



## Press Release

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### AUTHORIZED SMALL ARMS TRADE REVISED UP-TO USD 8.5 BILLION PER YEAR More than double previous estimate

The annual value of authorized international transfers of small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition is at least USD 8.5 billion, according to the *Small Arms Survey 2012: Moving Targets*. The new figure, the result of a four-year investigation completed this year, is more than double the previous estimate of approximately USD 4 billion, released in 2006.

An expansion in the arms trade is partly responsible for the upward revision. Two important sources of growth are increased spending by US civilians on small arms and their ammunition, and large-scale government purchases of military firearms and light weapons for international and national armed forces involved in fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Better information and more nuanced research methodologies have also played a role in refining the estimate.

The *Small Arms Survey 2012* finds that the authorized trade in small arms and light weapons is highly concentrated, with a handful of countries accounting for most of the documented transfers during the 2001–10 period. The 2012 *Survey* again calculates the top importers and exporters using the most recent published customs data, but poor transparency in state reporting—among both large and small exporters—keeps a great deal of the authorized trade obscure.

‘While state transparency on small arms transfers to and from Europe and North America has been relatively strong, it has lagged in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East,’ said Small Arms Survey Managing Director Eric Berman. ‘Improved transparency from important exporters, such as China and the Russian Federation, as well as states that re-export surplus weapons, would improve our understanding of the sources and means through which authorized arms transfers fuel the illicit trade.’

The 2012 *Survey* also reports the initial findings of a multi-year project to examine illicit small arms and light weapons, focusing on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. One conclusion is clear in all three cases: non-state armed groups are almost always using older-generation weapons. To a great extent, the legacy of state collapse and plundered stockpiles, rather than newer weapon models, appears to determine the arsenals of today’s insurgents. One exception is the significant percentage of Iranian weapons seized from insurgents in Iraq, which were of relatively recent manufacture.

Other findings of this edition of the *Survey* include:

- After 15 years of rising homicide rates, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, and Venezuela all suffer from rates of more than 30 per 100,000—at least five times the global average. Together with Brazil, Colombia, Panama, and Puerto Rico, these countries also exhibit very high proportions of homicides committed with firearms (>70 per cent).
- Worldwide, at least two million people are living with firearm injuries sustained in non-conflict settings over the past decade. Their injuries generate considerable direct and indirect costs, such as those incurred through treatment, recovery, and lost productivity.
- In response to increased attacks by Somali pirates, international naval forces and private security companies have stepped up their activities in high-risk waters. As a result, the number of successful attacks dropped in 2011, but pirate groups are increasingly resorting to lethal violence and abusing their hostages during attacks and captivity.
- State transparency on small arms and light weapons transfers improved on average by more than 40 per cent between 2001 and 2010, but the average score for all states combined remains below half of all available points.

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. The *Small Arms Survey 2012: Moving Targets* is the Survey’s 12th annual global analysis of small arms issues. Summaries and selected chapters from the 2012 edition, published by Cambridge University Press, are available for download from [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).

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