



# RMDS/G 03.40 (Guideline)

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## Marking and Tracing of SALW

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## Foreword

On 08 May 2003 the development of regional micro-disarmament<sup>1</sup> standards and guidelines was discussed during the RACVIAC sponsored seminar on '**SALW - A year after Implementation of the Stability Pact Plan**'. The consensus was that such standards and guidelines were desirable, and SEESAC agreed to develop a framework and then take responsibility for the future development of regional standards. It was agreed RMDS/G would be designed to support the work at the operational level, and would go further than the more generic 'best practice' documents currently available. After a wide-ranging discussion between stakeholders as to the status of RMDS/G it has been agreed that the term 'standards' will refer to the technical issues, whilst 'guidelines' will apply to 'programme' issues.

This RMDS/G<sup>2</sup> reflects the development of operational procedures, practices and norms, which have occurred over the past four years in the area of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)<sup>3</sup> control. Best operational practices have been identified and reviewed from within the region and beyond, and included as appropriate within this RMDS/G.

SEESAC has a mandate under the Stability Pact Regional Implementation Plan to fulfil, among others, operational objectives of 1) sharing information on and enhancing co-operation in the establishment and implementation of SALW control and reduction programmes and approaches among regional actors; and 2) providing linkage and co-ordination with the other relevant regional initiatives. The development of RMDS/G is one means of fulfilling that mandate.

The work of preparing, reviewing and revising these standards and guidelines is conducted by SEESAC, with the support of international, governmental and non-governmental organisations and consultants. The latest version of each standard, together with background information on the development work, can be found at [www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org). RMDS/G will be reviewed at least every three years to reflect developing SALW control norms and practices, and to incorporate changes to international regulations and requirements. The latest review was conducted on 01 March 2006, which has reflected the development of the UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) [www.unddr.org](http://www.unddr.org), which include RMDS/G as a normative reference in the Disarmament and the SALW Control modules.

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as: 'The monitoring, collection, control and final disposal of small arms, related ammunition and explosives and light weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. It includes the development of responsible weapons and ammunition management programmes'. Often used interchangeably with SALW control in the past, but SALW Control is now the recognised terminology. The term Micro-Disarmament has only been used here to ensure consistency of the RMDS/G concept, rather than renaming the standards.

<sup>2</sup> The layout and format of RMDS/G are based on the highly successful International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The cooperation of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is acknowledged by SEESAC during the development of RMDS/G.

<sup>3</sup> There is no agreed international definition of SALW. For the purposes of RMDS/G the following definition will apply: '**All lethal conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or a light vehicle, that also do not require a substantial logistic and maintenance capability**'

## Introduction

There are many inter-relational factors that determine the type of SALW control intervention, and its subsequent success or failure. This requires that a number of mechanisms have to be set up to implement the process. These mechanisms need to be planned, coordinated and used to ensure the success of a national SALW plan. One of these mechanisms is the system for the marking and tracing of weapons, which is necessary for the accounting and audit procedures. This ensures that audit trails can be established for any weapons or ammunition being used for illicit purposes.

Some nation states have enacted national laws or regulations with regards to the marking of SALW, and the records that will be made during the manufacturing process. This RMDS/G also takes into account nations states which are not official producers of weapons, where weapons have been introduced by illicit means or during internal conflict, and where marking and tracing, and the maintenance of records, may have to be introduced for the first time<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See OSCE Best Practice Guidelines Document 'Record-keeping, marking process and traceability'

# Marking and Tracing of SALW

## 1 Scope

This RMDS/G establishes guiding principles for the establishment of system for the marking and tracing of SALW. This system, or similar, should be established and run by the national SALW commission<sup>5</sup>, which is responsible for the safe, efficient and effective planning and execution of SALW control intervention activities.

## 2 References

A list of normative references is given in Annex A. Normative references are important documents to which reference is made in this standard, and which form part of the provisions of this standard.

## 3 Terms and definitions

A list of terms and definitions used in this standard is given in Annex B. A complete glossary of all the terms and definitions used in the RMDS/G series of standards is given in RMDS/G 02.10.

In the RMDS/G series of standards, the words 'shall', 'should' and 'may' are used to indicate the intended degree of compliance. This use is consistent with the language used in ISO standards and guidelines.

- a) 'shall' is used to indicate requirements, methods or specifications that are to be adopted in order to satisfy the standard in full;
- b) 'should' is used to indicate the preferred requirements, methods or specifications;
- c) 'may' is used to indicate a possible method or course of action.

The term '**national authority**' refers to the government department(s), organisation(s) or institution(s) in each SALW country charged with the regulation, management and co-ordination of SALW activities.

The term '**tracing**' refers to the systematic tracking of illicit weapons from their source of manufacture, through the lines of supply, to the point of diversion into the illicit market and unlawful possession.

## 4 Role of accounting and verification in a national SALW programme

SALW control measures need to be completely transparent in the way they are carried out, and also need to be, and be seen to be, as completely accurate as possible.

In a country recovering from the results of internal conflict, the various communities and factions involved in the conflict will still be suspicious of each other, and this suspicion will affect the rate at which weapons are surrendered, or even if they are surrendered at all. Every action taken and every figure issued during the SALW programme will be the subject of intense scrutiny, and uncertainty can create tensions and fears, which could undermine the disarmament process<sup>6</sup>. Weapons handed in, and even weapons lawfully retained, need to be accounted for and verified. Accounting and verification have to be applied at every level of the disarmament process, and not merely at the time of weapons disposal.

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<sup>5</sup> National SALW commissions have been called a variety of names in previous SALW interventions. These include; national SALW co-ordination committee, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) committee, DDR authority etc. For the purposes of this RMDS/G these names all refer to a 'National SALW Commission'. For information on National SALW Commissions see RMDS/G 03.10.

<sup>6</sup> See 'Managing the Remnants of War', Chapter 3, p 91 of the results of uncertainty in the disposal of weapons.

Accountancy and verification both depend on the accurate marking and tracing of the weapons, both surrendered and retained. This is the only way in which the verification teams can be sure that the right weapons are being destroyed, and weapons surrendered can be accurately attributed. In addition, once identified and marked, the movement or retention of weapons needs to be traced, for the purposes of checking that no weapons are lost, stolen or exchanged in transit or storage<sup>7</sup>. Marking and tracing are therefore important elements in the search for transparency and accuracy in any SALW control intervention, and if properly conducted could add much to its ultimate success<sup>8</sup>.

## **5 Establishment of a Marking and Tracing System**

### **5.1 Setting up the marking and tracing facility**

Ideally, all weapons introduced into a country will have a series of identification marks, some put on the weapon during manufacture, such as the place and country of manufacture, the manufacturer's name, and the serial number. They may also have additional markings, put on during import, or when assigned to the police or armed forces. Illicit weapons or weapons supplied to insurgent forces or local militias often lack these forms of marking, or they have been removed, so it is highly unlikely that import records will indicate the scale of the SALW problem. This means that during a SALW control intervention, any weapons found may have to be re-marked for tracing purposes.

Marking and tracing will have to be so closely integrated with SALW accounting and verification that any marking system that is established should be allied to, or a part of, any accountancy organisation set up by the national SALW commission, as part of its overall preparations for the SALW programme. (For a SALW Control programme it will need to be staffed, accommodated and functioning before the start of the survey phase. During this phase, legally held weapons will need to be registered, and may need to be temporarily marked before the full accountancy process begins. The same will apply to any collections of illegal or unauthorised weapons made available to the survey teams. Early registration and marking may assist the collection process, because experience has shown that few collection programmes have progressed exactly to plan, and the more that the weapon owners are committed to the process, the more likely it is that the weapons will ultimately be surrendered).

### **5.2 Roles of the marking and tracing system**

The roles of the marking and tracing system should include:

- a) assistance during the weapons impact and distribution survey, to verify the participation of all stakeholders, individuals or communities that could be holding illegal weapons, and to register and mark any weapons presented for possible later surrender;
- b) creation of a marking database and diary, to record areas and items marked. This database will be linked with the central databases to be set up by the accountancy and verification organisations;
- c) registration and marking of legal weapons and ammunition held by the police, armed services and authorised individuals;
- d) co-operation with the accountancy organisation that the weapons database includes the recommended factors, including the quantities, types, serial numbers, markings and sources of legal and surrendered weapons;
- e) submission of marking data to the verification organisation;
- f) where necessary, marking of weapons and explosive munitions at collection or storage locations during the weapons registration process;

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<sup>7</sup> See 'Managing the Remnants of War', Chapter 8 p 219.

<sup>8</sup> For more details of SALW Accounting and Verification see RMDS/G 04.20 and 04.40 respectively

- g) tracing of weapons;
- h) marking of the containers earmarked for the movement of weapons and munitions to the destruction points;
- i) tracing of the containers from the collection points to the destruction points;
- j) checking of the markings and registration details of weapons and explosive munitions at the destruction points;
- k) tracing the movement of any components of weapons or munitions declared as scrap for re-cycling, to prevent re-incorporation into weapons; and
- l) briefing the national SALW commission, donors and sponsors of the SALW programme, members of the SALW public awareness campaign, communities, media and NGOs on the marking and tracing procedures that have been carried out in support of the programme

### **5.3 Composition of marking and tracing facility**

The accounting organisation team must include:

- a) sufficient staff numbers to carry out registration and marking of weapons held lawfully by police, armed services and authorised civilians;
- b) sufficient staff numbers to carry out marking of weapons and containers at collection or storage locations;
- c) sufficient staff members to carry out the tracing of containers between collection and destruction points, and containers designated as scrap to the scrapping organisations;
- d) staff members with knowledge of marking and tracing procedures and methods;
- e) staff members trained in the use of computers;
- f) staff members with sufficient seniority and standing to gain detailed information from police and military sources;
- g) staff members with sufficient integrity and credibility to be able to gain and maintain the confidence of all stakeholders;
- h) staff members with knowledge of all national languages, or a team of interpreters; and
- i) a staff member nominated for liaison with communities and the national SALW public awareness campaign.

### **5.4 Authority for direct contact**

The accounting organisation will be authorised to work directly where necessary with the following national organisations:

- a) Ministry of Interior / Internal Affairs;
- b) President's / Prime Minister's Cabinet Office;
- c) Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- d) Ministry of Defence;
- e) Ministry of Finance / Economic Affairs;
- f) Ministry of Justice;

- g) National Focal Point<sup>9</sup>;
- h) United Nations Development Programme, (as Chief Technical Advisor if directly supporting a national programme).

## **5.5 Methods of marking**

The method of marking depends on the types of munitions being surrendered, and materials of which they are constructed. It will also depend on the availability of qualified computer-literate staff. Marking can vary in exactness and simplicity, from a single mark to a complex code. The basic principle of such markings is that they should have the following characteristics:

- a) easy and quick to apply;
- b) long-lasting and difficult to erase, and;
- c) as informative as possible.

Types of marking to be included could include:

- a) electrical or chemical etching of a major metal component;
- b) cutting a scribe mark by hand saw or electric grinder in an obvious metal or hard plastic component, whose removal by grinding or filing would be obvious to open inspection;
- c) stamping or marking with a steel punch, or;
- d) marking by self-adhesive barcode patch. This would specially apply in circumstances where theft of weapons or explosive munitions was unlikely, and barcode patches likely to stay in position. Barcode marking would also be suitable for the tracing of containers.

## **5.6 International co-operation on marking and tracing**

Where groups of nation states with common borders all suffer directly or indirectly from armed insurrection, it is recommended that common marking systems and identity codes are agreed, and that weapons databases are harmonised. This will allow international tracing to be carried out. Recommended procedures for such international tracing have been drafted by the OSCE<sup>10</sup>.

## **6. Areas of responsibility**

### **6.1 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

UNDP has a general responsibility for enabling, assisting and encouraging the effective management of SALW control programmes by continuously maintaining an overview of RMDS/G to reflect developing SALW control norms and practices, and by informing of any changes to international regulations and requirements.

UNDP should apply RMDS/G to its SALW intervention programmes, activities and contracts within South Eastern and Eastern Europe unless the local situation precludes their effective application. In such circumstances, when one or more RMDS/G is not appropriate, UNDP will provide alternative specifications, requirements and guidance.

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<sup>9</sup> This should be the nominated individual, not the organisation providing the NFP.

<sup>10</sup> See OSCE Best Practice Guidelines Document 'Record-keeping, marking process and traceability'

## **6.2 Regional organizations**

In certain areas of the world, regional organizations have been given a mandate by their member states to coordinate and support SALW control programmes within a state's national boundaries. (For example EUFOR within Bosnia and Herzegovina).

In these circumstances the regional organization should assume many of the responsibilities and roles of the national SALW authority, and could also act as a conduit for donor resources. The responsibilities and roles of regional organizations for SALW control will vary from state to state and may be subject to specific Memoranda of Understanding, or similar agreements.

## **6.3 SEESAC**

SEESAC shall provide operational assistance, technical assistance and management information, within resources and on request, to all SALW intervention programmes within South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

## **6.4 National SALW authority <sup>11</sup>**

The national SALW authority should be responsible for ensuring the national conditions that enable the effective management of national SALW intervention projects. The national SALW authority is ultimately responsible for developing and managing the SALW intervention programme within its national boundaries.

The national SALW authority shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a national SALW commission for the management of SALW intervention planning and operations. The national SALW commission should be consistent with the guidelines provided by RMDS/G, and other relevant national and international standards, regulations and requirements.

## **6.5 Intra-national authorities**

Authorities that exist within nations introducing SALW Control operations and legislation are responsible for ensuring that their members recognise, respect and comply with such legislation, and support the national government in its introduction and implementation.

## **6.6 SALW Control organizations**

NGOs, commercial companies and other organizations involved in SALW control interventions shall make every effort to liaise and cooperate with the national SALW commission in order to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and safety of SALW control interventions.

## **6.7 Donors**

Most SALW Control operations are funded by donors – mainly governments and regional organisations. Donor agencies are part of the management process, and as such have a responsibility for ensuring that the projects they are funding are managed effectively, and in accordance with national and/or international standards. This involves attention to the writing of contract documents, and ensuring that SALW Control organisations chosen to carry out such contracts are competent. This responsibility and accountability is even greater when the national SALW authority is in the process of formation, and has not had the opportunity to gain experience

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<sup>11</sup> In this case the national SALW authority, if the same as the national SALW commission, may be responsible to itself.

## **Annex A (Normative) References**

The following normative documents contain provisions, which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of the standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this part of the standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the normative documents indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid ISO or EN:

- a) OSCE Best Practice Guide - Record-keeping, Marking Process and Traceability;
- b) RMDS/G 03.10 - National SALW Commissions;
- c) RMDS/G 04.20 - SALW Accounting;
- d) RMDS/G 04.30 - Monitoring of SALW programmes; and
- e) RMDS/G 04.40 - Verification of SALW programmes.

The latest version/edition of these references should be used. SEESAC hold copies of all references used in this standard. A register of the latest version/edition of the RMDS/G standards, guides and references is maintained by SEESAC, and can be read on the RMDS/G website: <http://www.seesac.org/>. National SALW authorities, employers and other interested bodies and organisations should obtain copies before commencing SALW programmes.

## **Annex B** **(Informative)** **Terms and definitions**

### **B.1.1**

#### **micro-disarmament**

the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. It includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

### **B.1.2**

#### **national authority**

the government department(s), organization(s) or institution(s) in a country charged with the regulation, management and coordination of **SALW** activities.

### **B.1.3**

#### **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)**

all lethal conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or a light vehicle, that also do not require a substantial logistic and maintenance capability.

Note: There are a variety of definitions for SALW circulating and international consensus on a 'correct' definition has yet to be agreed. For the purposes of RMDS/G the above definition will be used.

### **B.1.4**

#### **standard**

a standard is a documented agreement containing technical specifications or other precise criteria to be used consistently as rules, guidelines, or definitions of characteristics to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose.

Note: RMDS/G aim to improve safety and efficiency in SALW Control by promoting the preferred procedures and practices at both headquarters and field level. To be effective, the standards should be definable, measurable, achievable and verifiable.

### **B.1.5**

#### **tracing**

the systematic tracking of illicit weapons from their source of manufacture, through the lines of supply, to the point of diversion into the illicit market and unlawful possession.