

# 17

## **Stakeholders in Conventional Ammunition Management**

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### **Overview**

Stockpiling conventional ammunition for national defence and security needs is often considered primarily a matter of concern for security forces. While these forces are certainly prominent stakeholders in the management and control of ammunition stocks, they are not the only ones. A closer look at the issue of ammunition stockpiles shows that the group of stakeholders is much larger than it is often conceived to be, and includes local, regional, and international actors. Any discussion of conventional ammunition stocks should take into account the roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the challenges of responsible stockpile management are addressed comprehensively.

### **Introduction**

The overall responsibility for the management and control of conventional ammunition stockpiles usually lies with the government of the state in which the stockpiles are located. The government's role includes:

- establishing a general stockpile policy and the legislative and regulatory framework for ammunition stockpile controls; and
- ensuring that national legislation is in conformity with relevant multilateral regulations on the safe and secure transport, storage, and destruction of conventional ammunition, including environmental legislation.

In addition, some governments have legal responsibility for ammunition that is stocked abroad for use by their national peacekeeping or occupation forces.

Governments act through ministries, agencies, and commissions, which can often be in competition and therefore fail to coordinate. The formulation of specific regulations on stockpile management is often left to the ministries in charge of national security forces and actors under their authority, such as local defence forces and private security companies. This can lead to the compartmentalization of arms management responsibilities.

Other stakeholders in ammunition stockpiles can be conceived of in terms of three concentric circles that indicate their degree of responsibility for and involvement in stockpile management. The inner circle includes those with direct responsibility for (or direct access to) and regular involvement with large ammunition stockpiles. They include armed security forces and some quasi-state, armed actors. The middle circle is composed of agencies whose stockpiles can be relatively minor or transitory. They include ammunition manufacturers, transporters, dealers, commercial entities, and also some quasi-state actors. The outermost circle is composed largely of the civilian population and government agencies that could be affected by insecure or unsafe stockpiles. International donors also occupy this space, because they have an impact on stockpiles (e.g. by funding security-enhancing or destruction programmes), but are not normally concerned with them on a daily basis. NGOs are involved in various areas of stockpile monitoring, and even ammunition destruction (CHAPTER 9) in some states, and are a vital link between governments and civilian populations.

### The inner circle: national security forces

Armed security forces include the military and a range of law enforcement agencies, such as the national police; border guards; prison services; and, in some countries, gendarmerie and wildlife authorities. Some quasi-state actors, such as local defence forces and militias, and private security companies, may also be included in this circle.

Individual security forces are responsible for the day-to-day management of stockpiles and these stockpiles' compliance with national legislation and

regulations. This includes responsibility for the related activities of subordinate actors. National security forces may also provide input and technical expertise to inform the development and implementation of national policies on ammunition stockpile management, surplus identification, and disposal.

Another area of responsibility of national security forces includes the safety and security (CHAPTER 7) of the physical surroundings of ammunition stockpiles. This is of particular importance in relation to stockpiles containing ammunition, which can potentially explode, and may require that local authorities enforce strict security distances between the stockpiles and civilian settlements (CHAPTER 18). Security forces and, where relevant, specialized agencies can also be responsible for ensuring the secure and safe transport and destruction of ammunition. This may include compliance with international environmental regulations and regulations on the transport of dangerous goods. A further area of responsibility may include monitoring and verifying the security and safety of ammunition stockpiles.

The middle circle: manufacturers, transporters, dealers, commercial entities, and security users

Manufacturers, dealers, and commercial entities are also relevant stakeholders, because they may hold or transfer conventional ammunition that is not destined for the operational ammunition stocks of the security forces. Many of these actors often stock small arms ammunition only in small quantities. Nevertheless, they come into contact with ammunition stockpiles on a regular basis, and must be considered in issues ranging from transportation to government regulation. Moreover, while small arms ammunition stockpiles may only pose a small risk of explosion, they can pose a high risk of diversion throughout the supply chain.

Manufacturers and other entities along the ammunition supply chain—notably in the civilian sector—require careful attention to both safety (protection against accidental explosion or ignition) and security (ensuring against theft and diversion).

Similarly, stocks under the control of quasi-government agencies such as self-defence militias, and of commercial entities such as private security

firms, necessitate regular maintenance and monitoring by competent government agencies.

The outer circle: civilians, government agencies, international donors, and NGOs

While rarely specified in legislation and regulations, state actors have at least a moral responsibility to protect the civilian population and civilian property from the dangers posed by ammunition stockpiles. These risks include:

- accidental or intentional initiation of large masses of ammunition (CHAPTER 13);
- health risks that are caused by environmental pollution from improperly stored ammunition (CHAPTER 11); and
- the diversion of (primarily small arms) ammunition to feed crime or armed conflict (CHAPTER 15).

Civilian communities (CHAPTER 18) that surround major stockpiles have an interest in ensuring that they are protected against the possible deleterious effects of ammunition stocks, and are often concerned about stock safety. These concerns can be aggravated by a lack of adequate information provided by the state actors responsible for the management of the stockpiles. It is the responsibility of state authorities to respond to, and clarify, concerns raised by the civilian population.

Some government agencies are directly involved in the possible consequences of inadequate stockpile management, such as police, fire services, and disaster management units, who will be in the forefront of any response to problems that may arise, such as accidental explosions.

Ammunition stockpile diversion has cross-border dimensions and is the subject of international attention. Donors, and donor-funded assistance programmes, can play a critical role in capacitating national stakeholders to develop adequate national ammunition stockpile and surplus identification policies. Donor assistance can include financial and technical support for the construction of safe and secure storage facilities, training and equipment for responsible management practices, and the financing of safe and secure sur-

plus destruction (CHAPTER 9). Assistance may be provided through sub-regional organizations that support arms and ammunition controls in member states. Notably, such organizations often have a mandate that covers ammunition related to small arms and light weapons, but not necessarily other categories of conventional ammunition.

Other stakeholders in the outer circle include NGOs that can monitor government policies and their implementation. These groups may provide an important link between governments and civilian populations, and can allay real and perceived fears of the risks and challenges posed by ammunition stockpiles. A number of NGOs also specialize in ammunition destruction in some states, in place of, or supplementing, state-owned destruction facilities. NGOs and other actors who are active in the area of environmental protection may also have a stake, not only in relation to the environmentally friendly storage of ammunition, but also in the cleaning up of the environment in the wake of ammunition destruction.

## **Progress to date**

National stockpiles are no longer an issue of concern to militaries alone. Ammunition depot explosions, diversion from state stockpiles, and environmental hazards have increasingly become objects of public scrutiny and subjects of civil society debate. However, it is clear that, in many countries, national stockpiles remain a national secret. Failings in their management, and the risks they pose to all stakeholders, remain hidden from public scrutiny and are taboo in public debate.

Representative governments arguably have a duty to respond to the needs of all stakeholders in the stockpile management decisions they make. Where unstable stocks threaten to kill or maim local populations, or diverted munitions are used to fuel crime and insurgency, it is clear that the circle of stakeholders extends well beyond the traditional orbit of state security forces—a fact that requires continued attention in national policy-making and international processes (CHAPTER 1).

## Conclusion

Conventional ammunition is not solely an issue for national security forces. A wide range of actors have a stake in ammunition issues, including: its safe and secure storage; the responsible management of stockpiles; identifying surpluses; and the destruction of surplus stocks. The group of relevant stakeholders is considerably larger than often conceived, especially when considering their potential to be affected by accidental explosion or the misuse of diverted ammunition. International efforts to consider possible steps to address the challenges posed by insecure and unsafe ammunition stockpiles should acknowledge the multiplicity of relevant stakeholders and their various roles. ■

## Further reading

- Wilkinson, Adrian. 2006. 'Stockpile Management of Ammunition.' In Stéphanie Pézard and Holger Anders, eds. *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, pp. 229–59.
- . 2006. 'The Three Ds: Disposal, Demilitarization, and Destruction of Ammunition.' In Stéphanie Pézard and Holger Anders, eds. *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, pp. 261–91.