

FACT SHEET

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Lax Ammunition Controls Routinely Fuel Conflict and Endanger Lives—New Report No International System in Place to Prevent or Combat Ammunition Diversions

Lax controls on ammunition production, transfers, and stockpiles routinely lead to the diversion of ammunition to conflict zones and high-crime areas, finds a new survey of ammunition-related issues. *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer* also reveals that insecure ammunition storage poses critical safety risks for populations living near armouries, pointing out that explosions occur routinely in all regions of the world, resulting in large loss of life.

Within this context, the report considers numerous instances of diversions and looting. A recent and worrisome case is the diversion of ammunition from state stockpiles by armed groups in Sudan in 2005. This ammunition is likely to have been used in war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by these groups. In such cases, it is important to identify those responsible and to track the ammunition that makes its way to conflict areas through its supply chain. Yet because of poor national controls and the absence of international standards on measures such as ammunition marking, record-keeping, and cooperation between states in tracing efforts, such ammunition is largely impossible to track.

Targeting Ammunition also calls attention to the extensive damage caused by explosions such as the one that occurred in Nigeria in January 2002, when 1,000–2,000 people were killed as a result of a blast in an army barracks located in a populated area. The report further cautions that ammunition disposal is particularly critical in post-conflict situations, where explosive remnants of war pose serious threats to local populations.

The book also considers the impact of the diversion of ammunition to high-crime areas. Between 2002 and 2004, ammunition produced legally in Brazil accounted for the largest proportion of almost half a million rounds that were seized by the firearms unit of the local police in crime-ridden areas of Rio de Janeiro.

A collaborative project of five research partners, *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer* presents the first comprehensive overview of the ammunition issue. In recognition of the fact that ammunition has remained a low priority on the international agenda despite its critical role in fuelling conflict and crime, this volume highlights why the international community should make urgent progress in areas such as marking and tracing, record-keeping, storage, and disposal.

Moreover, *Targeting Ammunition* underscores the important role of the international community in preventing the transfers of ammunition—as well as ammunition production capacity—to regions that are prone to elevated levels of criminality or conflict. It further underscores the need to strictly control the legal trade in ammunition and to ensure better enforcement of national and international controls, including mandatory UN arms embargoes.

Additional findings include the following:

- Seventy-six countries have ammunition production facilities.
- Twenty-five countries manufacture sophisticated ammunition such as missiles for man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs), yet 10 of those produce copies based on foreign design.
- The accuracy and destructive capacity of ammunition are continuously increasing.
- In 1999–2003, the global value in reported annual authorized small arms ammunition exports reached USD 700 million, which, given under-reporting, is an underestimate. It also excludes the value of transfers of light weapons ammunition and explosives such as grenades.
- Illicit trafficking of ammunition relies heavily on inefficient enforcement and loopholes in national regulations.

The result of a joint collaboration of CICS (Centre for International Cooperation and Security) at Bradford University, GRIP (Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix, Brussels), SEESAC (Belgrade), the Small Arms Survey (Geneva), and Viva Rio (Rio de Janeiro), *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer* was published with the financial support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It represents the second volume in the Small Arms Survey Book Series.