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Bulgaria

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Introduction

THE DISPOSAL OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) is not a new phenomenon in Bulgaria. Old weaponry and ammunition is periodically destroyed within the Bulgarian Armed Forces. A current challenge is posed by the large quantities of surplus SALW that resulted from the implementation of military reforms and the necessity of a new approach to the disposal of redundant armaments. In the past, the export of surplus SALW was considered to be the only viable option by the Bulgarian Government. Combined with an imperfect national arms-control regime, this cemented a rather negative image of Bulgaria's arms trade. During the late 1990s, Bulgaria was regularly accused of violating international arms trade agreements and standards. Recently, however, political changes within the country – a new political will as well as national aspirations to join the EU and NATO – have resulted in serious attempts to improve Bulgaria's export policies and arms control regimes.

Stocks and determination of surplus

Government agencies holding SALW

The two main Bulgarian Government agencies holding SALW are the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). The MoD consists of a Central Administration with a staff of approximately 600 people,¹ and the Armed Forces with a staff of 65–70,000.² The MoI includes the National Police, the National Gendarmerie, the Border Police, the National Security Service, the National Fire Protection and Emergency Safety Service, and the National Service for Combating Organised Crime, with a combined staff of 55,000 persons. Both ministries have storage facilities as well as capacities for repair. In addition, the MoD possesses installations for testing and destruction.

Numbers of armed personnel in other Government agencies are relatively small and vary between 300 and 1700. Other agencies permitted to hold weapons include: the National Customs Agency (belonging to the Ministry of Finance), the National Forest Administration (part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), the State Agency for Civil Defence (directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers), the National Intelligence Service and the National Service for Protection (both directly subordinated to the President), the National Investigative Service, the Judicial Police and the National Administration of Prisons (included in the independent judicial system).

¹ Statutory regulations of the MoD, State Gazette 72, 13 August 1999.

² 53,484 uniformed and 10,458 civilians as of June 2002, Monitor, 11 November 2002.

Until recently, SALW were also held by troops of the Ministry of Transportation, troops of the Ministry of Construction and troops of the Ministry of Communications. With the last changes of the Military Doctrine (1999), these troops were dismissed and their personnel demilitarised. Some of Bulgaria's larger cities have created their own City Police Forces for the protection of public order, which are also holders of SALW.

Bulgaria is a producer of SALW. The main manufacturers are:

- Arsenal Joint Stock Company (JSC) in Kazanlak,
- NITI JSC in Kazanlak,
- VMZ JSC in Sopot,
- Arkus Co. JSC in Lyaskovets,
- Dunarit JSC in Rousse,
- Two branches of the Terem Company (owned by the MoD) in Veliko Tarnovo and Kostenetz.

Quantities of SALW and ammunition held by Government agencies

The amounts of SALW and ammunition held by Government agencies seem to be a very sensitive matter to the Bulgarian Government. Any publication of information on wartime plans and preparedness (where some of the data about stored SALW and ammunition is included) is directly prohibited by the new Law for the Protection of Classified Information (April 2002). The spirit of secrecy regarding military and security affairs inherited from the communist era is still strong. The lack of special regulations on the implementation of the Law further complicates the matter.

Any information on weaponry, military preparedness, arms deals, and defence-industrial capacities is classified according to the Law, a problem that deserves increased attention. Not surprisingly, state officials and experts on SALW seem to be much more reluctant to provide information on internal affairs than to discuss international co-operation and international initiatives in the field of SALW. The lack of access to relevant information raises questions about the transparency of Government policies.³

Estimates only comprise numbers of current peacetime personnel and the size of the wartime Armed Forces (which includes reservists). According to the last changes in the Bulgarian Military Doctrine, the wartime strength of the Armed Forces has been reduced from 500,000 to 250,000 in 1999, and will be further reduced to 100,000 in 2004. The peacetime size of Bulgarian Armed Forces will be reduced from the current size of 65–70,000 to 45,000 in 2004. However, these estimates depend on wartime plans, which are classified.

Civilian possession

In Bulgaria, private people and companies are allowed to hold revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines only, as is explicitly stated and regulated in the Law for Control on Explosives, Firearms and Ammunitions (LCEFA) and its Regulations. This legislation regulates the activities of individuals, legal entities and traders. They are allowed to possess, store and use explosives, firearms and ammunitions for protection, self-protection, production, hunting, sport and cultural purposes (collectors) and are obliged to apply to the MoI for temporary licences (three years at present). In the event that permissions are refused or cancelled, the MoI is obliged to confiscate and store these weapons. Overall control for this is exercised by the Interior Minister. Sub-machine-guns are licensed only for cultural purposes (collections and art productions), and for such purposes they are made inoperable. It is forbidden to sell ammunition designed for military or security purposes to private people and companies.

³ Interview with Prof Dr Tilcho Ivanov, Head of Department 'National and Regional Security', University of National and World Economy, Sofia, 15 October 2002.

According to the requirements stated in the Law and in the Regulation on the Implementation of the Law, traders and producers also have to apply for licences. They are obliged to keep records and to ensure that security measures are adequate. If they break the law, permissions will be cancelled and they will be subject to prosecution. With the recent changes in the Law, control has been strengthened, as new requirements were added and sanctions increased.

During the last three years, Bulgaria has taken steps to control SALW proliferation within its borders by establishing a Central Registry of Firearms at the National Police headquarters, and encouraging registration of civilian firearm possession in full accordance with the law. To date, 107,707 pistols and 146,096 sporting guns have been registered and 103,485 Bulgarian citizens are licensed firearms owners.⁴

Former and current MoD and MoI officers are allowed to acquire pistols and revolvers for their personal needs, once they have received permission according to the general procedures of the Law. The LCEFA and its regulations are not applicable to the activities of the MoD and the MoI, which are controlled and regulated by their own laws – the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces and the Law for the MoI.

Defining SALW surplus stocks

The Bulgarian Government has both general policies on SALW and specific arrangements at its MoD. At the general level, the principal authority is the Inter-departmental Council on the Military-Industrial Complex and Mobilisation Preparedness, which reports directly to the Council of Ministers. The Inter-departmental Council issues limited or full general licences for foreign trade activities, keeps a register of licensed foreign trade companies, co-ordinates the activities of the ministries and other departments on related issues, including international contacts, and asserts control over trade in arms and dual-use goods and technologies. Currently Mr Vassilev, both Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, chairs the Interdepartmental Council. Its permanent members include the Deputy Ministers of Economy, Defence, Finances, Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Transport, Regional Development and the Deputy Head of the General Staff, as well as the Head of the National Investigative Service and the National Security Service. This senior Government co-ordination body has a permanent secretariat headed by a secretary appointed by the Prime Minister. The secretariat includes three 'sector' specialists (or assistants to the secretary) on strategic reserves, mobilisation preparedness and export controls. The Council's three main responsibilities with regard to SALW are the preparation of war-time plans, the issuing of general licences for trade, including surplus SALW, and the preparation of the draft 'National Programme for the Utilisation and Destruction of Surplus Ammunition on Bulgarian Territory'.

According to the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces, the Defence Minister has direct obligations related to the definition of SALW surplus stocks. The Minister is responsible for and directly governs processes of elaborating plans for organisational restructuring of the Armed Forces, plans for war-time preparedness, programmes for development of Bulgarian Armed Forces, as well as proposals for defence strategic reviews. As a result of these activities, surplus SALW stocks are identified.

The Chief of the General Staff is primarily responsible for defining SALW stocks, as a result of state policy on the restructuring of the Armed Forces and plans for military preparations in times of peace and war. The Defence Policy and Planning Directorate at the MoD is responsible for drafting general wartime plans, and is therefore responsible for identifying surplus weapons. The International Co-operation Directorate at the MoD provides the international framework for overall defence planning, in particular in the field of SALW and related ammunition – by co-ordination and participation

⁴ Report published by SEESAC (South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of SALW), <<http://www.undp.org.yu/seesac/about/bulg.htm>>

of the Bulgarian MoD in regional military initiatives, as well as execution of MoD activities with regard to international obligations, agreements and work of international organisations in the field of security and defence. One of the concrete results of this co-ordinated work within the MoD is the annual *List of surplus material*, including SALW, prepared in accordance with 'Plan 2004' (the current plan for military reforms).

The MoD uses a specific formula to calculate the military need for SALW and ammunition. This formula is mainly the result of work carried out by the Defence Planning Directorate and the General Staff. However, it has not been provided by the Bulgarian Government.

The Government distinguishes between weapons in active service, weapons in reserve and surplus weapons. This is partly regulated by the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces and Government regulations for wartime preparedness. Although there is no special legislation applying to surplus SALW, they are clearly identified as a by-product of military planning. Once identified, within the lists of surplus material, the future of these weapons is determined. Generally, weapons belonging to different categories are stored separately, depending on some technical requirements.

Reasons for surplus

SALW surpluses in Bulgaria arise mainly through military reductions. According to the latest military plans, the peacetime strength of the Armed Forces will have been reduced by a half, from 80–90,000 in the middle of the 1990s to 45,000 in 2004. Military reserves have been reduced from 500,000 to 100,000. To a certain extent, changing requirements and technological progress can also be considered as surplus creating factors to the extent that they make some kinds of weapons and ammunition obsolete.

Quantities of SALW and ammunition categorised as surplus

The Bulgarian Armed Forces are currently in the process of transformation (to be completed by 2004). For that reason, numbers on surplus stocks have not been provided. According to the Government, the exact number of surplus SALW and ammunition will depend on the final structure and composition of the Armed Forces.

Policies

Export of SALW and ammunition

The Bulgarian defence industry reached its peak in the late 1980s, with 130 companies and a total workforce of approximately 150,000. One of the specialities of the Bulgarian defence industry was SALW, ammunition for such weapons, and their maintenance and repair.

After this high point, the industry began a decade-long period of downsizing and decline resulting from the demise of the Soviet Union and the abrogation of the Warsaw Pact. During the 1990s, the drying up of traditional Warsaw Pact and other markets, the slow pace of reforms in Bulgaria, the decline of the defence industry, the weakness of the economy in general, and the corresponding need for hard currency earnings all fuelled Bulgarian arms exports. Thus, for most of the 1990s, there were many press reports of Bulgarian arms entering conflict areas – from Africa to Latin America. As a US think tank observed: “[n]umerous reports indicate that a number of these sales were made through an underground economy involving middlemen or brokers, rather than normal trade channels, and were aided and abetted by a lax regulatory system for exports.”⁵

However, after the elections of 1997, the new democratic Government of Ivan Kostov cracked down on the small arms trade, as did its successor under Simeon Saxe-Coburg

⁵ 'The Bulgarian Defence Industry Strategic Options for Transformation, Reorientation & NATO Integration', Atlantic Council of the United States, Policy Paper, July 2001, p 26.

Gotha. It is now unusual to find press reports on new supplies of Bulgarian SALW entering regions of conflict or countries of concern. Even when such deals are reported, it is hard to tell when the deliveries were made from Bulgaria, and whether Government officials were aware of them.

The process of arms trade regulation passed through different stages. On 12 February 1991, the Council of Ministers issued Regulation no 13 on state control of the arms trade, military technologies and equipment. A licensing authority was also created – the Governmental Commission for Arms Trade Control, headed by the Defence Minister. Later in 1991, the Commission was transformed into the afore-mentioned Interdepartmental Council under the Council of Ministers, which oversees the production and trading of military equipment and technology. It is also responsible for mobilisation preparedness. Usually the Inter-departmental Council is led by the Prime Minister or Vice-Prime Minister. The Council includes, at deputy minister level, ministries that have relations with the defence industry. A double-licence control regime for the arms trade was established, with the Interdepartmental Council responsible for issuing both types of licences (until 1995) – the so-called general licence and the licence for each individual transaction. At the end of 1992, the Government passed Regulation 114 on Bulgaria's dual-use export controls. This regulation established controls and licensing regimes on the import, export, re-export and transit of goods, materials, technologies, equipment and services that can be used for the creation of nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction.

On 8 November 1995, the Bulgarian National Assembly passed the Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.⁶ The Law confirmed the established double-licence regime for arms trade and dual-use goods and technologies. Two licensing authorities were established by law. The role of the Interdepartmental Council was confirmed with regard to general licences for companies to trade in military or dual-use equipment. The second licence authority is the Special Commission⁷ within the Ministry of Trade (later the Ministry of Economic Affairs), which is responsible for issuing the second type of licence. These licences are issued for individual transactions concerning export, import or re-export. Bulgaria joined the Wassenaar Arrangement and ratified several international agreements for non-proliferation. Currently, 47 companies possess a general licence for trade of military equipment and 53 for trade in dual-use goods and technologies.

The experience accumulated in the application of this regime led, in September 2000, to the amendment of the Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. The main changes were:

- An exchange of information with corresponding competent authorities in other countries;
- Both kinds of licence are granted only to companies that are registered in Bulgaria and more than 50 percent Bulgarian-owned;
- Foreign counterparts must possess similar trade licences in their own countries.
- Transport companies must also be licensed;
- New requirements were imposed to provide more information using different channels and mechanisms were established for improved and continual control during transactions, including: additional documentation checks, provision of external export opinions (if needed by the state authorities), and prohibition of re-export to third countries;
- Traders are obliged to present more detailed information about a deal – including agreements, technical specifications, payment methods and bank documents, original end-user certificates and obligations to keep special registers of the deals;

⁶ Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, State Gazette 102, 1995.

⁷ Its full name is Commission for Control and Permissions of Foreign Deals with Arms and Goods and Technologies with possible dual-use to the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

- All brokers participating in arms deals involving Bulgaria must be registered in Bulgaria;
- Decisions of the Commission to the Ministry of Economic Affairs must be taken unanimously according to the Law.⁸ If there is disagreement, the licence is not granted;
- Sanctions and penalties were increased drastically.

At the moment, according to the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces, the Council of Ministers, through its Interdepartmental Council, manages and controls the manufacturing and trading of military and dual-use goods and technologies. In addition to the last amendments to the Law on Arms Trade Control, the Council of Ministers approved Decree no 91 of April 2001, which explicitly lists the countries and organisations to which the sale and supply of arms and related material is prohibited or restricted. Furthermore, only two people in Bulgaria are permitted to sign an end-user certificate as a guarantee against illegal import or re-export. Bulgarian authorities implemented the 'TRACKER' system (donated by the US Government) in order to facilitate the identification of weaponry and the exchange of information on weapons between respective Government agencies, customs and national police. The system provides, among other things, centralised and automated access to information required for export control. It further provides specialised databases, a high level of information protection, possibilities for electronic documents processing, and support for the process of classifying goods and technologies with possible dual use.⁹

Bulgaria's interest in developing a strong export control policy is twofold. First, ineffective controls undermine the international credibility of Bulgaria and limit its access to legitimate markets for arms and other products. Second, they also undermine Bulgaria's efforts to join NATO and the European Union.

The amended Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies is a product of wide-ranging consultation with EU member states and other countries in the region. It has increased the overall control exercised by the responsible state institutions, and it is regarded as a very modern law, with effective control and verification mechanisms.¹⁰ It is believed that future Bulgarian NATO membership will facilitate the exchange of information among the allies and would have a strong disciplinary effect.¹¹ In a speech delivered to the Bulgarian Parliament, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson stressed the importance of sharing intelligence information among the Euro-Atlantic community and ensuring firm export controls.¹² There are hopes that the Bulgarian defence industry might be included in internal NATO defence production programmes, which could provide viable alternatives for the production and export of SALW.¹³

Destruction of SALW and ammunition

The process and organisation of destruction is described in detail in the LCEFA and its Regulation for Implementation. However, this Law refers only to weapons held by the civilian population. For destruction of SALW and ammunition the MoD uses similar internal regulations stemming from the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces. The whole process of destruction of SALW within the structures of the MoD, from identifying to scrapping the weapons, is regulated under the control of the Defence

⁸ Amendment of the Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, Art 7(2), State Gazette 75, 2002.

⁹ Capital, 11 May 2002, Sega, 12 April 2002.

¹⁰ Interview with Dragomir Zakov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), NATO and International Security Directorate, Sofia, 15 October 2002.

¹¹ Interview with Prof Dr Tilcho Ivanov, Head of National and Regional Security Department, University of National and World Economy, Sofia, 15 October 2002.

¹² <www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030217a.htm>

¹³ 'The Bulgarian Defence Industry Strategic Options for Transformation, Reorientation & NATO Integration', Atlantic Council of the United States, Policy Paper, July 2001, p 26.

Minister.¹⁴ It includes: registration, storage, transfer, transportation, management, record-keeping, preservation of serial numbers and other measures for identification and verification, including site inspections and filming, in some cases with the participation of foreign experts. These processes are monitored by the military counter-intelligence service and the military police.

Structures and practices

In Bulgaria, the MoD is the main authority responsible for the disposal of surplus SALW. It possesses and controls storage facilities, procedures and practices for destruction, and it is responsible for meeting security standards. Surplus weapons formerly in service with the MoI or confiscated from the population are handed over to the MoD for disposal.

According to the LCEFA, the MoI is in charge of the collection and confiscation of illegal weapons. The Law and its Regulation also describe the obligations of the MoI with regard to repair, destruction and scrapping of SALW for private use (out of SALW owned by the MoD and the MoI). For every case of destruction and scrapping, a special committee has to be created, with the participation of the MoI and the Ministry of Culture. Destruction has to be properly documented and carried out in a place of safety, and is generally carried out by the MoD.

Although well described in the LCEFA, the amount of SALW the MoI itself disposes of is negligible.¹⁵ The MoD is the main organisation authorised to carry out the destruction of surplus SALW. The main agent within the MoD responsible for the processes of destruction is the Logistics Command, part of the General Staff. The Logistics Command accounts for available surpluses and destroyed items. A special section for the utilisation of armament and ammunition exists within the Logistics Command structure.¹⁶

SALW exports

There is no publicly available information on numbers of SALW and ammunition sold or exported by the Bulgarian Government. In principle, this is classified under the Law for the Protection of Classified Information. According to internal regulations and orders of the MoD, the Government bodies responsible for deciding over sales of surplus material are the MoD-owned Terem company, the Supply and Trade Directorate, the Supply Management Directorate and the MoD agency Management of Private State Property. These agencies possess required trade licences and permissions and they obey the requirements and procedures of the Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activity in Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. If necessary, they may contact other licensed trade companies. The 'List of surplus material' specifies which of the weapons are destined for export or for destruction.

On the authority of the Council of Ministers, confirmed with decisions of the National Assembly, surplus SALW and ammunition have been donated to foreign governments, such as the new Government of Afghanistan and the Government of Georgia.¹⁷ These donations were closely co-ordinated with the USA and the international community. The value of these transfers amounted to several hundred thousand US dollars.¹⁸

¹⁴ Interviews with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Deputy Head of Section for Utilisation of Armament and Ammunition, MoD, General Staff – Logistics Command, Sofia, 9 October, 2002 and Nikola Mihaylov, Head of Department 'International Organisations and Arms Control', International Co-operation Directorate, MoD, Sofia, 18 October 2002.

¹⁵ Interview with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Sofia 9 October 2002.

¹⁶ Interview with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Sofia 9 October 2002.

¹⁷ Interview with Dragomir Zakov, NATO and International Security Directorate, MFA, Sofia, 15 October 2002.

¹⁸ Monitor, 21 October 2002, Dnevnik, 23 September 2002, Pari, 23 August 2002, Novinar, 20 August 2002, Monitor, 15 June 2002.

In general, revenues from surplus SALW sales are added to the MoD budget. Any intermediary company receives a commission of between 2 and 5 percent.¹⁹

SALW destruction

The overall process of disposing of surplus weapons is co-ordinated by the Logistics Command, which is part of the General Staff structure of the MoD. The Logistics Command is responsible for the co-ordination, control, and recording of the destruction process.²⁰ The actual destruction is carried out by the company Terem – mainly in one of its branches in Veliko Tarnovo. Today, Terem, a former military arsenal-type factory, is 100 percent state-owned. The directors of Terem are appointed by the Defence Minister. The factory in Veliko Tarnovo is well situated – it is in the middle of the country surrounded by mountains, close to one of the MoD's central military storage facilities. This is advantageous in terms of transport, security, protection, storage and economies of scale. The Veliko Tarnovo facility also offers expertise in safety conditions and weapons repair. In recent years, it has developed technologies for SALW destruction. Once identified as surplus, SALW stocks are stored in the MoD's military storage facilities to await destruction. The storage facility in Veliko Tarnovo serves as a kind of waiting room for the Terem factory. The whole procedure, including the transfer of SALW from military units and local storage to central military storage (which is subordinated to the Logistics Command) and then to the factory in Veliko Tarnovo, is recorded so that the weapons are accounted for.

The entire destruction process is documented according to internal rules of the MoD and/or other additional requirements. Also involved in the process are the military counter-intelligence service and the military police. According to the Bulgarian Government, the destruction of surplus SALW and ammunition is a regular process within the MoD. However, information on destroyed weapons is very limited.²¹

As part of an ongoing co-operation programme between Bulgaria and the US State Department, 77,050 small arms, 612 light weapons, 435 tons of small arms ammunition (6,896,216 rounds) and 135 tons of artillery and anti-tank ammunition (9,370 rounds) were destroyed at Veliko Tarnovo in 2001. These weapons were very old, but a new destruction agreement is under way.²² The extension of the US-Bulgaria programme foresees the destruction of an additional 23,295 weapons, including 10,000 AK-47s and ammunition, at a cost of US\$119,000.²³ A further project to destroy SALW ammunition is expected to receive \$430,000 in funding.²⁴ As part of the co-operation with South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is planned that another 20,000 AK-47's will be destroyed.²⁵ Bulgarian officials state that only financial reasons are hindering further progress in that direction.²⁶

Bulgaria has also entered into bilateral co-operation on security issues with the Netherlands and Norway, whose MoD is working with the State Department on the restructuring of the Bulgarian Armed Forces and the identification of surplus military equipment and SALW.²⁷

In 2001, only 2,000 illicit weapons were confiscated by the Bulgarian border police – a relatively small amount compared with the amount of drugs seized. The majority of

¹⁹ Private Communication.

²⁰ Interview with Prof. Dr. Boyan Petkov, General Staff – Logistics Command, MoD, Sofia, 9 October 2002.

²¹ Interviews with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Sofia, 9 October 2002, and Nikola Mihaylov, Sofia, 18 October 2002.

²² Interviews with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Sofia 9 October and 'Controlling small arms proliferation: the view from Bulgaria', Bulgarian Red Cross/Saferworld seminar report, 2002, pp 5, 11.

²³ Short Mission Report, SEESAC consultation in Bulgaria, 8–10 July 2002, <www.undp.org.yu/seesac/about/bulg.htm>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 24 chasa, 20 December 2002.

²⁶ Interviews with Lt.-Col Anri Georgiev, Sofia 9 October, 2002 and Nikola Mihaylov, Sofia 18 October, 2002.

²⁷ Short Mission Report, SEESAC consultation in Bulgaria, 8–10 July 2002 <www.undp.org.yu/seesac/about/bulg.htm>

the 2,000 weapons confiscated or turned in were handguns, sporting rifles or shotguns collected along the Bulgarian-Serbian border.²⁸

Bulgaria's SALW destruction technologies, facilities and capacity exceed its own surplus. Bulgaria has the potential to become a regional centre for SALW destruction, as the infrastructure, facilities, technologies and qualified labour force are available.

Reviewing surplus holdings

The Government reviews its surplus holdings regularly, once through the process of military planning and wartime preparedness, involving many state agencies, and also through the process of compiling and managing its annual 'List of surplus material'.

International assistance

The Bulgarian Government is involved in international assistance programmes for destruction of SALW mostly as a recipient. For Bulgaria, destroying SALW is a relatively expensive process. National resources are limited and are mostly used for restructuring and modernisation of the Armed Forces in order to meet NATO standards. The Government therefore has to rely on international assistance, especially financial assistance, as the limited national resources are usually spent on the destruction of ammunition, for safety and environmental reasons. Weapons are generally stored. If there is a market for these weapons, export seems to be a viable option.

Financial help from western donors is a cost-effective way to reduce the risks of legal or illegal export of surplus weapons. For example, the agreement between Bulgaria and the USA amounts to around US\$0.5 million. In addition, it provides some internal political dividends, such as support from the population for the process of destruction and help for the local economy.

Reforms

Reforms undertaken by the Bulgarian Government include the following:

- The OSCE Document on SALW and related activities and documents, together with other measures, led to more transparency. Bulgaria exchanges information within the OSCE, the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the UN Register. It should be noted that the Bulgarian submission to the OSCE is not accessible to the broader public and that access to information still is not properly regulated by the new 'Law for Protection of Classified Information'.
- Recent changes in legislation (September 2002).²⁹
- Compliance with arms embargoes and other limitations imposed by the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, the OSCE, the Wassenaar Arrangement and other international export control and non-proliferation regimes.³⁰

For this purpose, the Government regularly adopts legally binding acts to regulate explicitly the obligations of Bulgarian legal entities and individuals under the restriction and prohibition regimes and to impose penalties against possible violators. For example, the Republic of Bulgaria has directly implemented the sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council against states and organisations such as UNITA (Angola), FR Yugoslavia, Afghanistan (the Taliban), Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea in its legal framework.

²⁸ <www.undp.org.yu/seesac/about/bulg.htm>

²⁹ See 'Policies' above.

³⁰ Counter-Terrorism Activities of the Republic of Bulgaria in implementation of Resolution 1373 (2001) of the UN Security Council on Measures to be Adopted by the UN Member-States for the Suppression of Terrorism, National Report, <www.mvr.bg>

In compliance with the Resolutions of the UN Security Council, the EU and OSCE, the Republic of Bulgaria approved, by special Decree no 91 of the Council of Ministers of 9 April 2001, a list of states and organisations against which a ban or restrictions on sales and deliveries of armaments-related equipment and dual use goods and technologies were imposed.

As an OSCE member, in November 2000 Bulgaria made a political commitment to the implementation of the principles, norms, and measures included in the OSCE Document on SALW. On 1 February 2001, the Council of Ministers approved the OSCE Document and its nationwide implementation.

Bulgaria participated in the UN Conference for Prevention of Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its aspects and has made a political commitment to implement the Action Plan adopted by this Conference. The Republic of Bulgaria has been a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement since 1996.

In August 1998, the Republic of Bulgaria acceded to the EU Code of Conduct in the field of trade in arms, and in December 1998 to the Joint Action of the EU Council for non-proliferation of SALW.

The problem of surplus weapons was first identified in a governmental programme of 2001. In December 2001, the Council of Ministers decided to prepare a 'National Programme for the Utilisation and Destruction of Surplus Ammunition on Bulgarian Territory'.

The MoD is continuing their agreements with the USA for financial help with surplus SALW destruction. Bulgaria expressed its desire and readiness to be a regional centre for destruction of SALW. Active participation in international programmes for destruction and co-operation is a part of Bulgarian policy on SALW elimination.

Concluding remarks

The problem of surplus SALW is not new for Bulgaria. This country has a system for identification, registration, storage, protection, technologies, facilities and authorised structures to deal with SALW. The SEESAC 2002 mission in Bulgaria concluded that "Bulgaria has made great progress towards a comprehensive programme of SALW control, particularly in the areas of arms export legislation, registration and destruction. While Bulgaria has strong arms export legislation, which is soon to be improved further, more effort is needed to implement these laws, especially on the micro level, to improve internal checks and balances, tracing and end-use/end-user verification and to achieve greater transparency".³¹ The disposal of SALW is regulated by relevant laws. Cases of illegal possession, confiscation or production of SALW from the population are negligible. Arms control regimes are in accordance with international requirements. Export agreements are being implemented. Bulgaria actively participates in international activities and initiatives with regard to SALW, including the exchange of information with relevant national and international authorities. The process of destruction and utilisation of surplus SALW in Bulgaria could be accelerated easily with small financial help. Bulgaria actively seeks financial and technical assistance for the destruction of SALW. To a certain degree, the inherited secrecy and existing military culture contributes to the safety of disposal and arms control. On the other hand, it complicates the process of transparency and public accountability.

This chapter is part of a wider research study entitled *Disposal of surplus small arms* which examines the policies and practices of ten Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) countries concerning surplus small arms. The report's ten case studies focus on stocks and determination of surpluses, as well as policies on exports, stockpile management and destruction. The report was initiated and co-ordinated by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) and carried out in close co-operation with the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), Saferworld and the Small Arms Survey.

To obtain a copy of the complete report contact bicc@bicc.de, basicuk@basicint.org, general@saferworld.org.uk or smallarm@hei.unige.ch

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