

# Trade Update

## AFTER THE 'ARAB SPRING'

This chapter explores the impact of the 'Arab Spring' on small arms transfers to the Middle East and North Africa, a region with high levels of armed violence and political instability. It outlines trends in authorized small arms transfers for 2001–12, and discusses the extent to which regional reporting instruments contribute to transparency in small arms transfers.

### Authorized small arms transfers

This chapter examines trends in the values of authorized small arms transfers by top exporters and importers between 2001 and 2012, as reported to UN Comtrade. An analysis of available customs data shows that the United States dominated the small arms market for that period and also reveals that:

- the five largest exporters of small arms during 2001–12 were (in descending order) the United States, Italy, Germany, Brazil, and Austria; and that
- the five largest importers of small arms during 2001–12 were (in descending order) the United States, Canada, Germany, France, and the UK.

Based on UN Comtrade data, this section also identifies the top exporters and importers of small arms and light weapons—those with annual exports and imports of at least USD 100 million, respectively—in 2012:

- The top exporters 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 were (in descending order) the United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, France, the United Kingdom, Thailand, and Indonesia.

### Authorized small arms transfers to the Middle East and North Africa, 2001–14

Parts of the Middle East and North Africa suffer from very high levels of armed violence, armed conflict, and political instability, as well as the risk of small arms misuse and diversion. The 'Arab Spring' heightened many of these concerns, with repeated calls for the imposition of multilateral arms supply restrictions following government crackdowns on protests. Governments in the region continue to import small arms to bolster weak or recently re-established national security forces that are fighting well-equipped non-state armed groups. The chapter examines the effect of increased armed violence and political instability in Egypt, Libya, and Syria on the policies of significant small arms exporters to the region by comparing the small arms flows of two periods: 2001–10 and 2011–13.

**There is little evidence that the 'Arab Spring' has significantly affected the policies of major arms exporters.**

There is little evidence that the 'Arab Spring' has had a significant impact on the policies of top or major exporters of small arms to the Middle East and North Africa. Libya is the only state affected by the uprisings to be subject to a UN arms embargo. Efforts to impose such an embargo on Syria have failed and the option has not been discussed with regard to Egypt. Multilateral efforts to

restrict arms flows to Syria and Egypt do not appear to have had a significant impact on the ability of governments in these countries to procure small arms and ammunition. Considerations that presumably include regional and national security concerns are exerting a strong influence on arms export decision-making, effectively outweighing the risk of misuse or diversion in the eyes of these exporters.

Western and Gulf Cooperation Council States face a dilemma regarding the supply of small arms to non-state armed groups engaged in conflict with



Footage released by IS allegedly shows small arms and ammunition dropped by the United States and intercepted by IS, in Kobani, Syria, October 2014. © A3Maq News/YouTube

Table 4.11 Small arms and ammunition pledged or delivered to peshmerga, August–September 2014

Exporter	Pledged materiel	Declared value
Albania	22 million 7.62 x 39 mm cartridges, 15,000 hand grenades, 15,000 60 mm mortar shells, 12,000 82 mm mortar shells, 20,000 grenades for 40 mm under-barrel grenade launchers	n/a
Bulgaria	1,800 firearms and 6 million rounds of ammunition	USD 3.7 million (BGN 6 million)
Croatia	Undisclosed small arms and ammunition	n/a
Czech Republic	10 million 7.62 x 39 mm cartridges, 8 million 7.62 x 54R mm cartridges, 5,000 RPG-7 rounds, and 5,000 hand grenades	USD 2 million (CZK 41 million)
Estonia	1 million rounds of 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition	n/a
France	Browning M2 heavy machine guns and undisclosed arms and ammunition	n/a
Germany	8,000 G3 rifles and 2 million rounds of 7.62 x 51 mm ammunition, 8,000 G36 assault rifles and 4 million rounds of 5.56 x 45 mm ammunition, 40 MG3 general purpose machine guns and 1 million rounds of 7.61 x 51 mm ammunition, 8,000 P1 pistols and 1 million rounds of 9 x 19 mm ammunition, 30 MILAN anti-tank guided weapons and 500 guided missiles, 200 shoulder-fired Panzerfaust 3 rocket-assisted recoilless guns and 2,500 rockets, 40 Carl Gustaf recoilless guns and 1,000 projectiles, 100 flare guns and 4,000 rounds, and 10,000 hand grenades	USD 91 million (EUR 70 million)
Hungary	7 million cartridges and thousands of mines and armour-piercing shells	n/a
Iran	Undisclosed arms and ammunition	n/a
Italy	100 MG 42/59 general purpose machine guns and 250,000 ammunition rounds, 100 12.7 mm machine guns and 250,000 ammunition rounds, 1,000 RPG-7 grenades, 1,000 RPG-9 grenades, and 400,000 ammunition rounds for 'Soviet-made machine guns'	USD 2.5 million (EUR 1.9 million)
UK	40 Browning M2 heavy machine guns and nearly half a million rounds of ammunition	USD 2.6 million (GBP 1.6 million)
United States	Undisclosed arms and ammunition	n/a

Note: n/a = not available.

Sources: AFP (2014b; 2014c; 2014d); Albania (2014); B92.net (2014); Italy (2014, p. 13); Jones (2014); Kimball (2014); Kominek (2014); Novinite (2014); Payne (2014); UKMoD (2014); author correspondence with a small arms expert, September 2014

repressive governments or extremist organizations in the Middle East and North Africa. They must balance the risks that such groups might abuse human rights, violate international humanitarian law, and divert arms transfers with the pressing humanitarian needs of civilian populations that are threatened by armed conflict and repression. Small arms have been delivered to non-state armed groups in Libya and Syria in the context of humanitarian interventions, regime change support, and counter-terrorism efforts. Table 4.11 provides a snapshot of the arming of the *peshmerga* (Kurdish militia) in Iraq in response to the advance of the armed group known as the Islamic State.

**Exporters have authorized exports of small arms to non-state armed groups that are inclined to fight extremist groups.**

### Transparency on small arms transfers: regional reporting instruments

Several regional reporting instruments contribute to transparency with respect to small arms transfers by releasing information provided by states. Member states of the European Union and countries in South-east Europe provide reports that cover authorizations and, in some cases, deliveries of conventional arms. Information specific to small arms is currently exchanged only among participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The assessment of regional reporting instruments shows that regional intergovernmental information exchanges on small arms transfers are not contributing to public transparency, in contrast to regional reporting instruments that cover broader categories of conventional arms. ■