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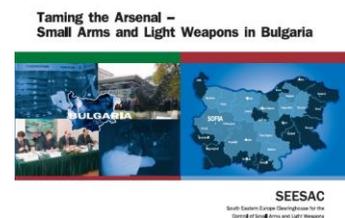
06 April 2005

## SEESAC ACTIVITY REPORT – AR 48

### SALW SURVEY - BULGARIA

<b>SEESAC FUNCTIONAL AREA</b>	<b>FA 3 - Management Information</b>
<b>SEESAC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY</b>	<b>SG 2 - Co-ordination Measures SG 4 - Project Support SG 8 - Operational Research</b>

The Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD), Sofia and Saferworld, London held a media launch on 30 March 2005 to officially present the findings of the SALW Survey of Bulgaria entitled, 'Taming the Arsenal – Small Arms and Light Weapons in Bulgaria'. At the launch, representatives from the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior also gave their comments on the report. The media launch was also well attended by the local press and representatives of civil society.



Research for the survey was conducted in Bulgaria by Saferworld and CSD between July and November 2004 with funding provided by SEESAC. The survey was based on the SALW Survey Protocols and includes all components of those protocols.

The report concluded that there are 305,624 legal firearms registered to 249,882 private citizens and an estimated 93,000 to 259,000 unregistered, illegal weapons in Bulgaria.



The rate of legal weapon possession among civilians has nearly tripled in the last decade with the gradual easing of restrictions on civilian gun ownership and a growth in imports.

The Bulgarian Armed Forces hold around 200,000 surplus SALW and 21,000 tons of surplus SALW ammunition. At present there is a national programme for the destruction of surplus ammunition but not for weapons. The Bulgarian Government's preferred choice for disposing of surplus weapons is sale, whether on the national or international market, rather than destruction. Despite this, around 100,000 surplus military SALW have so far been destroyed with the assistance of international donors, with whom discussions are ongoing.

Despite the widespread availability of SALW, both legal and illegal, the impacts on public health, community security and inter-ethnic relations are not serious.

Absolute numbers of firearm homicides have decreased in recent years in line with a general decline in crime rates. However, the proportion of annual homicides committed with SALW has increased during the same period.

The proportion of females who fall victim to gun crime has doubled in the last three years, to the point where it now exceeds the global average.



Most Bulgarians do not perceive SALW proliferation to be a serious security concern at this time and rank gun-related problems far below other issues such as unemployment, crime and corruption.

Most Bulgarians feel that the current domestic weapons permit regime is not restrictive enough and believe that stricter controls will increase the general level of security in the country.

A majority of Bulgarians are afraid they will become a victim of crime, with crimes against property being their main concern. Fear of crime is the single most important driving force behind civilian demand for weapons, with hunting coming a close second.

Although the system for issuing civilian weapon permits is strict, its application is often flawed. Vague criteria for assessing licence applications appear to invite corruption on the one hand while causing frustration to many gun owners.

The efforts of Bulgaria's law enforcement agencies to combat SALW crime are undermined by a weak judicial system that is characterised by corruption, long delays and light sentencing.

Bulgaria's SALW production capacity is much reduced in comparison to a decade ago with only 8,000 – 9,000 persons directly employed on SALW production at present.

The arms and dual-use goods transfer control system has been progressively tightened from 1996 onwards and the regulatory framework is now fairly comprehensive in scope. Despite the reforms, several official transfers to potentially sensitive destinations are thought to have occurred in the last few years.

A comprehensive SALW Survey should be the first stage of any SALW related intervention by the government or international community. Functional analysis of a SALW programme identifies that initial data has a major influence on programme success. It is also important that a SALW Survey be considered to be a distinct operational task with the aim of determining the nature and extent of SALW proliferation and impact within a region, nation or community in order to provide accurate data and information for a safe, effective and efficient intervention by an appropriate organisation. The information contained within a SALW Survey serves as a basis for monitoring the SALW situation in a country or measuring the success of any future SALW control intervention.

The report can be downloaded in whole or in part from the SEESAC ([www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)), Saferworld ([www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)) and CSD ([www.csd.bg](http://www.csd.bg)) websites. Hard copies of the report will be available from 30 April 2005 upon request from SEESAC, which can be contacted on (+381) (11) 3446353 or by E Mail at [info@seesac.org](mailto:info@seesac.org).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Wilkinson', is located in the lower left quadrant of the page. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

**Adrian Wilkinson**  
**SEESAC Team Leader**

Office: +381 11 344 6353  
Mobile: +381 63 217 350  
Fax: +381 11 344 6356  
E Mail: [adrian.wilkinson@undp.org](mailto:adrian.wilkinson@undp.org)  
URL: [www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)