

small arms survey 2012

moving targets

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FOREWORD

Illicit trafficking in small arms remains a deadly challenge for international peace and security. Across the world, violence carried out with small arms and light weapons undermines our efforts to promote sustainable development, protect human rights, build safer cities, improve public health, and help countries emerge from conflict. The casualties include children, the stability of entire societies, and public confidence in institutions. The opportunity costs—people whose lives have been cut short; countries made fragile and unattractive for investment—are equally profound.

The publication of this edition of the *Small Arms Survey* is timely. This year, the United Nations will convene the Second Review Conference of the decade-old UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, giving Member States an opportunity to review progress and ensure that this framework continues to guide international action.

Like previous editions, the *Small Arms Survey 2012: Moving Targets* provides original research and analysis that can improve policy-making. It can also contribute to the development of measurable goals for small arms control—an objective I articulated most recently in my 2011 report on small arms to the UN Security Council.

I commend the *Small Arms Survey 2012* as an authoritative volume to Member States and all stakeholders committed to reducing the devastating toll that small arms inflict on individuals, communities, and entire countries and regions. Let us work together to solve the big problems caused by small arms.

—Ban Ki-moon

Secretary-General of the United Nations

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ABOUT THE SMALL ARMS SURVEY

The Small Arms Survey is an independent research project located at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Established in 1999, the project is supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and current contributions from the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Survey is grateful for past support received from the Governments of France, New Zealand, and Spain. The Survey also wishes to acknowledge the financial assistance it has received over the years from foundations and many bodies within the UN System.

The objectives of the Small Arms Survey are: to be the principal source of public information on all aspects of small arms and armed violence; to serve as a resource centre for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and activists; to monitor national and international initiatives (governmental and non-governmental) on small arms; to support efforts to address the effects of small arms proliferation and misuse; and to act as a clearinghouse for the sharing of information and the dissemination of best practices. The Survey also sponsors field research and information-gathering efforts, especially in affected states and regions. The project has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

NOTES TO READERS

Abbreviations: Lists of abbreviations can be found at the end of each chapter.

Chapter cross-referencing: Chapter cross-references are fully capitalized in brackets throughout the book. One example appears in Chapter 2, which reviews recent empirical trends and theoretical explanations of drug violence in Latin America: ‘Trends in homicide rates show a similar pattern, with the Northern Triangle countries suffering from rates two to three times that of Panama, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica—and Belize occupying a middle position (LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN).’

Exchange rates: All monetary values are expressed in current US dollars (USD). When other currencies are also cited, unless otherwise indicated, they are converted to USD using the 365-day average exchange rate for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011.

Small Arms Survey: The plain text—Small Arms Survey—is used to indicate the overall project and its activities, while the italicized version—*Small Arms Survey*—refers to the publication. The *Survey*, appearing italicized, relates generally to past and future editions.

Small Arms Survey

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

47 Avenue Blanc, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

t +41 22 908 5777 f +41 22 732 2738

e sas@smallarmssurvey.org w www.smallarmssurvey.org

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Small Arms Survey 2012

Editors	Glenn McDonald, Emile LeBrun, Eric G. Berman, and Keith Krause
Coordinator	Glenn McDonald
Publications Manager	Alessandra Allen
Designer	Richard Jones, Exile: Design & Editorial Services
Cartographer	Jillian Luff, MAPgrafix
Copy-editor	Tania Inowlocki
Proofreader	Donald Strachan

Principal chapter authors

Introduction	Glenn McDonald and Emile LeBrun
Chapter 1	Elisabeth Gilgen
Chapter 2	Benjamin Lessing
Chapter 3	Anna Alvazzi del Frate
Chapter 4	Nicolas Florquin, Dauren Aben, and Takhmina Karimova
Chapter 5	Dominik Balthasar and Janis Grzybowski
Photo essay	Alessandra Allen and Nicolas Florquin
Chapter 6	Nicolas Florquin
Chapter 7	Glenn McDonald
Chapter 8	Janis Grzybowski, Nicolas Marsh, and Matt Schroeder
Chapter 9	Jasna Lazarevic
Chapter 10	Matt Schroeder and Benjamin King

Eric G. Berman, Keith Krause, Emile LeBrun, and Glenn McDonald were responsible for the overall planning and organization of this edition. Alessandra Allen managed the editing and production of the *Survey*. Tania Inowlocki copy-edited the book; Jillian Luff produced the maps; Richard Jones provided the design and the layout; Frank Benno Junghanns laid out the photo essay; Donald Strachan proofread the *Survey*; and Margaret Binns compiled the index. Daly Design created the illustrations in Chapter 8. John Haslam, Carrie Parkinson, and Daniel Dunlavy of Cambridge University Press provided support throughout the production of the *Survey*. Natacha Cornaz, Sarah Hoban, Chelsea Kelly, Natalia Micevic, Mihaela Racovita, and Jordan Shepherd fact-checked the chapters. Olivia Denonville and Martin Field helped with photo research. Benjamin Pougner, Cristina Tavares de Bastos, and Carole Touraine provided administrative support.

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—Keith Krause, Programme Director
Eric G. Berman, Managing Director
Anna Alvazzi del Frate, Research Director



A suspected drug gang member takes position during an operation at Grota favela, Rio de Janeiro, November 2010. © Sergio Moraes/Reuters

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

In July 2001, UN member states met in New York to adopt the Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA) and, more fundamentally, accelerate national, regional, and international efforts to tackle the small arms problem. The PoA focuses on arms control; it seeks to curb small arms proliferation by reinforcing controls over manufacture, international transfer, storage, and final disposal. A spin-off measure, the International Tracing Instrument, adopted in December 2005, is designed to strengthen weapons marking, record-keeping, and tracing. The UN small arms process also laid the groundwork for a parallel effort, centred on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (adopted in June 2006), aimed at enhancing our understanding of, and ability to respond to, the dynamics of armed violence.

Over the past decade, our knowledge of a range of small arms issues—including the scope of the arms trade and the negative impact of small arms in conflict and non-conflict settings—has grown considerably. But what of international efforts to combat small arms proliferation and armed violence?

In August–September 2012, UN member states will meet in New York for the PoA’s Second Review Conference. States are asked to ‘review progress made’ in the PoA’s implementation, but the reality is that the tools that would allow the UN membership to make such an assessment have yet to be developed. There is little doubt that the PoA and other similar measures, including many at the regional level, have spurred a wide range of activity, from improved marking practices to the destruction of surplus stocks. The Geneva Declaration’s focus on measurability and programming has similarly catalysed a series of practical measures aimed at preventing and reducing armed violence.

But, in both cases, the big picture remains hazy. The broad outlines of action can be discerned, but not many of the details of that activity. Moreover, we do not yet know what impact small arms measures, when implemented, have on weapons proliferation or on individual or community security.

The first edition of the *Small Arms Survey*, launched in 2001 at the time of the PoA’s adoption, reviews what was then known about small arms supply, control efforts, and effects. Eleven years later, the *Small Arms Survey 2012: Moving Targets* attempts something similar. Drawing on existing sources of information—but also new and previously untapped sources—it presents several critical trends in small arms supply and misuse. In essence, rather than presenting an updated snapshot of the small arms situation, the 2012 *Survey* focuses on the question of change.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Reports of increasing rates of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean regularly make the headlines, but what are the trends exactly? Two chapters in this edition examine this region, where the proportion of homicides committed with firearms is higher than the global average in 21 of 23 reviewed countries. As Chapter 1 illustrates, a strong

correlation appears to exist between homicide and firearm homicide rates; in Latin American countries that have a high overall homicide rate, firearms are responsible for a higher ratio of the deaths. While this relationship has also been observed in other regions, this chapter presents the first in-depth review of its manifestations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Chapter 2, an analysis of time-series data demonstrates how drug-related violence can push countries that are ostensibly at peace into something resembling civil war. In Mexico, major drug-trafficking organizations have responded in kind to President Felipe Calderón's 'declaration of war' against them. While the roles and motivations of the cartels are clearly important factors in drug violence, they do not, in and of themselves, explain the recent explosion of violence in Mexico. Instead, it appears that the government's strategy of blanket suppression has triggered the escalation in cartel-led violence.

Perhaps because it is so obviously disruptive to society, homicide is usually captured in state statistics; policy-makers and many interest groups measure gun violence in terms of lives lost. Non-lethal violence is seldom routinely monitored and is less well understood. But, as Chapter 3 indicates, it outpaces lethal violence at the global level by a wide margin, leaving huge physical, psychological, economic, and social costs in its wake. A plausible estimate of three non-fatal gun assaults for every fatal one would mean that at least half a million non-fatal injuries are sustained as a result of intentional firearm violence each year worldwide. For now, however, such estimates have a large margin of error; without improved, more systematic surveillance of non-lethal violence, our picture of the global burden of armed violence will remain incomplete.

As our understanding of armed violence, including associated trends, advances, so too does our knowledge of the global trade in small arms and light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition. In 2009, the Small Arms Survey began a four-year project to develop a more precise estimate of the value of the global authorized trade in these weapons, previously calculated at around USD 4 billion per year. The fourth and final phase of the project, presented in Chapter 8, indicates that the current figure is at least twice that—USD 8.5 billion or more. Part of this increase stems from better information and the use of rigorous modelling techniques tailored to specific components of the trade (small arms, light weapons, parts, accessories, and ammunition). Another part, however, is the result of absolute increases in the value of small arms transfers, including, it appears, the importation of firearms by US civilians and the acquisition of a range of weaponry by armed forces fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chapter 8 notes that many gaps remain in our knowledge of the authorized trade. Estimates, however robust, are no substitute for transparent reporting by states on arms exports. Chapter 9, on transparency, takes stock of ten years of arms export reporting, highlighting the significant improvements some states have made in their reporting, but also the fact that the average level of transparency among the world's 52 major exporters of small arms remains poor—averaging less than half of all points available in the 2012 Transparency Barometer.

These gains in our understanding of authorized small arms transfers, however partial, appear almost monumental compared to the thicket of uncertainty that the illicit trade represents. As the Survey wraps up its multi-year authorized transfers project, it begins a new one designed to increase our knowledge of illicit small arms, a topic of particular relevance to the PoA. The first phase of the project, presented in Chapter 10, focuses on three war zones: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. Although a lack of data precludes a definitive mapping of insurgent arms in these countries, multiple sources of information nevertheless tend to the same conclusion in all three cases: non-state armed groups are using older-generation weapons. To a great extent, the legacy of state collapse and plundered stockpiles, rather

than new supply, appears to determine the arsenals of today's insurgents. In fact, their relative lack of advanced weaponry suggests that arms control efforts of the past decade are having some effect. Yet it is equally clear that once governments lose control of their stockpiles, the consequences can be felt for decades.

The looting of government arsenals during the Somali civil war is a case in point. In fact, it provides the backdrop, not only for a review of insurgent weapons in Somalia in Chapter 10, but also for two stand-alone chapters relating to the country. Chapter 5, on the autonomous region of Somaliland, examines the consolidation of state authority in the territory and other factors that have led to far better levels of security than are found elsewhere in present-day Somalia. Chapter 6 discusses one of the spillover effects of persistent insecurity and underdevelopment in north-eastern Somalia, namely Somali pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea. This chapter reviews the protective measures undertaken by shipping companies and governments, most notably the deployment of international naval forces and the increased use of private security guards. As discussed in both Chapter 6 and the accompanying photo essay, the greater presence of armed protectors, coupled with their actual use of force in some cases, appears to have secured a drop in the number of successful pirate attacks, yet also seems to be inducing pirates to adopt more aggressive tactics.

Many of the situations portrayed in the *Small Arms Survey 2012* are in flux. So, too, is the UN Programme of Action. Chapter 7 reviews the most recent event in the PoA calendar, the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts, held in May 2011. Although, as the chapter notes, the meeting does not tell us much about the state of national implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, the information states shared on obstacles to implementation and means of overcoming them does represent a crucial first step towards strengthened implementation over the longer term. No final answers, then, but a process that, fundamentally, remains a work in progress.

The *Small Arms Survey 2012* features three sections: a thematic section highlighting trends in armed violence; two country-specific studies; and a final section that focuses on weapons and markets. More information on the chapters in each of these sections follows.

Trends section

Chapter 1 (Latin America and the Caribbean): Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean not only experience significantly higher homicide rates than other parts of the world, but also have higher proportions of firearm homicides than the global average of 42 per cent. Firearms were used in an average of 70 per cent of homicides in Central America, in 61 per cent in the Caribbean, and in 60 per cent in South America. At the same time, there are significant differences among countries in the region.

This chapter sheds light on patterns and trends of homicides and firearm homicides in Latin America and the Caribbean. It shows that higher overall homicide rates are frequently linked to higher proportions of firearm homicides. In addition, there appears to be a link between rising homicide rates over time and an increase in the proportion of firearm homicides. While it is unclear whether firearm homicides are driving overall homicide rates or vice versa, there is clearly a relationship between the two. This chapter discusses numerous factors that may explain why the relationship is especially pronounced in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chapter 2 (Drug violence): In December 2006, the Mexican president called in the army to wage an all-out war on the country's drug cartels. While the action has led to the capture and death of numerous cartel leaders, it has not succeeded in destroying the cartels themselves. Worse, it has precipitated major counter-offensives against the army as well as inter-cartel violence that have left some 47,000 Mexicans dead. State pressure also appears to be

leading some cartels to migrate south into Central America, where they threaten to alter the dynamics of the drug trade in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

The Mexican response differs significantly from the one recently taken by officials in Brazil. There, in an effort to wrest control of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* from prison-based drug syndicates, state security forces began a new programme in 2008 to retake and then occupy favelas with long-term community-oriented police forces. The programme is unusual in that it moves against only the most violent syndicates and aims not to eradicate the illicit drug trade itself, but instead to reduce the worst drug-related violence and re-establish state authority.

This chapter reviews various facets of drug violence between organized actors in Mexico and Brazil. It finds that the onset and intensity of systemic drug violence on the scale seen in Mexico and Rio de Janeiro are highly variable and sensitive, not only to drug trafficking and market structure, but also to state anti-narcotics policy and enforcement. In contrast to the Mexican army's attempt to suppress and even destroy its domestic cartels, Rio's multi-faceted programme appears to be successfully 'pacifying' its syndicates, although it is too early to tell whether the reduction in levels of armed violence can be sustained.

Chapter 3 (Non-lethal violence): While most state and local authorities keep records on the number and characteristics of homicides, including firearm homicides, very few do so for violence that does not result in death. Yet non-fatal intentional firearm injuries far outnumber gun homicides. This chapter provides an overview of the available data on the incidence of non-lethal firearm violence in non-conflict settings, including estimates for countries where data collection is relatively robust. It notes that, while survivors of gun violence often face long-term medical, economic, and social difficulties, such consequences are seldom counted among the costs of gun violence because they are not captured in official statistics. The chapter reviews the challenges to conducting non-fatal firearm injury surveillance and describes interim systems and entry points for interested donors, arguing that capturing non-lethal violence is crucial for a full understanding of the burden of armed violence on societies.

Country studies

Chapter 4 (Kazakhstan): This analysis of the security situation in Kazakhstan highlights paradoxical trends. On the one hand, the country has been spared the civil war and ethnic strife that has affected some of its Central Asian neighbours. Crime has decreased significantly since the mid-1990s, while the government keeps rather tight controls over civilian ownership of firearms. On the other hand, concerns with Kazakhstan's internal stability are growing and include a domestic homicide rate that still exceeds the regional and global average, an increase in the use of firearms in crime, and a recent surge in terrorist violence, as well as cases of social, ethnic, and political violence. The six large-scale, unplanned explosions at munitions sites that have occurred in Kazakhstan since 2001 also highlight problems in the management of state stockpiles of arms and ammunition. While it would be alarmist to speak of an approaching storm, Kazakh skies are not entirely clear.

Chapter 5 (Somaliland): Although Somaliland has its origins in a violent struggle and experienced episodes of large-scale violence through the mid-1990s, it has not only largely freed itself of armed conflict, but has also established a relatively high level of security for its population. This chapter looks at the trajectory of violence during the ongoing state formation process in Somaliland and examines patterns of cooperation between state and non-state security providers at the local level in urban areas. It suggests that the rising capacity of the state has curtailed armed opposition to a large extent, inducing various local non-state groups to collaborate with the state, thereby allowing for a relatively high degree of security.

Definition of small arms and light weapons

The Small Arms Survey uses the term 'small arms and light weapons' to cover both military-style small arms and light weapons as well as commercial firearms (handguns and long guns). Except where noted otherwise, it follows the definition used in the *Report of the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms* (UN document A/52/298):

Small arms: revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns.

Light weapons: heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of less than 100 mm calibre.

The term 'small arms' is used in this volume to refer to small arms, light weapons, and their ammunition (as in 'the small arms industry') unless the context indicates otherwise, whereas the terms 'light weapons' and 'ammunition' refer specifically to those items.

Weapons and markets

Photo essay: This essay illustrates the stark reality of Somali piracy as seen through the lenses of more than a dozen professional and amateur photographers. The photo essay considers the root causes and enablers of Somali piracy, such as criminal networks, official corruption, and a lack of alternative economic opportunities. It also portrays some of the many measures undertaken to respond to pirate activities—from local resistance and incarceration of pirates to deployments of NATO vessels and private security guards.

Chapter 6 (Somali piracy): The frequency of pirate attacks worldwide reached record levels in 2010, largely attributable to Somali groups. While international naval forces and private security companies have increased their presence in affected waters in response, pirates have reacted by using captured vessels as 'mother ships' to allow them to strike at ever-greater distances from the coast. Pirate groups have also become more inclined to resort to lethal violence during attacks and to abuse their hostages.

The persistent threat of Somali piracy has prompted the shipping industry to turn to private security companies to protect vessels, with encouraging results as of late 2011. A number of states have sought to facilitate the provision of private armed security by, for instance, allowing security firms to rent out government-owned firearms. But embarking private armed guards on ships poses complex legal challenges, with the lack of clear rules for the use of force and firearms further complicating matters.

Chapter 7 (UN update): In 2011, the UN convened a new type of PoA meeting, an Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE). Chapter 7 distils key elements of these discussions, which focused on the current sticking points in the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, along with means of overcoming the same. While the chapter highlights the range of 'implementation challenges and opportunities' that MGE participants discussed in relation to weapons marking, record-keeping, and tracing, it also notes the uncertainty concerning the meeting's future legacy. UN member states have yet to develop specific means of following up on the ideas, proposals, and lessons learned that were shared at the MGE.

Chapter 8 (Authorized transfers): This year's transfers chapter is the final part of a four-year project to estimate the annual value of authorized transfers of small arms and light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition. It examines the trade in parts and accessories and summarizes and re-evaluates some of the findings produced between 2009 and 2011. The chapter concludes that the average annual value of authorized international transfers is at least USD 8.5 billion. This is a substantial revision of the long-standing USD 4 billion estimate. The annual value



Residents look out of their windows as soldiers occupy Rocinha favela, Rio de Janeiro, November 2011. © Mauricio Lima/The New York Times/laif

of transfers of parts of small arms and light weapons is estimated to be worth approximately USD 1.4 billion. Annual transfers of sights are estimated to be worth more than USD 350 million.

Chapter 9 (Transparency): This chapter reviews ten years of reporting on the small arms trade by 52 countries exporting at least USD 10 million worth of small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition. It highlights which countries have achieved top scores, noting in which reporting categories states can improve their level of transparency. The chapter concludes that over the past ten years, major exporting states have been increasingly transparent in reporting their small arms and light weapons transfers; however, the average score of all states remains below 50 per cent of the maximum possible score in the Small Arms Survey's Transparency Barometer, leaving most states with considerable room for improvement.

Chapter 10 (Illicit small arms): This chapter inaugurates a multi-year project aimed at improving public understanding of illicit small arms and light weapons by acquiring and analysing new and hitherto under-utilized data on illicit weapons. The project consists of three phases, each focusing on illicit weapons in countries that share a defining characteristic. Chapter 10 summarizes findings from the first phase, which looks at illicit weapons in conflict zones.

The Small Arms Survey gathered data on more than 80,000 illicit small arms and light weapons in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. One striking finding is the absence of the newest small arms and light weapons. Most appear to be older Soviet- and Chinese-designed models that have been circulating in these countries for many years. Also noteworthy is the comparatively small number of portable missiles, most of which are older Soviet-designed systems that are much less capable than modern missiles.

CONCLUSION

The 2012 edition of the *Small Arms Survey* seeks to increase our scrutiny of what is changing, and not changing, in relation to small arms proliferation and armed violence. It remains to be seen whether UN member states will develop the tools that allow for a better assessment of progress made in PoA implementation. Without such an assessment, it is impossible to answer a second, arguably more important question, namely what impact PoA implementation is having on the illicit small arms trade. In general terms, we lack the tools needed to determine where progress has been made, which issues and regions require the most attention, and where the challenges are greatest.

In any case, it appears clear from the findings presented in this volume that small arms proliferation remains a critical problem in many countries and regions, and that armed violence, both lethal and non-lethal, continues to undermine the security and well-being of people and societies around the world. Over the past decade, knowledge of small arms issues has expanded, with many aspects of the authorized trade, weapons diversion, and lethal armed violence now better understood. Yet crucial gaps remain in these—more extensively surveyed—fields, while other areas, including the illicit trade, are largely uncharted. Much has been learned and achieved in the decade since the adoption of the PoA, but the remaining gaps loom large. Knowledge, like security itself, continues to fall short of key needs. ■