



## Press Release

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### PRIVATE GUARDS OUTNUMBER POLICE, BUT REMAIN OUTGUNNED Security firms most heavily armed in Latin America, conflict zones

The private security industry has expanded to employ some 20 million documented personnel worldwide—almost twice the number of police officers, reveals the *Small Arms Survey 2011*. In some countries, the figure represents a doubling or even a tripling of the number of private security workers over the past 10–20 years. Government outsourcing of many security functions appears to be driving the boom, among other factors.

Despite the rapid growth of the sector, private security personnel hold far fewer firearms than do state security forces. A review of data for 70 countries reveals that they hold no more than 4 million, compared to some 26 million held by law enforcement and 200 million held by armed forces. Findings also show that private security arms are not evenly distributed. Outside of conflict-affected zones, Latin America is the region with the highest ratio of arms per employee—about ten times higher than in Western Europe.

Regulation and accountability mechanisms have not kept up with the growth of the private security industry. Despite evidence that some private security companies have engaged in the illegal acquisition of firearms, have lost weapons through theft, or have misused their arsenals, there is no systematic reporting of such misconduct.

‘In prisons, at airports, along borders, and on the street, security provision is increasingly in the hands of private actors,’ said Small Arms Survey Programme Director Keith Krause. ‘The key question—to which we don’t know the answer—is whether these evolving arrangements are enhancing or impairing security.’

The *Survey* also reviews legislation governing civilian possession of firearms in 42 jurisdictions around the world. It finds that almost all of them prohibit access to certain firearms they consider ill-suited to civilian use; the vast majority have a system of owner licensing in place to prevent certain types of civilians, such as criminals, from owning firearms; and many register firearms or maintain records of firearms owned. Of the jurisdictions reviewed in the *Survey*, the vast majority (40) regard civilian gun possession as a privilege, while only two treat it as a basic right.

The *Survey* also includes case studies examining the dynamics of both public and private security provision in Côte d’Ivoire, Haiti, and Madagascar.

Findings of this edition of the *Survey* include:

- The annual trade in light weapons is estimated at USD 1.1 billion. Based on this and previous findings, the combined global authorized trade in small arms, light weapons, and their ammunition is worth nearly USD 7.1 billion per year.
- In 2008 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, Switzerland, Israel, Austria, South Korea, Belgium, the Russian Federation, Spain, Turkey, Norway, and Canada.
- In 2008 the top importers of small arms and light weapons (those with annual imports of at least USD 100 million) were (in descending order) the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, France, and Pakistan.
- The oversight systems of multinational corporations are generally too weak to prevent the hiring of private security personnel known to have used excessive force in the past.
- Household survey data generated since 2004 suggests that security has steadily improved in Haiti over the past decade and has continued to improve since the January 2010 earthquake. Police involvement in criminal activity, as reported by crime victims, decreased sharply after the transition to an elected government in 2007.

Published by Cambridge University Press, the *Small Arms Survey 2011: States of Security* is the Survey’s 11th annual global analysis of small arms issues. An independent research project funded by several governments, the Small Arms Survey is the principal source of public information and analysis on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. ■

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