

Sifting the Sources

AUTHORIZED SMALL ARMS TRANSFERS

For years, spotty and imperfect information from governments precluded a firm estimate of the global authorized trade in small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition. The *Small Arms Survey 2006* advanced a figure of around USD 4 billion, based on available customs data amounting to roughly half of this figure, but underlined its tentative nature (Small Arms Survey, 2006, pp. 66–67). Today, however, new sources of data—and the expansion and refinement of existing sources—allow for a better understanding of the international trade in small arms and light weapons.

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of available firearms data—the first phase of a multi-year project that will examine all components of the global trade in small arms and light weapons. According to customs data reported to the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade), trade in the three main categories of firearms—sporting and hunting shotguns and rifles, pistols and revolvers, and military firearms—totaled approximately USD 1.44 billion in 2006. A 53-country comparison of data from UN Comtrade with information from other sources—including the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UN Register) and national and regional arms transfer reports—reveals an estimated USD 140 million in additional firearms transfers not captured in customs data. In total, then, the Small Arms Survey estimates that the documented global authorized trade in firearms reached about USD 1.58 billion in 2006. The undocumented trade, which remains significant despite greater reporting on firearms transfers, is likely to be at least USD 100 million (see Box 1.3 in the chapter).

Using Comtrade data alone, the chapter also identifies a 28 per cent increase in the authorized trade in small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition from 2000 to 2006, after adjusting for inflation. One trend that partly explains the growth is that the US market significantly increased its imports of handguns, sporting guns, and ammunition during that period. The highest growth sector was small-calibre ammunition (less than 14.5 mm), the trade in which increased by USD 183 million, or 33 per cent, between 2000 and 2006.



Iraqi soldiers hold new rifles distributed by US forces at Camp Taji in north Baghdad, May 2007. © Ceerwin Aziz/AFP

Table 1.22 Estimated small arms exports from 53 countries, aggregated by category, 2006

Category	UN Comtrade total (USD)**	Revised estimate (USD)**	% difference
Military firearms	244 million	321 million	32
Pistols & revolvers	428 million	430 million	<1
Sporting rifles & shotguns	756 million	779 million	3
Firearms (unspecified)	n/a	39 million	n/a
Total	1,428 million	1,568 million	10

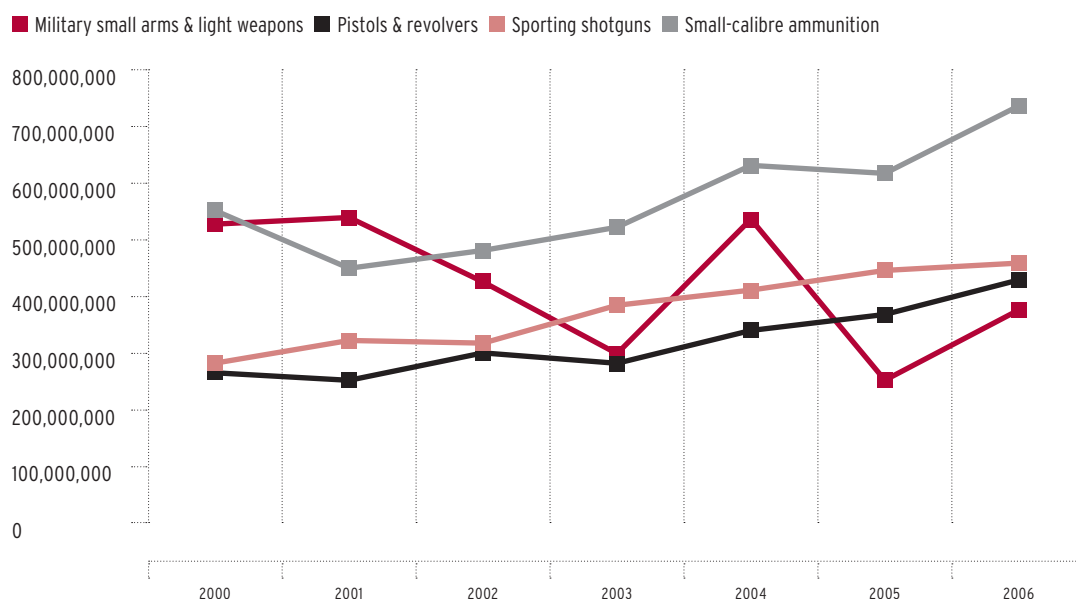
* It is important to stress that these values are only estimates. As explained in the chapter (see Box 1.2), data limitations preclude definitive assessments of even the most transparent countries.

** Totals are rounded to the nearest million.

Other major findings of the chapter include the following:

- Available data on firearms suggests that the previous estimate of USD 4 billion for the global authorized trade in small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition, is a significant underestimate.
- While many countries have improved their reporting of small arms transfers, a number of others remain selective in the provision of information, issue misleading data, or do not report on their small arms transfers at all.
- Suspected or known significant exporters of small arms that report little or no information on their firearms exports include Belarus, Iran, Israel, North Korea, and South Africa. Other exporters, including China, Pakistan, Singapore, and the Russian Federation, provide some data on exports of sporting shotguns and rifles, but little or no data on their military firearms exports.
- In 2006 the top exporters of small arms and light weapons (those with an annual export value of at least USD 100 million), according to available customs data, were (in descending order) the United States, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Austria, and Belgium. China and the Russian Federation are probably also top exporters, but customs data alone does not support this status.
- The top importers of small arms and light weapons for 2006 (those with an annual import value of at least USD 100 million), according to customs data, were (in descending order) the United States, France, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Germany, and Australia.
- Eighty per cent of the trade in small arms and light weapons is accounted for by the exports of no more than 20 countries.
- The 2009 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer identifies Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Serbia, and the United States as the most transparent of the major small arms and light weapons exporters. The least transparent major exporters are Iran and North Korea, both scoring zero.

Figure 1.2 Changes in the value of the trade in four categories of small arms and light weapons (USD), 2000-06



* All USD values have been adjusted for inflation and are expressed in constant 2006 USD.

Sources: UN Comtrade (n.d.); NISAT (n.d.)

- The United States imports most of the world's exported handguns and many of the world's exported sporting shotguns and rifles. In 2006 handgun sales to the United States accounted for 59 per cent of the major exporters' sales, and US imports of sporting and hunting shotguns and rifles accounted for 42 per cent.
- Most of the reported trade in sporting and hunting rifles and shotguns occurs among wealthy Western countries, which are both major exporters and importers.

By the end of its multi-year project, the Survey will have comprehensively reassessed the entire global trade in small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition, and will be able to provide a new estimated value for this trade. Equally important, the Survey will also have identified existing data gaps in each of the aforementioned categories—a prerequisite for achieving greater transparency and accountability in a trade that remains relatively opaque. 🇺🇸

Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer Notes

* Major exporters are those countries that export—or are believed to export—at least USD 10 million worth of small arms, light weapons, their ammunition, and associated components annually. The 2009 Barometer includes all countries that were among the major exporters at least once in their reporting covering the years 2001-07. For major exporters in 2005, see Annex 4.1 of Small Arms Survey (2008), <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/year_b_pdf/2008/CH4%20Transfer%20diversion%20annexes.pdf>; for those in 2004, see Annex 3.1 of Small Arms Survey (2007), <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/year_b_pdf/2007/CH3-Transfers_Annexe_3.pdf>; for those in 2003, see Small Arms Survey (2006, pp. 68-74); for those in 2002, see Small Arms Survey (2005, pp. 102-5); and for those in 2001, see Small Arms Survey (2004, pp. 103-6).

** X indicates that a report was issued.

*** The Barometer analysed the tenth annual EU Report (CoEU, 2008), reporting on EU member states' activities in 2007.

Scoring system

The scoring system for the 2009 Barometer has changed from 2008. The new system provides more comprehensive, nuanced, and consistent thresholds for the various categories. The Barometer's seven categories assess timeliness, access, and consistency in reporting (categories i-ii, discussed below); its clarity and comprehensiveness (iii-iv); and the level of detail provided on actual deliveries, licences granted, and licences refused (v-vii).

(i) **Timeliness (1.5 points max.):** The first category awards points for the timeliness (promptness) of reports and of the data they contain.

(ii) **Access and consistency (2.0 points max.):** This second category reviews the accessibility of the information that states provide, its frequency, and the use of multiple reporting instruments.

(iii) **Clarity (5 points max.):** The main purpose of this third category is to analyse the extent to which information on small arms and light weapons transfers, including their ammunition, can be distinguished from conventional arms transfers. It also evaluates the information that countries provide on relevant legislation, including its implementation; measures to prevent diversion; and international, regional, and sub-regional commitments relating to the control of small arms transfers. Finally, it grants points for data on aggregated totals of deliveries and licences granted/refused, as well as information on brokers.

(iv) **Comprehensiveness (6.5 points max.):** The fourth category examines the level of detail provided on weapons types (e.g. (un-)guided light weapons, sporting and hunting guns, pistols and revolvers, military firearms, small arms ammunition, and ammunition larger than 12.7 mm). It also evaluates reporting of different types of transfers (e.g. permanent re-exports and transit/trans-shipment activities).

(v) **Deliveries (4 points max.):** The fifth category awards points for information shared on actual deliveries; end users; and the types, values, and quantities of delivered weapons.

(vi) **Licences granted (4 points max.):** The sixth category awards points for information shared on licence recipients; end users; and the types, values, and quantities of approved transactions.

(vii) **Licences refused (2 points max.):** The seventh category considers whether or not the country identified countries that were refused licences; gave an explanation of such refusals; and provided information on the types, value, and quantity of weapons for which licences were refused.

For more detailed information on the scoring guidelines, visit the Small Arms Survey Web page:

<<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/portal/issueareas/transfers/baro.html>>.

Explanatory notes

Note A: The Barometer is based on each country's most recent arms exports report made publicly available from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008.

Note B: The Barometer takes into account country reporting to the UN Register from 1 January 2007 to 20 January 2009. Reporting to UN Comtrade for 2007 is considered up to 23 January 2009.

Note C: The fact that the Barometer is based on three sources—national arms export reports, customs data made available to the UN, and reporting to the UN Register—works to the advantage of states that publish data in all three outlets. Points awarded from each of the three sources are added up. There is, however, no double counting. If countries provide the same information to two or more different sources, they are awarded the same number of points that they would have received had they provided the information to a single source.

Note D: Where governments indicate that they do not export, or have not exported, a particular type or particular types of small arms or light weapons during the applicable reporting period ('nil reporting'), this can be considered complete information for the purpose of attributing points under relevant categories of the Barometer.

Country-specific notes

1 Germany published a national arms export report in 2007 that was limited to data from 2006. It did issue a national report for its arms exports activities in 2007. This report was published in January 2009 (after the cut-off date of 31 December 2008) and could therefore not be evaluated for the 2009 scoring. Germany is therefore evaluated with data from 2006 for its national report and 2007 data for the EU Report. Germany's reporting to the UN Register does not contain actual deliveries, but licences issued. This information was scored accordingly.

2 Serbia published a national arms export report in 2007 that was limited to data from 2005-06. The country, separated from Montenegro as of 3 June 2006, is evaluated on a 24.5 points scale because it cannot get all the points rewarded under 'Access and consistency'.

3 The US report is divided into several documents. For the purposes of the Barometer, the US annual report refers to the State Department report pursuant to section 655 on direct commercial sales and the report on foreign military sales, which is prepared by the US Department of Defense (US, 2008a).

4 France's 2007 report has changed in format, resulting in it being much less detailed than the previous national report. France therefore loses several points.

5 Spain makes public its report on small arms and light weapons exports to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as an annexe to its arms export report. The report contains information on licences granted and actual deliveries. It covers only OSCE states and a very limited number of transactions. Spain is therefore granted only half of the points for providing information on the intended country of import and types and quantities of weapons or ammunition exported.

6 Bosnia and Herzegovina published a national arms export report in 2007 that was limited to data from 2006.

7 Poland is one of the three EU member states under review that do not produce a national report, but the country reports to the EU Report.

8 Portugal published a national arms export report in 2008 that included data from 2006. The country's data in its national report (2006) does not correspond with the data evaluated in the EU Report (2007).

9 Austria's national report does not contain information on its small arms exports, but the country appends to the report its reporting to the EU Report.

10 Canada published a national arms export report in 2007 that was limited to data from 2003-05. Canada has not been granted a point under 'Deliveries', although the Canadian annual report states that the majority of exports are for private end use. For a point to be awarded under this category, more detailed information needs to be provided.

11 Cyprus is one of the three EU member states under review that do not produce a national report, but the country does report to the EU Report.

12 Hungary is one of the three EU member states under review that do not produce a national report, but the country does report to the EU Report.

13 Taiwan's score has been evaluated on the basis of data it submits to UN Comtrade, as published by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in its Trade Map database (ITC, 2008).

14 South Africa published a national arms export report in 2007 that was limited to data from 2003-04. The country does not define the abbreviations of military categories 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' used in its national report. Efforts to obtain a definition from South African authorities were not successful before the printing of the Small Arms Survey 2009.

Sources

Austria (2007); Belgium (2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d); Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007); Bulgaria (2008); Canada (2007); CoEU (2008); Czech Republic (2008); Denmark (2007); Finland (2007); France (2008); Germany (2007); Italy (2008); ITC (2008); Netherlands (2008); Norway (2008); Portugal (2007); Romania (2008); Serbia (2007); Slovakia (2008); South Africa (2007); Spain (2008); Sweden (2008); Switzerland (2008); Ukraine (2008); UN Comtrade (n.d.); UK (2008); US (2008a; 2008b)

Table 1.27 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer 2009, covering major exporters^a

	Total (25 max.)	Export report (year covered)/ EU Report ^{b,c}	UN Comtrade ^d	UN Register ^e	Timeliness (1.5 max.)	Access and consistency (2 max.)	Clarity (5 max.)	Comprehensiveness (6-5 max.)	Deliveries (4 max.)	Licences granted (4 max.)	Licences refused (2 max.)
Switzerland	21.00	X (07)	X	X	1.50	1.50	4.50	5.25	3.00	3.50	1.75
United Kingdom	18.50	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	2.00	4.00	4.75	3.00	2.50	0.75
Germany	18.00	X (06)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.50	1.00
Norway	16.75	X (07)	X	X	1.50	1.50	4.25	3.25	3.00	2.50	0.75
Netherlands	16.50	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	2.00	3.00	3.75	3.00	2.00	1.25
Serbia ^f	16.50	X (05-06)	X	X	1.50	0.50	3.25	3.75	3.50	2.50	1.50
United States ^g	16.50	X (07)	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.00	4.50	3.00	3.00	0.00
Denmark	15.75	X (06)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.75	4.00	2.00	2.00	1.00
Romania	15.75	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	0.50	2.50	4.25	3.00	3.00	1.00
Slovakia	15.50	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	1.50
Sweden	15.50	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.50	3.75	3.00	2.00	0.25
Italy	15.00	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.50	3.75	3.00	1.50	0.25
France ^h	14.75	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.75	3.25	3.00	1.50	0.25
Finland	14.50	X (06)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.75	3.50	3.00	2.00	0.25
Spain ⁱ	14.25	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.25	3.25	3.50	2.00	0.25
Belgium	13.25	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.50	3.00	1.50	0.25
Bosnia & Herzegovina ^j	13.00	X (06)	X	X	1.50	1.00	2.50	2.50	3.00	1.50	1.00
Poland ^k	13.00	EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.00	2.00	3.75	3.00	1.50	0.25
Czech Republic	12.75	X (07)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.00	2.25	3.25	3.00	1.50	0.25
Portugal ^l	12.75	X (06)/EU Report	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.75	2.25	3.00	1.50	0.25

