



Media contacts:
Tania Inowlocki: +41 78 719 1647, inowlock@hei.unige.ch
Emile LeBrun: +31 6 4848 2004, sas-com@hei.unige.ch

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed for release until 1 pm EST (New York) on 11 July 2005

Most Conflict Deaths Caused by Small Arms—New Report

Guns implicated in 60–90% of estimated 100,000 direct war deaths for 2003

Small arms are responsible for the majority of direct conflict deaths, clearly outweighing other types of arms, finds the 2005 edition of the *Small Arms Survey*. Depending on the nature of the fighting, which varies from one conflict to another, small arms cause an estimated 60 to 90 per cent of all direct war deaths.

In focusing on armed conflict, the *Small Arms Survey 2005* affirms that small arms play a defining role in all phases of contemporary conflict—by causing injury and death during conflict, by allowing conflicts to persist through ongoing arms transfers, and most significantly by exacerbating armed violence during critical ‘post-conflict’ phases. The *Survey* reports that ‘post-conflict’ regions often experience higher levels of firearm violence than they did before, or even during, armed conflict.

‘The task of post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation is made much more difficult by the large numbers of arms that remain in circulation in most conflict zones. The international community is only starting to meet this critical disarmament challenge,’ said Keith Krause, Programme Director of the Small Arms Survey project.

The *Small Arms Survey 2005* also concludes that media and research organizations routinely undercount direct conflict deaths. In many cases, significant underestimates can create misperceptions that influence interventions, peacekeeping operations, and other important policy decisions. Where recent estimates have put the number of conflict deaths at 27,000–51,000, a more realistic number of direct deaths is between 80,000 and 108,000 for 2003, finds the *Survey*.

‘To date, estimates of conflict-related deaths have suffered from a number of challenges that produce undercounts,’ said Krause. ‘The main problems are a lack of systematic quantitative data and an over-reliance by analysts on government or media accounts of conflict violence, which are often inaccurate.’

Beyond the estimated 100,000 direct deaths, contemporary wars also cause a larger but unquantifiable number of indirect deaths due to conflict-related social disruption, which leads to malnutrition, starvation, and deaths from preventable diseases. Research shows that small arms also play an important role in these deaths, by restricting the access of humanitarian and relief organizations to vulnerable populations.

The report also finds that as conflict continues, small arms procurement patterns of governments and of insurgents often become more sophisticated and diverse, with non-state armed groups often obtaining weapons from government arsenals, through theft, seizure, or corruption.

Published by Oxford University Press, the *Small Arms Survey 2005: Weapons at War* is the fifth annual global analysis of small arms issues. An independent research project funded by Switzerland and ten other governments, the Small Arms Survey is the principal international source of public information on all aspects of small arms. It is based at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information visit www.smallarmssurvey.org.

Avenue Blanc 47
CH-1202 Geneva/ Switzerland

Phone (+41 22) 908 57 77
Fax (+41 22) 732 27 38

e-mail smallarm@hei.unige.ch
www.smallarmssurvey.org

- # # # -