ITALIAN MAFIA HOMICIDES DOWN 43% FROM 2007 TO 2010

Italian crime groups moving increasingly into legal markets

Italian mafia homicides, already in general decline for more than a decade, dropped 43 per cent over the period 2007 to 2010, according to the Small Arms Survey 2013. Analysts link the steep reduction to the mafia groups’ increasing interest in legal markets, where murder attracts law enforcement attention, hindering legitimate business operations. Despite a reduction in lethal violence, mafia groups continue to maintain extensive firearm arsenals.

The overall decline in mafia homicides masks significant regional variations. The Camorra group, historically rooted in Naples and surrounding areas, was responsible for almost half (48 per cent) of all mafia homicides documented in Italy over the period 1992–2010. The rate of mafia homicides in Calabria, home of the ‘Ndrangheta group, was twelve times the national rate in 2010. The greater availability of firearms in Calabria, the stronger presence of organized crime groups, and recurrent conflicts among clans may be fuelling mafia violence there.

‘It appears that for most Italian mafia groups the risks of using extreme violence now outweigh the perceived benefits,’ said Small Arms Survey Programme Director Keith Krause. ‘If we are to improve our understanding of this decline, and of the varying patterns of violence among different groups, it is important that researchers gain access to official data on mafia weapons use.’

The Small Arms Survey 2013: Everyday Dangers focuses on small arms and armed violence outside war zones, with chapters on organized crime and gang violence, the use of firearms in intimate partner violence, and violent land disputes. Understanding the diverse forms and expressions of non-conflict armed violence, which dwarfs conflict violence worldwide, is crucial to national and multilateral violence prevention and reduction efforts.

In addition to the chapters on non-conflict armed violence, the Small Arms Survey 2013 relays new findings on illicit weapons recovered in Mexico and the Philippines, the prices of arms and ammunition at illicit markets in Lebanon, Pakistan, and Somalia, and the impacts of improvised explosive devices on civilians worldwide.

Other findings of the 2013 Survey include:

- Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) killed and injured at least 13,000 civilians in 44 countries in 2011, according to open-source reporting. Militant Sunni Islamist groups are responsible for the overwhelming majority of civilian casualties inflicted in IED attacks, primarily because of their indiscriminate tactics and use of large IEDs.
- An in-depth analysis of recovered illicit arms reveals that, despite their vast wealth, Mexican cartels do not possess the full array of light weapons available to governments and some state-sponsored armed groups.
- In 2010 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, Germany, Italy, Brazil, Switzerland, Israel, Austria, the Russian Federation, South Korea, Sweden, Belgium, and Spain. The top importers (those with annual imports of at least USD 100 million) were (in descending order) the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, South Korea, France, and Thailand.
- The 2013 edition of the Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer identifies Switzerland, Romania, and Serbia as the most transparent of the major exporters, and Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates as the least transparent.

Published by Cambridge University Press, the Small Arms Survey 2013: Everyday Dangers is the Survey’s 13th annual global analysis of small arms and armed violence issues. An independent research project located at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva), the Small Arms Survey is the principal source of public information and analysis on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. Summaries and selected chapters from the 2013 edition are available for download from www.smallarmssurvey.org.