthermore, small arms violence and casualty rates are limited. The study highlights the need to question regional generalizations and points to some factors that appear to prevent serious small arms proliferation. It suggests the following explanations for why small arms problems in Kyrgyzstan appear to be less serious than expected:

- The stockpile of arms in Kyrgyzstan at the time of independence was smaller than in neighbouring republics such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- The general level of security in the country has remained high. Individuals have had few incentives to arm themselves for their own protection.
- In the absence of civil war and collapse, the authorities have been able to maintain control of the arms issue more effectively than their counterparts in states such as Georgia or Tajikistan.
- Kyrgyzstan does not appear to have a particular cultural demand for arms. Nor is small arms possession in the country obviously linked to gender identities, unlike in some other parts of the former Soviet Union.
- There is no obvious reason to smuggle arms through Kyrgyzstan to nearby concentrations of demand. Russia has plentiful supplies of its own, as do Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

A TROUBLED STATE IN A VOLATILE REGION

Kyrgyzstan displays many signs of trouble. Its economy, although growing, is characterized by industrial stagnation, high unemployment, and very wide income differentials. Per capita income levels remain far below the levels that people were accustomed to in the Soviet era. There is widespread and considerable frustration and political disillusionment. The government lacks capacity and its democratic institutions and processes are weak. Ethnic minorities are underrepresented in government. The state is unaccountable to its citizens and shows signs of creeping

authoritarianism. It appears to be incapable of consistently providing essential public services. For these reasons, the people of Kyrgyzstan increasingly view their government as illegitimate.

The general level of security in Kyrgyzstan has remained high. Individuals have had few incentives to arm themselves for their own protection.

Kyrgyzstan is situated in a region where many countries have suffered significant political unrest and civil conflict. Tajikistan, in the south, experienced civil war from 1992 to 1997, and a number of Tajik regions remain outside government control even after the peace agreement of May 1997. Afghanistan, further to the south, suffered foreign invasion and civil war in the period from 1979 to 2001. It is widely believed that substantial numbers of arms remain beyond government control.

Radical Islamism has contributed to insecurity in Afghanistan, where the pre-2002 Taliban regime granted sanctuary to an array of terrorist and insurgent groups including not only al Qaeda but also Uighur separatist groups challenging Chinese rule in Xinjiang. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which had grown out of the Uzbek government's suppression of Islamic movements in the Ferghana Valley, tried to penetrate Uzbekistan via Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, mounting raids into the Batken District of the Ferghana Valley in 1999–2000 (see Box 10.5).[1]

Box 10.1 Methodology: Challenges and solutions

This study is based on a broad array of sources. These include a thorough desk review of primary and secondary sources (academic, governmental, and those of international organizations and NGOs) and a commissioned summary of reports on crime and criminality published in *Delo No,* the principal Kyrgyz newspaper. Official statistics on possession, use, and impact were complemented with a wide range of interviews in Bishkek and in southern Kyrgyzstan. Interview subjects included officials from the National Security Service and the ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Interior, and Defence, as well as a selection of medical personnel, journalists, academics, and civil society representatives. In addition, research staff interviewed a wide range of diplomatic personnel and representatives of international organizations and NGOs. The breadth of the interview sample was designed to provide an adequate basis for triangulation of interview results.

In order to discover public views about the small arms issue, the research team carried out a household survey in the south, where political tension and criminality have been relatively high. The 236 survey respondents were selected so as to reflect a balance between Kyrgyz and minority communities. To complement the survey, the researchers attended village meetings.

To gain a better understanding of regional dynamics of arms flows, as well as the link between these flows and trafficking in goods and people, research was also carried out in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

Challenges

The research project encountered a number of methodological problems related to official data. Kyrgyz authorities were reluctant to provide data. There is reason to question the capacity of official organs to generate complete data on various arms issues, such as the size of stockpiles or crime rates. During interviews there was evidence of motivated bias: government personnel in Kyrgyzstan had both an interest in projecting an image of stability, security, and effective control and in inflating the dimensions of exogenous threats to its security (for example, terrorism and narcotics trafficking) because external flows of assistance are influenced by outside perceptions of the dimensions of such problems. Opposition figures and the NGO community may have countervailing biases that inflate their estimates of the small arms problem. Household survey data suffered because people might have been reluctant to talk to strangers about gun possession and use. Respondents in Kyrgyzstan often inquired who was behind the survey and whether the information would be handed to government authorities.

Nevertheless, the variety of sources taken together should give a fairly reliable impression of the small arms issues in Kyrgyzstan today.

Kyrgyzstan lies along major routes for the trafficking of drugs and people. In 2000, Afghanistan produced 70 per cent of the world's supply of illicit opium. Between 1994 and 2001, the Central Asian share of seizures of heroin originating in Afghanistan grew from 0.1 per cent to 23.0 per cent (UNODC, 2003, p. 5; UNODCCP, 2002, p. 14).

The people of Kyrgyzstan increasingly view their government as illegitimate.

These internal and external factors create conditions in which it is reasonable to expect that small arms constitute a significant problem for Kyrgyzstan. For example, Pirseyedi (2002: 85–6) argues that the combination of latent tension and conflict and the easy availability of small arms in the region could have explosive consequences.

The existence of a considerable infrastructure for illicit small arms trafficking in Central Asia suggests that a breakout of armed internal conflict in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, or Kyrgyzstan would lead to immediate and massive shipments of small arms to the conflict region. However, given the proportions the proliferation of small arms has already assumed within these countries, it can be argued that the easy availability of small arms itself may become the decisive factor transforming political disagreements into full-scale armed confrontations.

However, there is little evidence that the economic and political pressures facing Kyrgyzstan are producing major political instability within the country. This reflects not only the effectiveness of informal coping mechanisms in the economy but also the absence of any obvious political alternatives to the present government. The opposition remains weak and divided, and generates little enthusiasm among the population as a whole. Although much is made of the danger of Islamism in Central Asia, there is no substantial evidence that radical Islamist movements are taking hold within the Kyrgyz majority of the country.

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This remote Kyrgyz checkpoint at Kyzyl-Art poses a feeble threat to traffickers who navigate the windy road into and out of neighbouring Tajikistan.

The incidence of political violence is sporadic and low. During a period of unrest in the region of Aksy in 2002, the government was barely able to retain control over the situation (see Box 10.2).[2] In general, however, there is little evidence that economic deprivation and social and political frustration have produced increasing levels of crime.

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Box 10.2 'For those who perished by the bullets of the authorities'[3]

Kyrgyz police forces fired at a group of 2,000 protestors in the south-western rural district of Aksy on 17–18 March 2002. Six people died and 62 were injured.[4] The demonstrators were protesting the imprisonment of the parliamentary deputy representing Aksy, Azimbek Beknazarov, who had been an outspoken critic of President Askar Akaev. Following Beknazarov's imprisonment in January 2002, tensions were high in Aksy and parents kept their children home from school in protest. After rumours that Beknazarov was being beaten in jail, angry protesters briefly took visiting government officials hostage.[5]

The shootings occurred on a quiet country road leading into the regional centre, Kerben, as the police tried to stop the demonstrators.[6] All five demonstrators shot during the initial encounter were men, although eyewitness accounts claim women were at the forefront of the demonstration.[7] Special provisions in the Kyrgyz legal framework prohibit firing at women.[8] The deaths of male demonstrators suggest that the police aimed at the demonstrators, despite press statements asserting that initial warning shots had been fired into the air.[9] Five of the six demonstrators who died were hit by gunshots, while at least ten of the injured had bullet wounds. Others suffered beatings and head injuries. On the night 17–18 March, villagers gathered outside the regional police station in Kerben to protest the shootings. During that night, another person was shot from a police car.[10]

© AP/Burt Herman

Protesters pray at the six-month anniversary in September 2002 of an opposition demonstration in Aksy at which police shot and killed at five people.

The shooting triggered a wave of protests, all of which were peaceful. At present, the Beknazarov opposition remains active, though fewer in number than in spring 2002, when as many as 10,000 were expressing their dissatisfaction with the government.[11]

The disturbances in Aksy, and the subsequent political crisis, fostered a number of significant changes in policy. The government of Kyrgyzstan resigned in May 2002 and was replaced. In September 2002, the government established a commission to develop constitutional amendments to strengthen the legislative branch. The next month, President Akaev announced that he would not seek re-election in 2005. Additional resources were ploughed into infrastructural improvements in the south.

In the wake of the Aksy events the Kyrgyz government invited the OSCE to initiate a programme on police reform. One of the eight components in the EUR 3.8 million (USD 4.1 million) project is introducing Kyrgyz police to 'less-than-lethal-force' methods in crowd control. The aim is to prevent future bloodshed of this type. Local human rights organizations in Kyrgyzstan, however, see the programme as directed at the suppression of civic initiatives in Kyrgyzstan and have voiced strong criticism of the OSCE.[12]

LEGAL SMALL ARMS POSSESSION

The Kyrgyz government has retained a strict legal regulatory system of small arms that mirrors the legal framework of Soviet legislation.[13] The Law on Arms divides weapon types into three categories: battle, service, and civil arms.

State holdings: Battle and service arms

There are no public figures on Kyrgyzstan's official stockpile of arms. Based on the number of armed servicemen, the government is estimated to possess a total of 50,000 weapons. The army has 10,900 active servicemen and the border guards 5,000 (IISS, 2002). On the assumption that the formula for calculating the number of guns in national armies—

2.25 arms per soldier—holds for Kyrgyzstan, there are 24,525 weapons in the Kyrgyz army. Each border guard is likely to have at least one gun, which raises the overall figure for military possession close to 30,000. The main law-enforcement agency is the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), which has 17,000 staff.[14] It is complemented by 1,200 members of the National Security Service (formerly KGB). MVD officials claim that there is at least one gun per individual in law enforcement.

The Kyrgyz army uses weapons which, transferred from the Soviet forces in May 1992,[15] resemble those of other former Soviet army units. The most common weapons are Kalashnikovs—AK-47, AK–74, AKM Kalashnikov (modernized assault rifle—Makarov pistols, and Dragunov sniper rifles (SVD). Army officers claim that there have been no new supplies of arms since independence, although some press reports note Russian arms supplies to Kyrgyzstan in 1999.[16] Statistics on declared imports/exports for Kyrgyzstan show no military imports (Table 10.1). The financial constraint on the Kyrgyz forces ensures that the arms inventory has remained modest. Soviet troops, which were relocated to Russia after 1991, took much of the equipment with them as they left.

Table 10.1 Imports of small arms by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state)

Commodity	Time period	Total value (USD)	Exporters and % of total trade value to Kyrgyzstan	
Shotguns, shotgun-rifles for hunting	1993-2000	237,685	Canada	29.5
			Germany	22.7
			Russian Federation	47.7
Rifles for hunting	1996-2001	170,406	Austria	2.3
			Germany	3.5
			Russian Federation	94.2
Small arms ammunition and parts	1994-96	46,067	Germany	80.3
			Russian Federation	19.7
Revolvers and pistols	1995-98	14,187	Spain	26.9
			Switzerland	73.1
Cartridges, shotguns	1995-98	4,624	Switzerland	40.2
			United Kingdom	59.8

Note: The tables may considerably underestimate Kyrgyz arms trade.

Source: Comtrade database, NISAT database

Civilian holdings

There are strict legal rules governing civilian possession, and the legal framework resembles the stringent Soviet system of gun control. Despite an extensive regulatory framework on the registration of weapons and the issuing of appropriate documents to gun owners, no official figures on legal civilian possession are available.[17] However, the MVD and the Hunters' Association[18] agree on their estimate of approximately 15,000 registered arms in Kyrgyzstan.[19]

Eighty per cent of all registered hunting guns in Kyrgyzstan are held in the Chui Oblast, the area surrounding the capital Bishkek.[20] In other regions, such as Batken and Osh Oblasts, possession of registered hunting guns is found predominately in urban centres.[21] Kyrgyzstan differs from most other countries in having fewer rather than more hunting weapons registered for rural areas. This is explained by the still disproportionate share of Russian hunters, most of whom live in urban centres, and possibly also by less complete registration in rural areas.

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The Kyrgyz law on civil arms subdivides arms into four groups: (i) arms for self-defence; (ii) gas pistols; (iii) sport arms; and (iv) hunting arms (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, paras. 2–7). Citizens have to be of appropriate mental and physical health to be granted the right to bear a weapon (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, para. 15). The law allows for the use of arms against other persons in a situation of self-defence. In practice, however, it appears that permission to own weapons is given only to members of the Hunters' Association, which in 2002 had 7,410 registered hunters. Each hunter can have up to four guns (two smooth bore shotguns and two rifles). Most members, however, have only one or two weapons.[22] Overall membership of the hunting association decreased during the 1990s, falling from 25,900 (fishermen included) in 1990 to 8,617 in 2002. This is explained by Russian emigration from Kyrgyzstan: most members in the Hunters' Association were ethnic Russians at the time of independence.[23] A relative increase in prices might also be a factor.

The great majority of hunting guns are produced in Russia, with Izhevskii Mekhanicheskii Zavod and Tulskii Oruzheinyi Zavod dominating the market (PRODUCERS). The most common hunting guns are the double-barrel shotgun TOZ-34 and the BAIKAL IZH-27 Over and Under Shotgun. Russian imported shotguns cost USD 232–348.[24] The average monthly salary in Kyrgyzstan is approximately USD 35, making purchases of new hunting guns a major investment for the average consumer in Kyrgyzstan. The luxury of a hunting gun is therefore likely to be limited to the country's small economic elite. There has been a steep increase in prices since independence.

In addition to hunters, there are 'legal persons with special authorized tasks' who are licensed to own guns. This category only represents a small percentage of overall gun possession,[25] and includes individual security providers, such as government and private security guards (that is, security for property and money transportation, and protection of nature and natural resources).[26] The most common weapons used within this category are Makarov pistols and gas pistols.

UNREGISTERED AND ILLEGAL POSSESSION

Illegal possession of weapons is difficult to quantify, but a number of indicators suggest that it is low and does not constitute a major security issue. This assumption is based on the opinion of law enforcement officials, supported by a small household survey, moderate gun injury and murder rates, security perceptions, and cultural attitudes to guns. However, there are signs that leakages from government stockpiles occur and that gun injuries appear to have slightly increased.

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Leakages from government stockpiles

Leakage from army stockpiles has been common in post-Soviet societies, and Kyrgyzstan has been no exception. It is impossible to quantify the extent of the problem. Representatives of the Kyrgyz army claim that a commission checks the weapons inventory of armed forces every third month.[27] In 1996 one such commission found that 26 sub-machine guns, 138 pistols, 5 machine guns, and 17,500 bullets were missing from two regiments and one artillery division (FTI, 2002).

It is unlikely that control commission investigations take place regularly or are able to tackle the problem of arms leakage effectively. The low level of military spending has left the Kyrgyz army in a demoralized state. Low salaries and poor material conditions create an environment conducive to crime. In the period 1993–2002, the Military Prosecutors Office assessed a total of 1,100 cases. More than 30 officers and 500 soldiers were faced with criminal charges. There were seven registered incidents of large-scale theft of firearms by military personnel in the period 2000–2 (Foundation for Tolerance International, 2002). Given the high overall corruption levels in the Kyrgyz

government structure, the actual crime rate among army personnel could be substantially higher than that revealed in the Military Prosecutor's statistics.

Box 10.3 Ministry of Internal Affairs: Weapons stock control

According to MVD officials, weapons in MVD facilities are held in locked facilities with one door for the duty officer and a window for issuing weapons to other officers, who are not allowed into the store. Weapons in storage are checked at the beginning of each shift.

Weapons loss resulting from negligence is severely punished. At a minimum, the officer is dismissed and has to repay two to three times the cost of the weapon, whether or not it is later found. In cases of possible criminal intent, the MVD's special investigation service intervenes and reports to the minister.

A weapons theft in 2003 at the Jalalabad OVD station raises questions about the implementation of these procedures. On 15 May, 2003, ten people entered the Jalalabad OVD offices, assaulted the security guards, and stole some 35 weapons (around 20 Kalashnikov automatic rifles, more than ten Makarov and Stetchkin pistols, a Dragunov sniper rifle, and a machine gun) (*Vechernii Bishkek,* 2003). They then left Jalalabad for the Aksy region. Eventually, most members of the group were arrested and the bulk of the weapons recovered, although the sniper rifle remains unaccounted for. An investigation attributed the success of the attack to lax procedures. The head of the Jalalabad interior administration was dismissed, along with a number of his deputies. A subsequent ministerial decree ordered the installation of CCTV monitors both in weapons stores and in the corridors outside them. Owing to lack of funds, this measure has not been fully implemented.

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Kyrgyz soldiers guard their headquarters in Batken in September 1999. For several weeks, armed radical Islamists, allegedly from Uzbekistan's Muslim opposition, held hostages in this mountainous region.

However, as noted above, Kyrgyzstan's overall stockpile is likely to be relatively small as the Soviet troops that were relocated to Russia after 1991 took much of the equipment with them when they left. In addition, it is possible that many of the stockpile leakages did not remain in the county, and were transferred to Tajikistan. (See the section below on trafficking.)

Gun possession according to officials and the population

Kyrgyz law-enforcement agencies, although reluctant to make specific estimates, stress that illegal gun possession is likely to be low.[28] From 1996 to 2004, the MVD confiscated 5,000 guns. This is a low figure in comparison with Tajikistan, where 22, 831 guns were confiscated in the same period (Tajikistan, 2003). There are some reports of the (illegal) possession of home-made guns in rural areas (that is, converted gas pistols). It is unlikely, however, that this is a widespread phenomenon.[29]

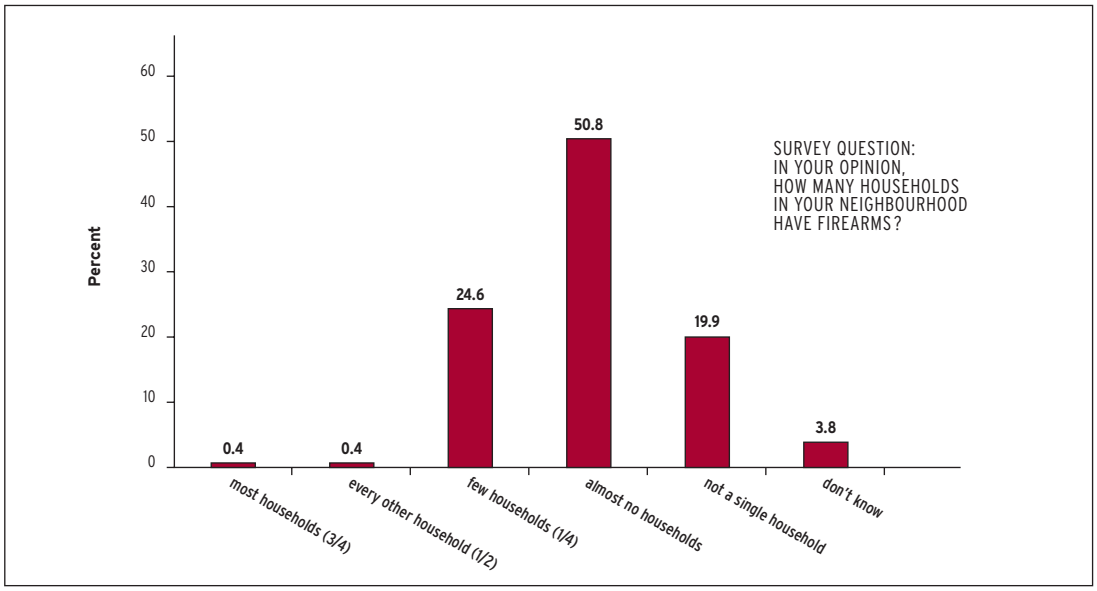
The household survey, carried out in villages close to the borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which are considered the troubled areas of the country, supported the view that overall private gun ownership is low. Half of the respondents claimed that 'almost no households' had guns, while 24 per cent noted that 'a few households' have guns. Seventy-eight per cent said they had never heard a gun, while 76 per cent claimed that they had never seen a firearm.[30] The respondents tended to cite hunting rifles as the most common weapon (40 per cent), but other weapons, such as Kalashnikovs (20 per cent) and pistols (13 per cent), were also mentioned. Fifty per cent of the respondents observed that criminals were the group in society most likely to have guns, while as many as 25 per cent reserved that role for businessmen.

Gun crime

The perception that illegal guns and general possession among the population are low is supported by very moderate gun injury and gun murder rates in Kyrgyzstan. Official statistics indicate a relatively low reported crime rate in

Kyrgyz society that appears to have decreased since the first years of independence. The total number of crimes in 1993 was 42,495; in 2001 the figure fell to 39,986.[31] However, the overall murder rate shows a slight increase over time. Officially reported gun deaths remain at a low level with no obvious upward trend: 6 in 2000, 11 in 2001, 9 in 2002 (0.2 per 100,000).[32] The proportion of murders committed by use of a gun is relatively small, which is a further indicator that guns are not so widely available (see Table 10.2).

Figure 10.1 Public opinion on firearm possession



Moreover, in the household survey conducted in Batken and Osh Oblast only 2.5 per cent ticked 'armed robbery' when asked to identify the most common types of crime. 'Theft' and 'drunken disorder', by contrast, received high scores.

The crime statistics confirm the trend of higher urban than rural gun possession. In the period 2001–3, 65 per cent of the 325 reported gun offences took place in urban centres. MVD analysts estimate that there are between two and three gun-related offences in Bishkek per month (Kyrgyzstan, 2003).

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Table 10.2 Percentage of murders committed with firearms

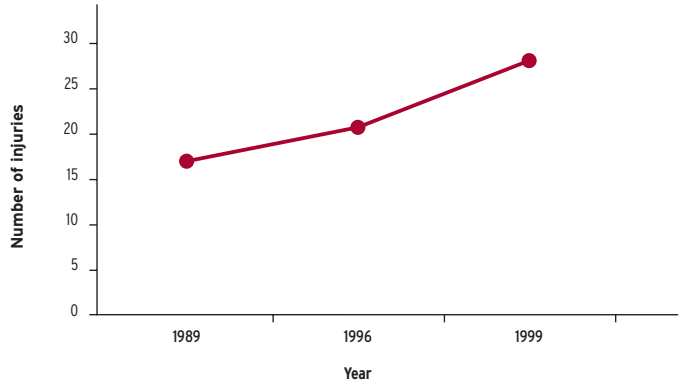
Country	%
Argentina	58.47
England and Wales	7.80
Hungary	21.46
Kyrgyzstan	**10.65**
Tajikistan	83.30
United States	63.39

Source: WHO (2003)

Gun Injury

The available national health statistics show a slight increase in gun-related violence and injuries. There were 17 accidental injuries from guns in 1989, 21 in 1996, and 26 in 1999. The figures for 1989, which are the only available statistics broken down by gender, reveal that no women received accidental injuries from guns. In addition, interviews with medical officials in Bishkek suggest that they rarely encounter gun trauma cases in female patients. They also note, more generally, that knives are more frequently used in domestic disputes than guns.[33] Representatives from women's crisis centres and injury statistics from these centres confirm that guns are rarely used in violence against women in Kyrgyzstan.[34] Gun injuries among the male population tend to be concentrated in the age group 15–39. The injury figures for Kyrgyzstan are substantially lower than for Tajikistan, where in just one of the city hospitals in Dushanbe between two and three patients are admitted every month with gun injuries.[35]

Figure 10.2 Number of gun injuries, 1989–99



Source: Unpublished mortality statistics from National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

SECURITY PERCEPTIONS

Perceptions of personal security have improved since 1991. Local analysts note that the early period after independence was a time of upheaval and insecurity, during which citizens might have been more inclined to possess guns for their personal safety.[36] Thirteen years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, trends within the Kyrgyz state and society have become more predictable. There is still ambiguity in relations between the police and civilians (such as over expectations of bribes), but basic law and order, and hence personal security, seem to be guaranteed by law-enforcement structures.[37] Interview material and statistics point to better personal security in rural areas than in urban ones.[38] In both settings, however, due to low levels of gun possession, small arms are not a major factor influencing crime patterns and perceptions.

In describing perceptions of security, almost all respondents (98.7 per cent) said that no one in their household had been threatened or intimidated by the use of guns in the last three months. Half of the respondents (53 per cent) felt that their personal safety had not changed over the past decade, while 37 per cent claimed that it had got worse. Most of the respondents thought their safety was the same (52 per cent) or better (33 per cent) than in other parts of the country.

Box 10.4 Ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan[39]

During the week of 4 June 1990, violence between ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Kyrgyz broke out in the southern city of Osh and the surrounding villages, sparked by disagreement over land. The Kyrgyz nationalist organization Osh Aymaghi demanded that land belonging to an Uzbek collective farm be distributed to the Kyrgyz for housing projects. As the authorities started reallocating small parts of the land, clashes broke out on the outskirts of Osh city. The violence continued in Uzgen and other nearby areas the following day. Fear of attack and pledges of revenge from both sides fuelled the escalation in fighting. The riots ended when a state of emergency was imposed and Soviet troops were brought in, preventing mobs of Uzbeks from Andijan in neighbouring Uzbekistan from joining the riot.[40] Official sources claim 120 Uzbeks, 50 Kyrgyz, and one Russian were killed. The investigating commission registered more than 5,000 crimes, including murder, rape, and pillage. Most commentators believe that the death toll is likely to have exceeded 171.[41]

Kyrgyz authorities and law enforcement officials stress that there was no widespread use of small arms during the riots. Instead, the protestors used knives, axes, and agricultural tools. Transcriptions from court proceedings against perpetrators indicate that many crimes, including murder, were committed without the use of firearms; however, small arms (in particular pistols and hunting rifles) were also used in a number of recorded instances.

The law enforcement bodies and local authorities neither predicted nor reacted efficiently to the uprisings. However, Kyrgyzstan is the only former Soviet state that initiated a major juridical process following the mass ethnic unrest. This development indicates that the Kyrgyz law enforcement structures continued to function relatively well in the period immediately after the transition from Soviet republic to independent nation.

The Osh and Uzgen events of 1990 constitute the most serious ethnic conflict to date in Kyrgyzstan: however, there have been smaller incidents in south Kyrgyzstan, such as clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the Batken area in 1989. In January 2003, tensions mounted between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in Batken Oblast over new border check posts, but fighting was prevented. Frustrations over the alleged political advantages of the titular ethnic group and the struggle over scarce resources, such as water and land, run along ethnic lines. There is no indication that any of these underlying causes of hostility will disappear in the near future.

Interview data suggest continuing animosity between the two communities in this region. The phenomenon is exacerbated by the clear under-representation of Uzbeks both in local administrations and at the national level, and by continuing tensions between the two governments over border demarcation and border closure. In short, there has been and there remains a potential for conflict along ethnic lines in this region of Kyrgyzstan.

CULTURAL ATTITUDES TO GUNS

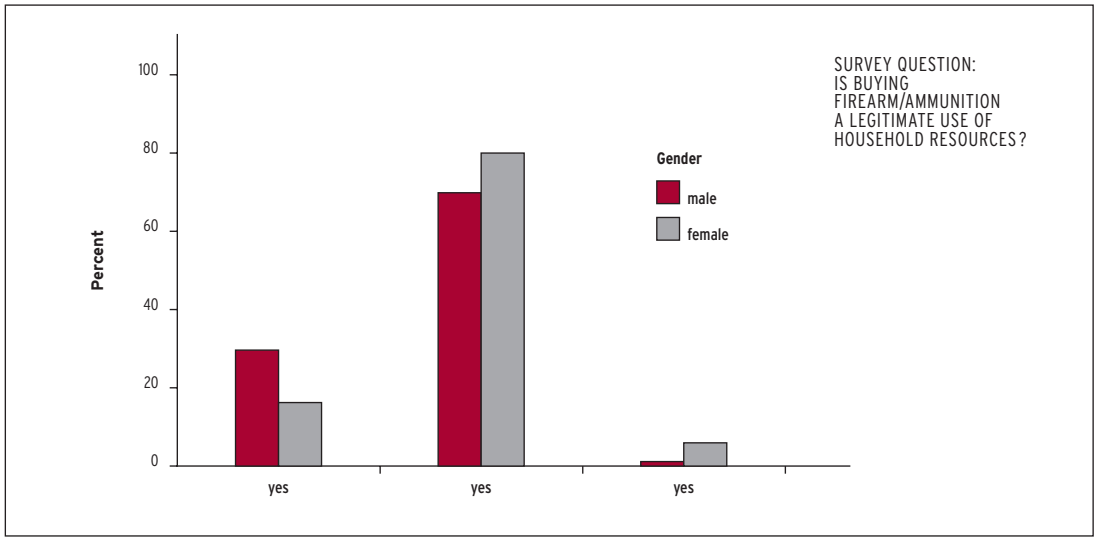
Kyrgyzstan has a non-permissive gun culture. As the proverb 'Even an uncharged gun shoots once a year' testifies, Kyrgyz society is aware of the dangers associated with gun proliferation, and discourages misuse of arms. The household survey confirms these attitudes. A large majority of respondents said that buying a gun was a not a legitimate use of household resources and considered that guns place households at greater risk instead of providing protection. Representatives of women's organizations and crisis centres claim that gun possession is only weakly associated with masculinity. To judge from the interview material, it seems fair to conclude that gun possession is not an essential ingredient in the construction of male identity in Kyrgyz culture, and that considerations of masculine image and self-esteem do not give rise to gun demand.

A large majority of respondents said that buying a gun was a not a legitimate use of household resources.

The survey showed that slightly more women than men (81 per cent versus 69) held that it was not legitimate to spend household resources on buying firearms. Other questions designed to reveal gender perspectives elicited surprisingly similar responses from men and women.

There seems to be some evidence that attitudes towards gun ownership and use would be different in a conflict situation. When asked whether they would defend the village against attack (as it had been during the period of ethnic conflict in the early 1990s), 69 per cent said they would do so. Forty-six percent claimed they would use a gun if under attack. The responses displayed a pattern of ethnic conformity, making the issue of gun availability particularly important.

Figure 10.3 Public opinion on the legitimacy of firearm purchase by households



Gun possession is not an essential ingredient in the construction of male identity in Kyrgyz culture.

GUN AVAILABILITY

The household survey asked respondents how guns could be obtained in a situation where 'a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, would need a gun'. A larger number (30.5 per cent) replied that a person would need to 'ask around', while 21 per cent noted that guns would be available 'from the black market'. Both answers indicate that people believe that informal channels for gun purchases exist in southern Kyrgyzstan. However, it needs to be borne in mind that, even when respondents assume the existence of these informal channels, they might not themselves have been connected with or have access to black market arms trading.

By contrast, only 13 per cent responded that a person could 'get a licence and buy one'. The low score of official channels is no surprise, given that there is only one store in the region (Osh city) selling legal weapons. Only 5 per cent indicated that a person could get guns if he 'knew of a hidden cache'. Curiously, more people in Osh Oblast selected this possibility than in Batken, even though most of the caches are thought to be hidden in Batken Oblast. This points to a significant degree of separation between the Islamic rebels and the local population. When asked to indicate neighbouring regions where arms might be available, the majority indicated oblasts in Tajikistan: Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (36 per cent) and Sogd Oblast (17 per cent).

BLACK MARKET

The main items circulating on the black market in Kyrgyzstan are, according to interviews with informed observers, Makarov pistols and Kalashnikovs.[50] Price estimates for a Kalashnikov vary within the range from USD 500–1500.[51] These are very high prices compared with other countries. The steep prices are explained primarily by the relatively mod-

erate supply and circulation of guns. The price of weapons has increased in black markets in Bishkek and Osh. In Dushanbe in Tajikistan, by contrast, prices rose prior to 1994/95 but fell from 1997 onwards when the civil war ended and the government consolidated its position. The early increase in prices in Dushanbe was caused by increasing demand. The drop in prices is likely to have been caused by a fall in demand since it occurred in conjunction with a government crack-down on illegal gun possession. Supply may be limited by the relative absence of arms traders and the existence of heavy punishments for arms smuggling. It is worth mentioning that prices are lower in the southern city of Osh, which is located close to the Tajik border. While law-enforcement officials stress that the black market in Kyrgyzstan is very modest, they estimate that 20–25 per cent of the few illegal guns in Kyrgyzstan come from border smuggling, 30–35 per cent from leakage in the army, and the remainder from old hunting rifles and home-made guns.[52]

Box 10.5 Incursions of Islamic rebels on Kyrgyz territory

In 1999-2000 there were several incursions from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan by activists from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The IMU had emerged in the Ferghana valley and some of its members had fought with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) in the Tajik civil war. The IMU later based itself in Afghanistan, where members received training and financial support from al Qaeda. During the incursions, the IMU demanded that the Uzbek government release all religious activists imprisoned in Uzbekistan, reopen mosques previously shut down, permit Muslim dress in Uzbekistan, and introduce sharia law (ICG, 2000b). Estimates of the size of IMU vary greatly. International observers who lived near IMU bases in Tajikistan claim that the IMU never consisted of more than 50-60 fighters.[42] By contrast, newspaper reports, usually citing Russian military sources, estimate up to 5,000 fighters (ICG, 2000b, p. 5).

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Kyrgyz soldiers practice aiming rocket-propelled grenade launchers at the military base in Osh City, Krgyzstan, during the hostage crisis in mountainous villages in August 1999.

The first incursion was on 6 August 1999. The group initially took four hostages, who were later released. On 22 August, the group seized another 13 hostages near Kan village in the Batken area. Fighting broke out between the Kyrgyz army and militants as the rebels approached the Uzbek Sokh enclave, which is surrounded by Kyrgyz territory. Uzbek fighter planes bombed Kyrgyz areas where the rebels were located without Kyrgyz authorization. The rebels released the hostages on 25 October 1999 and retreated to Tajikistan (ICG, 2000a).

A further, large-scale incursion took place the following year. IMU fighters entered both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in separate groups on a number of occasions in the period August to September 2000. A key area of IMU activity in Kyrgyzstan was the Karavshi valley leading down to the Tajik Vorokh enclave on Kyrgyz territory.[43] Government officials claim that 50 Kyrgyz soldiers and border guards died in the events of 1999 and 2000, while the counted IMU death toll is at least 120.[44]

The Kyrgyz National Security Service has found ten weapon caches in the mountains near Batken.[45] The biggest cache was discovered in June 2000. The majority of the arms were of Soviet production, though there were some items of Chinese and Belgian origin. A few American-produced grenades were also recorded.[46] The recent discoveries have been more modest, the latest discovery (in July 2003) containing only a small reserve of 200 Chinese produced rifle bullets.[47]

The Kyrgyz government was unprepared for the incursions in 1999. Following the first incursion, however, new border posts were erected and troops were relocated to the south.[48] All the Central Asian countries have tightened control at border crossings. This has impeded movement by the local population. Most cross-border traders are forced to pay bribes to the border guards and some civilians have been shot while trying to cross the borders illegally. Uzbekistan has unilaterally mined its border with Kyrgyzstan.

Many of the soldiers who served in the Batken operations were veterans of the Afghan war. Soldiers who served in the Kyrgyz army note that the equipment they used to fight the IMU was old: the firearms, machine guns, and grenade launchers dated from 1974. They also claim they were paid only a small percentage of the salary promised (USD 50 a day in 1999), some say as little as USD 28 in total (IWPR 2000). Local analysts note that the low and irregular pay encouraged the military personnel to sell equipment, including arms, on the black market.[49]

Table 10.3 Black market prices in 2003 (USD)

	AK-47	Makarov pistols
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)	800-1,000	300-500
Dushanbe (Tajikistan)	400	500-600
Osh (Kyrgyzstan)	250-1,200	50-80

Note: The prices are approximate and were listed in the following confidential interviews: Representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003; informed observer and former drug trafficker in Osh and Batken Oblast, 7 August 2003; and Former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003. Makarov Pistols are higher-priced than Kalashnikovs in Dushanbe after 1996 because of the government crack-down on gun possession, Makarovs are easier to hide and hence in higher demand.

PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN WEAPONS

Kyrgyzstan has no weapons production, but in Soviet times the republic was a major producer of ammunition for the Soviet armed forces, providing as much as 30 per cent of Soviet force requirements.[53] There is still ammunition production at the Bishkek Machine Tool Factory (Bishkekskii Mashinostroitel'nyi Zavod). Kyrgyzstan was the 13th largest exporter of ammunition in 1996 by value, with the bulk of exports going to former Communist countries.[54] There is one recorded incident of military small arms export from Kyrgyzstan: 199kg of military weapons to Slovakia in 2000. There has also been one recorded episode of illegal ammunition transfers: Kyrgyzstan sold three million 5.45 calibre assault rifle rounds for USD 180,000 in 2000 to Armenia (Moscovskiy Konsomolets, 2001).[55] Some of these exports may have been officially sanctioned. Armenia, for example, is one of Kyrgyzstan's defence partners in the Collective Security Treaty.[56] Others, however, point to corruption and the lack of effective export controls. The absence of a domestic military-industrial complex, with the exception of ammunition production, obviously restricts Kyrgyzstan's potential as a legal or illegal exporter of weapons.

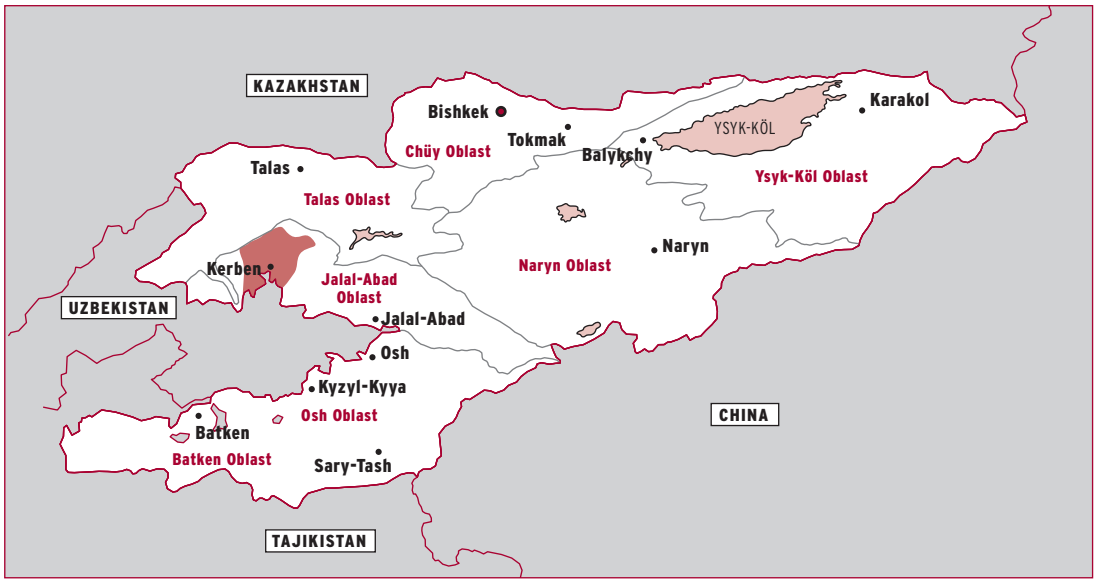
Table 10.4 Exports from Kyrgyzstan (reported by Kyrgyzstan): Small arms ammunition and parts

Destination	Trade value in USD/year	
	1995	1996
Bulgaria	2,004,399	225,000
China	225,000	264,000
India	n/a	453,500
Kazakhstan	93,800	402,199
Russian Federation	542,000	257,699
Tajikistan	n/a	156,000
Uzbekistan	4,941,000	2,785,100
Total	**7,806,199**	**4,543,498**

Note: The tables are likely to considerably underestimate Kyrgyzstan's trade in small arms.

Source: Comtrade database, NISAT database

Map 10.1 Largest reported exporters of small arms ammunition and parts in 1996



TRAFFICKING

There have been three main categories of arms flows through Central Asia. First was the retreat of Soviet forces and equipment from Afghanistan in 1989 and subsequent supplies of guns from Russia and other countries to their Afghan allies. The second flow was the arming of different factions in the Tajik civil war from 1992 to 1997. These weapons came mainly from Russia, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The third flow pertains to the intensification of arms shipments to the Northern Alliance following 11 September 2001 and the rearming of the Kabul government.

The majority of shipments associated with the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan were sent via the Uzbek–Afghan border rather than through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, since transportation infrastructure in southern Uzbekistan was more developed.[57] Supplies to warring factions in Tajikistan during 1992–97 came from a range of sources. The Russians supplied government forces with arms during the civil war.[58] Russian supplies to the government came, most likely, through airports in government-controlled areas such as Kuljab, as well as through the long-established Russian supply chain from Osh to Murgab.[59] Although Russian military supplies flowed principally to Russian forces and to those of the Tajik government, interviews with ex-fighters reveal that leakage from Russian stockpiles to all factions in the civil war was endemic.[60]

The Russian supplies to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan following the Taliban seizure of power in 1996 and then particularly after 2001 probably did not transit through Uzbekistan direct to Afghanistan, given the Uzbek decision to seal the Uzbek–Afghan border. It is likely, therefore, that Russia shipped weapons to the Northern Alliance by air or via the above-mentioned Murgab–Osh road. The Northern Alliance also received weapons from Iran and other states. That Kyrgyz territory was used as a conduit for some of this assistance is illustrated by the Osh rail wagon incident of 1998 (see Box 10.6).

Kyrgyzstan itself may have acted as a supply country during the Tajik civil war. To judge from supply and demand logics, it is likely that guns from Kyrgyzstan entered Tajikistan. In 1996–97 a Makarov pistol cost USD 900–1,000 in Dushanbe

while in Osh it sold for USD 120. For this reason, it is probable that much of the leakage from army stockpiles in Kyrgyzstan described above did not remain in the country but exited to Tajikistan. Until 1999, the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was unguarded with the exception of a few border crossings on main roads.[63] There are, however, no records of official Kyrgyz arms shipments to Tajikistan. Moreover, interviews with former combatants in Tajikistan showed no indication of major arms deliveries from Kyrgyzstan.[64] This suggests that arms shipments from Kyrgyzstan involved small quantities and were probably conducted by individual sellers and buyers.

Box 10.6 Weapons transit through Kyrgyzstan bound for Afghanistan[61]

Between 4 October and 13 October 1998, three trains arrived in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh filled with 700 tonnes of weapons (though few small arms) and ammunition, hidden under 300 tonnes of food supplies. The cargo was listed as 'humanitarian aid' destined for Afghanistan. The trains originated in Mashad (Iran) and the Iranian embassy in Kyrgyzstan was named as the owner of the cargo. The shipment crossed Turkmen and Uzbek territory before arriving in Osh. The third train reportedly stopped in Bekabad, Uzbekistan, where four wagons were seized by local Uzbek authorities. The arms and food were intended for the United Front (Northern Alliance) in Afghanistan.

Several countries were implicated in the arms transfer. Iran was the initiator but cooperated closely with Russia. The role of the Turkmen, Uzbek, and indeed Kyrgyz governments remains an open question. Some investigations stress the complicity of the Kyrgyz government. However, in an interview with the Small Arms Survey, Muratbek Imanaliev, who was Foreign Minister at the time, claimed that the Foreign Ministry knew nothing of the arrangements but that there had been an agreement among top military representatives from all countries in the region.[62]

The Osh incident sheds interesting light on arms-related issues in Central Asia. It confirms the persistence of Russian involvement in the region and highlights the continued use of the old Soviet military infrastructure. More importantly, it illustrates the lack of coordination, control, and oversight both among and between national ministries and local authorities. The local authorities that opened the cargo and exposed it to the media were allegedly uninformed about the content of the wagons. The head of Osh Customs department, I. Masaliev, and chief of the Osh Security Service, Colonel O Suvanaliev, were both dismissed after the incident. Despite official assurances from the Kyrgyz government that the cargo was returned to Iran, the United Front later claimed that the weapons had reached them.

Is there currently any arms trade or trafficking through Kyrgyz territory? Members of the anti-terrorist coalition continue to resupply certain groups in Afghanistan, particularly with ammunition. Much of the weaponry used in Afghanistan is of Soviet and Russian origin. Spare parts and ammunition from mainly Russian producers would therefore also be in demand. These producers might ship goods through Kyrgyz territory.[65] Contrary to what some European analysts argue, there is no available evidence suggesting large-scale northward shipments of small arms from Afghanistan through Central Asia. Analysts arguing otherwise assume that arms flows accompany drug flows (Pirseyedi, 2002). However, most local analysts and law-enforcement personnel in Kyrgyzstan insist that there is no northbound trafficking in arms. Russia is a major producer of guns, which in turn suggests that the demand for guns originating from outside Russia itself is low.[66]

Contrary to what some European analysts argue, there is no available evidence suggesting large-scale northward shipment of small arms from Afghanistan through Central Asia.

Drug traffickers use guns for protection, but there is no available evidence of major arms shipments accompanying drugs shipments. Intelligence sources from one Western country suggest that guns might be one commodity in the recently established barter exchange of psychotropic drugs.[67] However, these individual intelligence reports on northbound arms trafficking are not confirmed by statistics of seizures at the border by the Kyrgyz border guards or by the annual reports by the State Commission on Drugs Control under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.[68] By contrast, on the Afghan–Tajik border drug traffickers are heavily armed and there are almost daily instances of serious skirmishes between Russian or Tajik border troops and well-armed drug dealers. The groups transporting drugs further through Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan are not so heavily armed.

While there appear to be no substantial flows,[69] a number of arms caches are distributed throughout Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and are a cause for concern. Some caches along the Afghan–Tajik border seem to be mainly intended for the

protection of drug dealers caught in skirmishes with border guards. Others have been left in Tajikistan after the civil war by opposition fighters belonging to groups that are by now mainly inactive. Yet others are IMU stores in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Approximately ten caches of weapons have been uncovered in the Kyrgyz mountains (see Box 10.5). These guns were probably carried into Kyrgyzstan prior to the first major IMU incursion in 1999. The IMU continues to operate in Central Asia, though in a much reduced form. In August 2003, there were reports of a group of 20–25 unarmed IMU fighters making its way into Ishkashim region and then infiltrating Kyrgyz and Uzbek territory.[70] The fact that these fighters were unarmed as they crossed suggests the continued presence of hidden caches in Central Asia. However, to judge from the inventory of recent caches found by the authorities, these mountain weapon storages seem relatively modest.

There is no available evidence that groups organizing trafficking in women are also involved in illegal arms sales.

There is significant illegal trafficking in women in Kyrgyzstan. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates 4,000 women are trafficked each year, many of whom are flown out of Osh airport.[71] There is no available evidence that groups organizing trafficking in women are also involved in illegal arms sales. Given the absence of a link between drugs and arms, it is reasonable to believe, for similar reasons, that there is also no substantial link between trafficking in women and in arms.

CONCLUSION

Most of the literature recycles the common belief that Central Asia as a whole is awash with arms. In the discussion about small arms in Kyrgyzstan, it was suggested that many of the factors that frequently contribute to small arms problems were evident in the region: economic decay, weak and illegitimate government, fragile law-enforcement structures, widespread corruption, regional inequities, and substantial social frustration, including an important component of ethnic tension. However, despite the serious economic, social, and political challenges Kyrgyzstan faces, small arms are not a crucial security issue in Kyrgyzstan. Legal possession is low and consists mostly of hunting guns. Illegal possession is difficult to quantify, but appears to have little impact. Leakage has occurred, but it appears to have been sporadic, declining over time, and relatively insubstantial to begin with. Gun use and associated death and injury are quite low, and do not appear to be increasing. The population does not perceive a significant threat from small arms. There is little evidence to substantiate claims that Kyrgyzstan is a significant transit country for the small arms trade. The evidence that Kyrgyzstan is an important transit country for drugs is reasonably compelling, Kyrgyzstan also plays a role as both a source and a conduit for human trafficking. Direct evidence that the people involved in these activities also smuggle substantial amounts of small arms is almost impossible to obtain, in Kyrgyzstan as elsewhere. However, pricing data and the lack of significant gun confiscation from traffickers suggest that the link between the trafficking of guns and that of drugs and people is not a serious problem in the country. In short, with respect to small arms, Kyrgyzstan seems to be a rather benign environment.

The explanation for this finding has historical, economic, social, and cultural components. In the first place, Kyrgyzstan was not a substantial weapons site during Soviet times and therefore leakage from Soviet military stores and movements was smaller than it was in many other Soviet republics (such as Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova). In addition, the simple fact that Kyrgyzstan did not experience large-scale civil conflict meant that governmental structures did not disintegrate. According to interview data, they retained much of their Soviet-era culture of strict weapons control.

Hunting weapons are expensive and were in the past disproportionately held by the Russian minority, many of whom emigrated in the early years after independence.

The study of Kyrgyzstan revealed that the degree and seriousness of small arms possession is less alarming than previously thought. This finding is perhaps at first surprising given economic decline and social fragmentation in Kyrgyzstan and armed conflict in neighbouring countries, as well as high levels of organized crime, phenomena often thought to be associated with gun crime. However, Kyrgyzstan does not fit our expectations and thus highlights the necessity of unpacking regional generalizations and understanding the processes that lead to small arms possession and misuse.

10. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOMCA	Border Management Central Asia
EU	European Union
EXBS	Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance
FTI	Foundation for Tolerance International
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
MVD	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OVD	Oblast (county) Internal Administration
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNODC	UN Office of Drug Control
UNODCCP	UN Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

10. ENDNOTES

[1] For a discussion of the origins and growth of the IMU, see Rashid (2002, in particular pp. 137–86).

[2] For a useful account of post-Aksy political changes, see Freedom House (2003, p. 332).

[3] The quote is from the inscription on the memorial for the Aksy victims, placed along the Kara Suu-Kerben road in Aksy region.

[4] There is confusion as to how many people were injured and whether police forces suffered injuries. Government officials claimed on 18 March 2002 that 47 police officers were wounded. RFE/RL (2002). A list compiled by the neutral NGO Foundation for Tolerance International lists six people dead and 27 injured.

[5] Interview, NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003, and local opposition representatives in Kara Suu, Aksy region village, 26 August 2003.

[6] After viewing the MVD's video recording of the events, informed observers said they were able to identify the voice of the regional MVD head ordering troops to open fire. Confidential interview, Aksy, 26 August 2003.

[7] Eyewitness account obtained by the Small Arms Survey from villagers in Karagygach, Aksy region. The eyewitness account is one of several forwarded by IWPR to the government commission in charge of investigating the Aksy events.

[8] Kyrgyzstan (1994, Section 3, paragraph 4).

[9] RFE/RL (2002).

[10] Interview with NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003.

[11] Estimates by NGO representative in Aksy, 25 August 2003.

[12] *Central Asia–Caucasus Analyst* (2003); RFE/RL (2003).

[13] The key provisions are found in the Law on Arms of June 1999.

[14] Interview, Asanaliev, Karavai Colonel Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, MVD Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek.

[15] Interview, Kenjesariev, Mr., Head of the Department of Military-Technical Cooperation Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

[16] Interview Kenjesariev, Mr., Head of the Department of Military-Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003. The Small Arms Survey study on Russia notes that

heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, and ammunition were exported to Kyrgyzstan in 1999 (Pyadushkin, 2003).

[17] Neither the archives on guns in the Ministry of Internal Affairs' county (oblast) departments nor the membership records of the Hunters' Association are computerized. All permits for hunting weapons are given on the basis of membership of the Hunters' Association. However, records for Batken Oblast in 2002 indicate ten members, while the Ministry of Internal Affairs Batken department's records for 2002 indicated 472 hunters with 484 registered hunting weapons. It is unclear how this discrepancy has come about and indeed whether the local law enforcement bodies are aware of it. Likewise, the recent theft of weapons in Jalalabad suggests problems in implementing MVD procedures for control of weapons stocks (see Box 10.4). In short, while Kyrgyzstan's legal framework is extensive on paper it is unlikely that the full control mechanisms envisaged have actually been implemented.

[18] The Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic is referred to as the Hunters' Association throughout this chapter.

[19] Interview, Ivanovich, Ivan, Head of the Chui Oblast section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003, and Nazarov, Mr., Deputy Director, Criminalistic Center, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.

[20] As per the Hunters Association's membership statistics, there is a growing trend towards concentration of legally registered guns in Chui Oblast. In 1990, 11,200 of the 25,900 members were from Chui Oblast, while in 2002 6,234 of the 8,617 members were from Chui Oblast. National membership records made available to the Small Arms Survey by the Hunters Association.

[21] Oblast membership records made available to the Small Arms Survey by Osh Hunting Association

[22] Interview, Ivanovich, Ivan, Head of the Chui Oblast section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003.

[23] Oblast membership records made available to the Small Arms Survey by Osh Hunting Association and Interview Ivanovich, Ivan, Head of the Chui Oblast section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003.

[24] The prices are for new, legally imported hunting rifles available in Kyrgyz hunting and arms stores. The importer needs to obtain permission from Kyrgyz and Russian authorities as well as from the Kyrgyz embassy in Moscow. Transportation, customs, and registration costs inflate the prices. Hunting rifles are cheaper in Kazakhstan and Russia but the purchaser has to obtain relevant import permits independently. Interview, Ivanovich, Ivan. Head of the Chui Oblast section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003.

[25] Nazarov, Mr., Deputy Director, Criminalistic Center, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.

[26] Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Arms no. 49, 9 June 1999, para. 4. The law on arms also allows for collection of guns and for arms to be awarded by government agencies to officials as appreciation for service. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Arms no. 49, 9 June 1999, paras. 6, 7.

[27] Interview, Kenjesariev. Mr., Head of the Department of Military-Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

[28] Interviews, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003, Nazarov, Mr. Deputy Director, Criminalistic Center, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003

[29] Interviews, Tugelbaeva Bermeta Galievna, President of Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

[30] This finding might be questionable. It may reflect reticence in answering questions about the presence of weapons in regions that have been tense in the past. In addition, it may reflect the use of the phrase '*strelkovoe*' (shooting) as opposed to '*obychnoe*' (common) '*oruzhie*' (weapon) in the survey. *Strelkovoe oruzhie* is often associated with a military weapon.

[31] It is uncertain how many crimes are unreported in Kyrgyzstan; in the EU an estimated one-third to one-half of all crimes are reported.

[32] National Statistical Committee Kyrgyz Republic. Unpublished data.

[33] Interview, Sopuev, Andrei A. Dr. Deputy Director (Scientific Research), National Surgical Center of the Kyrgyz Republic.

[34] Interview, Tugelbaeva Bermeta Galievna, President of Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003.

[35] Interview, Polatovich, Artikon Karim, Head of Science National Medical Reconstruction Unit Dushanbe, 20 August 2003.

[36] Interview, independent journalist, Bishkek, 17 July 2003.

[37] Interview, independent journalist, Bishkek, 17 July 2003.

[38] Interview, Ismailov, Bahadir, OSCE legal expert, 5 December 2003.

[39] This section draws extensively on Lubin and Nunn (1999) and Tishkov (1995, pp. 133–49).

[40] Interview with Abdimunon Joldoshov, expert, Secretariat of the Special Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on Foreign Investment, 24 July 2003.

[41] Lubin and Nunn (1999) claim Kyrgyz authorities have admitted to at least 300 dead, but that the number could be significantly higher. The ICG alleges, on the basis of UNDP sources, that as many as 1,000 people were killed in the fighting (ICG, 2001, p. 6).

[42] Confidential interview with the Head of Mission of an international organization, Dushanbe, 15 August 2003.

[43] Interview, Sahdimonov, Abdilbek, Foundation for Tolerance International Program Officer, former head of staff in Batken Oblast Administration, 29 July 2003.

[44] Estimates of number of dead soldiers given in confidential interview with Batken Oblast Administration Official, 30 July 2003. Figure of 120 dead IMU fighters from ICG (2000b, p. 5).

[45] Representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

[46] Interview, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

[47] Interview, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Oblast, 30 July 2003.

[48] Interviews, Sarikevich, Amankulov Taluntbek, Commander of Kyrgyz Border Guard Service in Batken Oblast, 31 July 2003; Kenjesariev, Head of the Department of Military Technical Cooperation Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003; Baisakov, Sheishenbek, Head of Oblast Internal Affairs (OVD) Batken Oblast, 31 July 2003.

[49] Interview, independent journalist, Osh, 22 July 2003.

[50] Interview, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

[51] Kyrgyzstan (2003). Interview with representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003, and with informed observer and former drug trafficker in Osh and Batken Oblast, 7 August 2003.

[52] Interview, representative of the National Security Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

[53] Interview, Kenjesariev. Mr., Head of the Department of Military-Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

[54] The value of exports was USD 4.5 million. See Nisat database.

[55] See also SAFERNET's Krgyzstan report, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy <http://www.ryerson.ca/SAFER-Net/>

[56] The Collective Security Treaty Organization, whose aim is to enhance military and political integration between its members, currently includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

[57] Interview, Bondarets, Leonid M., Senior Expert, International Institute for Strategic Studies under President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 25 August, 2003.

[58] Interview, former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

[59] At present 50–60 trucks leave every week from southern Kyrgyzstan with supplies for the Russian 201 Motorized Rifle Division and for the Russian Border guards stationed in Tajikistan.

[60] Interview, Former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

[61] This box draws extensively on the excellent research undertaken by Human Rights Watch (2001), particularly Appendix 1, Case Study: Supplying the United Front: Iranian and CIS Cooperation.

[62] Interview, Imanaliev, Muratbek, Academic Dean, American University in Central Asia, 29 August 2003. In principle, this movement of weapons raises significant questions about the involvement

of border guards in the trafficking of weapons. However, at the time (1998), there was no organized Kyrgyz border service and the frontier to Tajikistan was essentially unmonitored.

[63] Interviews, Baisakov, Sheishenbek, Head of Oblast Internal Affairs (OVD), Batken Oblast, 31, July 2003, Sarikevich, Amankulov Taluntbek, Commander of Kyrgyz Border Guard Service in Batken Oblast, 31 July 2003, and Hudayberdiev, Zarif, Lt. Col., Head, MITBC Department, Boundary Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

[64] Interview, journalist, Kulab region, Tajikistan, 16 August 2003, and Former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

[65] Interview, Knjasev, Alexander Alexeivich, lecturer in international journalism, Kyrgyz–Russian Slavic University, 13 August 2003.

[66] The one likely exception is specialty weapons used by professional killers. In these instances, weapons from outside the jurisdiction in which the crime takes place are preferred.

[67] Confidential interview, intelligence officer from a Western country, Bishkek, 5 August 2003.

[68] Interviews, Gairfulin, Almas, Deputy Head of State Commission on Drugs Control under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 11 July 2003, and Hudayberdiev, Zarif, Lt. Col., Head, MITBC Department, Boundary Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

[69] This raises the intriguing question of whether Kyrgyzstan is in this respect typical of or unique among the countries of the region. Answering this question, however, would require substantial further work in neighbouring countries.

[70] Confidential source material and *Eurasia Insight* (2003).

[71] Interviews, Chenais, Fredric, Associate Expert, IOM Bishkek, 18 July 2003, and US intelligence officer, Bishkek, 5 August 2003.

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