

Piece by Piece

AUTHORIZED TRANSFERS OF PARTS AND ACCESSORIES

The authorized international trade in small arms and light weapons is diverse and dynamic, affecting every region in the world and all levels of society. Recreational hunters and other private individuals buy millions of imported rifles, shotguns, and rounds of ammunition each year. Millions of additional foreign-sourced weapons are procured by military and law enforcement agencies worldwide. Most of these weapons are used in accordance with national and international laws, but a small percentage is misused, poorly managed, or diverted, often with disastrous consequences.

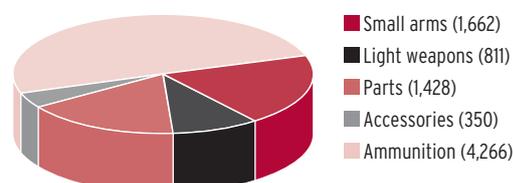
Yet, despite the profound implications of this trade, much of it remains opaque. Publicly available sources of data on international transfers of small arms and light weapons cover only a fraction of the total trade, and much of the data that is available is vague and incomplete. As a result, each year thousands of transfers of small arms and light weapons go unreported, and thousands more are inadequately documented. This lack of transparency hinders efforts to monitor arms transfers to problematic recipients and identify the accumulation of excessively large or destabilizing stockpiles of weapons.

In 2009, the Small Arms Survey launched a four-year project aimed at enhancing our understanding of the authorized trade in small arms and light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition (see Figure 8.1). This chapter summarizes the findings from the fourth and final phase of the project, whose focus is on parts and accessories. Using these findings and those presented in previous phases of the project, the chapter provides a new global estimate for the annual value of the international authorized small arms trade. The new estimate is significantly higher than the previous estimate of USD 4 billion, reflecting both an absolute increase in the value of transfers of certain items and a more complete accounting of these and other transfers.

Key findings from this chapter include the following:

- Authorized international transfers of small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition are estimated to be worth at least USD 8.5 billion annually.
- The annual value of authorized international transfers of parts of small arms and light weapons is estimated to be worth at least USD 1.428 billion, USD 146 million of which is not documented in publicly available sources.
- The trade in parts for military firearms and light weapons is dominated by weapons-producing countries. The 56 countries that produce military firearms and light weapons imported 97 per cent of parts by value, while the 117 countries that have no known domestic production capacity imported only 3 per cent.
- The value of the authorized international trade in weapon sights is estimated at more than USD 350 million. Available data suggests that sights account for most of the trade in major accessories for small arms and light weapons, but data gaps preclude a definitive assessment.
- Chinese producers and exporters dominate the civilian market in weapon sights in Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.
- In 2009 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, Japan, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, France, South Korea, Belgium, and Spain.
- In 2009 the top importers of small arms and light weapons (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, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, Germany, and France.

Figure 8.1 Annual estimated value of international transfers of small arms, light weapons, parts, accessories, and ammunition (in USD million)



Note: Reflecting a recent refinement of the methodology, the estimated value for transfers of small arms and light weapons differs from that published in Dreyfus et al. (2009) and Herron et al. (2011).



An employee of the Colombian weapons manufacturer INDUMIL (Industria Militar) displays the different parts of an assault rifle, May 2006.
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The chapter begins with a brief summary of key terms and definitions, which is followed by an overview of the methodology used to generate the revised estimate for the value of international transfers. The chapter then looks at international transfers of parts and accessories for small arms and light weapons. The trade in parts is explored through an analysis of supply chains and import patterns. The assessment of accessories is divided into two sections. The first section provides a basic overview of five categories of major accessories, indicating how they work, who uses them, and how they are used. The second section sheds light on the trade in accessories through case studies: one on the civilian market for weapon sights in four South American countries and a second on procurement of accessories by the armed forces of six countries. The chapter concludes with a brief recap of major themes from the four-year study, including the need for greater transparency in the small arms trade. ■