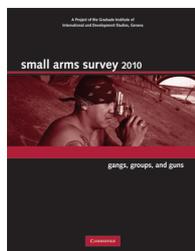


Small Arms Survey 2010

GANGS, GROUPS, AND GUNS



The *Small Arms Survey 2010: Gangs, Groups, and Guns* reviews a range of issues related to gangs and armed groups, exploring their functions, roles, and use of violence, as well as emerging efforts to address the damage they inflict on society. The volume explores prison gangs and gender aspects of gangs as well as pro-government non-state armed groups; it also features case studies from Ecuador and Southern Sudan. Rounding out the book is original research on the global ammunition trade and on options for controlling illicit firearm transfers by air.

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

Praise for the 2010 *Survey* from Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:

‘As demonstrated in the *Small Arms Survey 2010*, addressing the factors that trigger conflicts and fuel gang violence has a much more lasting—and constructive—impact than simply incarcerating or marginalizing members of street gangs and armed groups.’

Key findings

Firearms in the hands of gangs and armed groups

- Gangs in the best-understood countries and regions own between 1.2 and 1.4 million firearms.
- Worldwide gang arsenals include at least 2 million and probably no more than 10 million firearms.
- Other non-state armed groups—insurgencies and militias, including dormant and state-related groups—have a total of about 1.4 million small arms.
- The non-state armed groups actively fighting in 2009 had roughly 350,000 small arms altogether.
- Armed groups and gangs together control roughly 0.4 to 1.3 per cent of all small arms.
- Indirect evidence shows gangs and armed groups are obtaining more powerful small arms, feeding arms races with other actors.

Gang violence

- Gangs are a key risk factor for violence and victimization.
- Gang violence, including homicide, is most often directed against other gang members. In the largest US cities, gang homicide rates are estimated at up to 100 times that of the broader population.
- The level of gun use by gangs often appears to be related to the availability of guns in the countries where they are active.
- Motives for gang violence—including racial or ethnic conflict, economic gain, and respect or power—share similarities across regions.

Prison gangs

- Many policies and initiatives designed to weaken prison gangs have unintended, hidden, or long-term consequences that end up helping gangs thrive.
- Increased incarceration can inadvertently strengthen prison gangs, which can recruit and draw political support from the inmate population as a whole. Prison gangs also rely on re-incarceration to make their threats over non-imprisoned members credible.
- Segregation of prisons by gang affiliation has an immediate, short-term effect of reducing prison violence, but also a hidden, long-term effect of increasing gang strength, both within and beyond the prison walls.
- Prison gangs can help outside criminal actors and groups coordinate their actions and strategies, settle disputes, and weather the loss of leaders. The resulting prison-based criminal organizations are networked, resourceful, and highly resilient.
- There is no simple relationship between the strength of prison gangs and levels of armed violence. Rather, prison gangs organize and focus the means to commit violence. As they grow, conflict, when it does break out, tends to be extreme.

Women and girls in gangs

- Estimates of the female proportion of the gang population vary greatly. National youth survey data from the United States and United Kingdom suggest that females account for 25 and 50 per cent of all gang members, respectively, whereas US law enforcement data puts the figure at seven per cent.
- A conservative estimate of the global female gang population is 132,000–660,000.
- Sex composition may be a good proxy for a gang's engagement in violence. Evidence suggests that girls in all- or majority-female gangs may be less engaged in violence than male or female members of sex-balanced or all- or majority-male gangs.
- Girls and women tend to use weapons and engage in acts of violence less frequently and with lesser intensity than their male counterparts. They often opt for knives, stones, or tools over firearms as their weapon of choice.

Gang activity in Ecuador and street gang interventions

- Estimates of the number of gangs in Ecuador vary widely, partly as a result of different definitions, but two sources put the number of unique groups in Guayaquil, the country's largest city, at around 1,050.
- The majority of Ecuadorians fear being a victim of a violent crime and many say that fights between gangs or groups have affected them.
- Programmes implemented by the non-governmental organization SER PAZ led directly to a ceasefire between two of Ecuador's largest gangs—a major achievement—and appear to have been associated with a reduction in homicides in Guayaquil.
- By recognizing the positive potential of gangs, and by working with—rather than breaking apart—existing gang structures, SER PAZ programmes have yielded encouraging changes while avoiding the negative side-effects common with suppression approaches.
- The most promising gang violence interventions have combined classical law enforcement approaches with treatment and prevention components.

Armed groups

- Pro-government non-state armed groups (PGAGs) are primarily used within the borders of a country, rather than across borders, and play an important role in the internal politics of a country and the perpetration of violence against civilians.
- PGAGs pose a serious risk to civilians—one that is potentially far greater than that posed by national security forces. This is particularly true when governments outsource the worst violence to PGAGs and allow them to operate with impunity.
- PGAGs provide an important source of security to some communities, thereby underscoring their positive utility and community support in those settings.
- For many governments, PGAGs serve as useful and malleable tools to achieve their objectives in a way that absolves them of responsibility for the perpetration of abuses.
- PGAGs pose significant risks to communities and governments alike when governments fail to establish or maintain control over these groups or when the groups develop new agendas.
- In Sudan, the upsurge in intra-Southern violence in 2009 was directly linked to the conduct of the civil war and the history of Southern fragmentation.
- As 2011 nears, the possibility of further politicized armed conflict in Sudan is significant.
- Diverse armed groups have taken measures to address humanitarian concerns, including by facilitating access to populations affected by armed conflict, banning anti-personnel mines, and renouncing the recruitment and use of children.
- Humanitarian actors play an important role in making humanitarian commitments by armed groups effective in practice, notably by providing support for implementation and monitoring compliance.
- Prohibiting indiscriminate use and unsafe handling of small arms are among the measures armed groups can take to reduce the impact of these weapons on civilians.
- Engaging armed groups on their use of weapons of specific concern—such as surface-to-air missiles and indirect fire weapons—is especially important.
- Keeping armed groups' ammunition depots away from civilian dwellings and secure from theft can reduce the safety threats posed by unstable ammunition and limit the risk of further arms proliferation.

Small arms transfers

- The average annual value of the authorized trade in ammunition for small arms and light weapons between 2006 and 2009 was about USD 4.3 billion. These figures do not include man-portable guided missiles or single-shot, disposable rockets.

- The USD 4.3 billion ammunition finding shows that the long-standing estimate of USD 4 billion for the total trade (including weapons, parts, and accessories) considerably undervalues recent activity.
- In 2007, 26 countries had documented exports of small arms ammunition worth more than USD 10 million.
- The trade in propellant chemicals is worth at least tens, and perhaps hundreds, of millions of US dollars each year.
- The global trade in small arms and light weapons ammunition is considerably less transparent than the trade in the weapons themselves. This is true of both national reporting and reporting required or facilitated by international instruments.
- Governments procure most of their light weapons ammunition from domestic producers when possible. Therefore, international transfers of light weapons ammunition are probably a small percentage of global public procurement.
- Ammunition imported by Western countries is overwhelmingly sourced from Western companies. Public procurement data from seven Western states indicates that in recent years they have received less than four per cent of their light weapons ammunition (by value) from non-Western firms.
- The 2010 Transparency Barometer identifies Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Serbia 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.
- In 2007 the top exporters of small arms and light weapons (those with annual exports of at least USD 100 million), according to available customs data, were (in descending order) the United States, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, China, Switzerland, Canada, Turkey, and the Russian Federation. The top importers of small arms and light weapons for 2007 (those with annual imports of at least USD 100 million), according to available customs data, were (in descending order) the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, and Spain.
- Arms transfer regimes in the majority of the world's major exporting countries control transportation directly—through licensing—or indirectly—through the submission of transport information by exporters.
- Customs rules and procedures can be used to trace fully the transport segment of an arms transfer.
- Civil aviation rules are not specifically aimed at preventing arms trafficking. Many of their provisions, however, could be adapted to this goal, particularly those relating to aircraft registration and safety and security measures.

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Publication date: June 2010 • Paperback: ISBN 978-0-521-14684-5 • Hardback: ISBN 978-0-521-19711-3

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

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