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New Small Arms Survey report examines activities of least transparent small arms exporters

GENEVA (13 September 2017) — The global authorized small arms trade amounted to at least USD 6 billion in 2014, up from USD 5.8 billion in 2013, according to the Small Arms Survey's *Trade Update 2017: Out of the Shadows*.

The United States remains the world's largest arms exporter, with exports worth USD 1.1 billion in 2014. The next four largest exporters are Italy (USD 689 million worth of small arms exports in 2014), Brazil (USD 591 million), Germany (USD 475 million), and South Korea (USD 349 million). The Survey's director, Eric Berman, stated, 'The presence of Brazil and South Korea among the top 5 exporters demonstrates the changing dynamics of the international small arms trade, in particular the growing globalization of sources of supply'.

Opaque North Korean small arms exports examined

The *Trade Update 2017* report also presents the latest edition of the Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer, highlighting the role of the least transparent exporters in the international small arms trade as well as the challenges of monitoring the activities of those exporters. 'The concealed nature of the small arms trade increases the chances that the transferred weapons will end up in the wrong hands, and help fuel conflict, insecurity, and instability around the world', remarked Small Arms Survey researcher Irene Pavesi.

The Transparency Barometer recorded scores of 0 points for Iran, Israel, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This edition represents the first time that Israel has scored 0 points in the Barometer.

North Korea is the only major exporter to consistently score 0 in all editions of the Transparency Barometer. The report unpacks this, and examines the niche role of North Korea in supporting small arms production in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the activities of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are scrutinised.

Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Serbia, and the UK are the most transparent of the 49 exporters reviewed. 'However, not one country provides a full accounting of their trade activities', notes Small Arms Survey senior researcher Paul Holtom. 'The Arms Trade Treaty provides a forum for the exchange of good practices in reporting, which if adopted by more countries will significantly boost transparency in the small arms trade'.

Drop in US small arms imports

The value of US imports declined in 2014 for the first time since 2001, from USD 2.5 billion in 2013 to USD 2.2 billion in 2014. Still, the US remains the world's largest importer, followed at some distance by Canada (364 million USD), Indonesia (331 million USD), Saudi Arabia (209 million USD), and Germany (198 million USD). Of particular note with regards to importing states is the fact that Iraq received imports worth USD 139 million in 2014, up from 10 million USD in 2013. This made Iraq the 7th largest importer of small arms in 2014.

Additional information:

Regional trends in small arms imports

Breaking down the arms trade by region, the *Trade Update 2017* also identifies import trends over the period 2001–14, showing that the Americas accounted for 40 per cent of documented global small arms imports during this period, followed by Europe (30 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (26 per cent), and Africa (4 per cent).

- The Africa region had the lowest value for documented small arms imports in 2001–14, but the value of small arms imports almost tripled during this period from USD 82 million to USD 237 million. Northern Africa accounts for the largest share of small arms imports to the region, with an average annual flow of USD 62 million in 2001–2014.
- During this time period, the value of small arms imports into the Americas increased from USD 921 million in 2001 to almost USD 2.9 billion in 2014. The US and Canada alone accounted for around one third of global small arms imports during 2001–14.
- Asia and the Pacific accounted for almost 68 per cent of the global imports of military firearms in 2014 (USD 484 million of the total USD 708 million worth of transfers). Overall, imports by states in the region increased by 71 per cent in 2001–2014.
- The total value of European small arms imports increased by 82 per cent from 2001 to 2014. During this period, Western Europe accounted for 41 per cent of total European small arms imports, with annual average flows to the sub-region worth USD 509 million.

Note for editors

The Small Arms Survey is a centre of excellence based in Geneva (Switzerland) that provides expertise on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and civil society.

The *Trade Update* is an annual publication that provides data and analysis on trends in the international small arms trade, identifying the largest exporters and importers of small arms. It also contains the annual Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer, which assesses key exporters from the most to the least transparent.

The figures on the international small arms trade in the *Trade Update 2017* report are based on an analysis of customs data that states provide voluntarily to UN Comtrade. While UN Comtrade captures much international commercial activity, it does not capture all small arms transfers as many states do not report them to UN Comtrade, or do so only partially. As a result, the figures underestimate the total value and extent of the global trade in small arms. The *Trade Update 2017* sought to address this limitation by examining some of the least transparent exporters in more detail.

Report available at: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/S-Trade-Update/SAS-Trade-Update-2017.pdf>

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