

# Press Release

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## **Business as usual for small arms exports to 'Arab Spring' states**

### **Important exporters continue to supply governments and non-state groups**

The armed violence and political instability associated with the 'Arab Spring' have not led to significant changes in the policies or practices of countries exporting small arms and light weapons to the governments of Egypt, Libya, or Syria since 2011, finds the *Small Arms Survey 2015: Weapons and the World*. The study also reveals that the emergence of Islamic State has convinced many exporters to provide small arms to non-state armed groups in the region, despite heightened risks of weapons diversion and misuse.

'Our evidence shows that important exporting states continue to send small arms to Egypt, Libya, and Syria, including non-state armed groups there, despite the high risk of diversion and misuse,' said Keith Krause, Programme Director of the Small Arms Survey. He added that 'efforts by some countries to rein in supplies to specific "Arab Spring" states have been circumvented by others'.

The *Small Arms Survey 2015* also finds that insurgents in northern Mali are better armed than they were a decade ago, including with larger-calibre weapons. Jihadist groups have obtained man-portable air defence systems, which pose a serious and direct threat to civilian and military aircraft. Although they appear to have obtained most of the weapons from Malian army stockpiles, they have also obtained larger-calibre weapons from post-Qaddafi Libyan stockpiles.

Elsewhere in Africa, commercial poachers and armed groups are bringing increased firepower and organization to the lucrative trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn, and some state security forces are responding with aggressive 'shoot-to-kill' strategies and military-style weapons. The escalation comes as armed groups have devastated elephant herds in Central Africa. But the Survey finds that militarized anti-poaching initiatives do not always lead to reductions in poaching rates; aggressive law enforcement efforts are difficult to sustain and fund—and can put civilians at risk.

Among the other 2015 *Survey* findings:

- In 2012, the top exporters of small arms and light weapons (those with annual exports of at least USD 100 million), according to available customs data from the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade), were (in descending order) the United States, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Austria, South Korea, the Russian Federation, China, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Norway, and Japan. The top importers (those with annual imports of at least USD 100 million) were (in descending order) the United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, France, the United Kingdom, Thailand, and Indonesia.
- Focused military operations and the UN's demobilization programme, among other interventions, broke the internal cohesion of the rebel group Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda–Forces Combattantes Abacunguzi (FDLR–FOCA) and accelerated its decline. But the remaining force has gone into hiding by mingling with the civilian population, putting the latter at risk in the event of further military attacks.
- Ammunition stockpile management remains weak in much of South-east Europe, where some 10 per cent of all globally recorded incidents of unplanned explosions at munitions sites have occurred.
- The use of 'floating armouries' has become commonplace among maritime private security transiting the Indian Ocean, but there are no international standards for floating armoury security or storage, and armoury practices vary significantly, with commercial pressures creating incentives for unsafe practices.

Published by Cambridge University Press, the *Small Arms Survey 2015: Weapons and the World* is the Survey's 15th annual global analysis of small arms and armed violence. Summaries and selected complete chapters from the 2015 edition are available for download from [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).

The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders. ■