

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE:

18 February 2004
Bishkek

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Small Arms Less Prevalent in Kyrgyzstan Than Previously Thought – New Study

BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN – A new report finds that small arms are less prevalent in Kyrgyzstan than in neighbouring countries, countering the conventional wisdom that the entire Central Asian region is a hotbed of gun proliferation and misuse.

According to *Kyrgyzstan: A Small Arms Anomaly in Central Asia?* from the Small Arms Survey in Geneva, Kyrgyzstan experiences low levels of civilian gun violence, has no major weapons smuggling, and small arms are not a major factor in crime patterns and crime perceptions. All this despite its proximity to the drug trade and conflict in Afghanistan and unstable states in the region.

“This report reveals that our preconceptions about Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia need to be revised,” said Keith Krause, project director of the Small Arms Survey. “Though Kyrgyzstan faces many of the tough social and political challenges of its neighbours, it is clear that it does not yet share their small arms problems.”

Among the report’s findings:

- Government forces hold an estimated 50,000 firearms. Civilian possession is governed by strict legislation. There are an estimated 15,000 registered hunting guns.
- The Kyrgyz black market in small arms is less developed than those of other Central Asian nations
- Despite the presence of drug trafficking in Kyrgyzstan, small arms trafficking does not seem to accompany it
- A majority of Kyrgyzstan citizens disapprove of the purchase of firearms for personal use

The study notes that Kyrgyzstan certainly is not free from socio-economic problems and ethnic tensions but finds little sign that economic deprivation and social and political frustration have produced increasing violence and gun proliferation. The study therefore highlights the need to question regional generalizations and challenges assumptions about the link between social problems and arms proliferation and misuse.

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Small Arms Survey

Based on a review of available information and statistics, interviews with government officials, and a household survey of 236 individuals in 23 villages, the report is the first comprehensive study of small arms in Kyrgyzstan.

More information: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/Media/> or contact Christina Wille, Small Arms Survey, (0502) 36 73 70 (English with Russian translation on 18 February), +41 78 601 9885 (English), wille@hei.unige.ch .

Kyrgyzstan: A Small Arms Anomaly in Central Asia? was released today as part of a consultation organised by the Foundation for Tolerance International in Bishkek and International Alert.

An independent research project funded by 12 governments, the Small Arms Survey is the principal international source of public information on all aspects of small arms. The Small Arms Survey is located at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

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