Information about the Czech Republic's approach to international negotiations on the issue of small arms and light weapons and about the volume of production, exports, and imports and the numbers of weapons among holders of arms permits and licences in the Czech Republic in 2002

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1. Introduction

The information submitted here is a response to National Security Council Resolution No 138 of 20 November 2000. This material does not contain information about the numbers of small arms and light weapons in the arsenal of the Army of the Czech Republic and in the arsenal of other armed forces. This information is classified in accordance with Act No 148/1998 Coll., on the protection of classified information and on an amendment to related legislation, and in accordance with Government Decree No 246/1998 Coll., setting up lists of classified information.

2. International negotiations and cooperation

2.1. The international control regime of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Control for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies

The principal activity of the international control regime of the Wassenaar Arrangement, which is an informal group of 33 countries[1], is to ensure the general exchange of information on:

- global security developments;
- regional developments in the security situation in crisis areas;
- trends in trading in conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies;
- exports of monitored categories of conventional weapons;
- rejected export licences.

Members of the plenary session of the Wassenaar Arrangement met in December 2002, with the Ukraine taking the chair. The following conclusions were reached:

- they agreed on the need to combat terrorism;
- they decided by resolution that the list of controlled goods (especially mobile anti-aircraft rocket launchers and small arms and light weapons) needed to be extended;
- they emphasized the need to make the exchange of information more effective;
- they supported attempts to prevent illegal transfers of weapons;
- they approved a Memorandum of Understanding focusing on the resale of weapons;
- they supported the development of contacts with non-member countries, including the main arms producers, and openness of the regime on a non-discriminatory basis;
- they agreed to continue contact with the UN and other international organizations and non-dissemination programmes.

This year, when the international control regime is under the Presidency of the United States of America, a comprehensive evaluation of Wassenaar Arrangement activities is under way.

2.2. United Nations (UN)

2.2.1. UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

[1] OECD countries (except Mexico and Iceland), plus Russia, the Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, and Argentina

The UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ('UN Conference'), held in July 2001, approved the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ('UN Action Programme'), which specifies the goals of the international community in the corresponding process, not only at a national and regional level, but also at a global level.

At a *national* level, the process entails inter alia the adoption and application of legislation in the following areas:

- checks on production, exports, and imports in order to prevent illegal activities, including legal sanctions
- the labelling of weapons on production and import;
- the filing of records to ensure traceability;
- evaluations of national defence requirements, and the destruction of small arms and light weapons as the preferential solution should any surplus thereof be identified.

At a regional level, the process involves measures to increase transparency (so far on a voluntary basis). Regional measures in the most afflicted areas could include moratoria on the manufacture, import, and export of small arms and light weapons.

At a global level, the foundations are to be laid for the harmonization of cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking, and in preventing and settling conflicts, especially in the framework of demobilization, demilitarization, disarmament, and reconsolidation projects for former soldiers who were members of warring parties. Considerable attention is paid to the destruction of small arms and light weapons in post-conflict areas, especially in cases of domestic conflict.

An international meeting will be convened biennially to assess the situation regarding small arms and light weapons; in 2006 a follow-up conference will be held to evaluate developments and the effectiveness of measures stemming from the UN Action Programme. This year's meeting will be held on 7-11 July 2003 in New York. Last year's Information on Small Arms and Light Weapons was used in the preparations for the Czech Republic's contribution to this meeting; the Czech Republic has also answered a questionnaire from the UK nongovernmental organization IANSA[2]. Preparations are also under way for the EU contribution, which will include an evaluation of the fulfilment of the EU Joint Action 2002/589/CFSP on Combating the Destabilizing Accumulation and Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the EU Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms. An evaluation of the implementation of the UN Action Programme is given in Appendix to this information; a report on the fulfilment of the UN Action Programme in the Czech Republic in English is available from the web page http://disarmament.un.org.

2.2.2. The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition

In the framework of the United Nations, the issue of small arms and light weapons coincides with discussions on how to combat transnational organized crime. In Palermo in December

[2] International Action Network on Small Arms, www.iansa.org

2000, the Czech Republic subscribed to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime ('Convention'). Under Government Resolution No 1227 of 4 December 2000, the Minister of the Interior and Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Legislative Council were tasked with presenting the Convention, once signed, to the Government with a proposal for its ratification.

This Convention includes a Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition ('Protocol'). The primary aim of the Protocol is to ensure effective cooperation between the signatory states in combating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, and covers the issues of the traceability of firearms movements, the labelling and resale of firearms, and record-keeping. From the aspect of certain terms and specifications of measures stemming from the Protocol, it overlaps in some respects with the UN Action Programme in its coverage of the issue. A positive feature of the Protocol is that it is a legal binding international agreement. Considering that cooperation in issues of the illegal flow of weapons is an important aspect of the fight against terrorism, this matter has been included in the National Action Plan for Combating Terrorism. Under Resolution 1282 of 16 December 2002, the Czech Government commissioned the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior to prepare, in cooperation with the Minister of Industry and Trade, a motion to ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, further to the ratification of this Convention.

The Ministry of the Interior is working on preparations for a motion to ratify the above-mentioned Protocol. However, the Protocol criminalizes the act of intentionally falsifying or illicitly obliterating, removing or altering the markings on firearms required by article 5(1)(c) of the Protocol. Czech legislation is not fully compatible with this provision, and therefore an amendment must be made to the Penal Code to contain the body of a new crime based on the above-mentioned conduct. The amendment to the Penal Code is expected to enter into effect on 1 January 2005.

2.3. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE discusses and adopts regional measures relating to small arms and light weapons. The Czech Republic implements measures stemming from the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons ('OSCE Document'), which was passed at the OCSE Ministerial Council Meeting in November 2000. In 2002, the Czech Republic submitted all information required of it regarding national legislation, measures to control SAWL exports, the system used to label SAWL, technology used to destroy SAWL (especially surplus SAWL), and SAWL exports and imports. The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperate on the preparation of the required information.

It ensues from the OSCE Document inter alia that the countries involved agree to the marking of firearms manufactured on their territory in such a manner that allows these firearms to be traced. The markings should be permanent and should provide information allowing for the country of origin and serial number to be identified. A similar obligation also relates to unmarked imports of small arms and light weapons. In the Czech Republic, this matter has been fully resolved for the marking of newly manufactured military (prohibited) small arms which are not intended for the arsenal of the Army of the Czech Republic.

Under Government Resolution No 1282 of 16 December 2002, the Ministry of Industry and Trade therefore incorporated an obligation into the draft amendment of Act No 156/2000 Coll.[3] whereby those who manufacture military arms which are not intended for the arsenal of the Army of the Czech Republic or who export such arms from the Czech Republic must present them to the Czech Office for the Testing of Weapons and Ammunition (COTWA) for an examination as to whether they carry adequate markings. Under the amendment to Act No 156/2000 Coll., COTWA is obliged to label these arms with the relevant markings. The amendment is currently at the state prior to debate in the Senate. It is expected to enter into effect as of 1 October 2003.

2.4. European Union (EU)

The EU continues to pay special attention to the transparency of military material exports and imports and to the observance of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports ('Code of Conduct') and the EU Joint Action on Combating the Destabilizing Accumulation and Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

There is room to discuss issues related to SAWL exports in particular during meetings of the Council's Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports (COARM), which the Czech Republic has contributed in the past in Troika format with candidate countries. Both formal and informal meetings discuss the following issues:

- transparency and exchange of information, especially as regards exports of military material, including small arms and light weapons (application of the Code of Conduct and notification of rejected transactions);
- a uniform EUC (End-User Certificate);
- arms brokering.

By signing the Treaty of Accession to the EU, the Czech Republic became an active observer, a status enabling it to take a full part, for the first time, in a meeting of the COARM Working Party on 14 May 2003. Subsequently, on 27-28 May 20003, the Czech Republic hosted an informal meeting of experts from EU Member States and candidate countries on the control of conventional arms exports.

The EU has not yet resolved the issue of the inclusion of acceding countries into the system used to notify rejected export licence applications and into the system used to exchange information on the export of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies.

3. National control system for exports and imports of small arms and light weapons and for the possession of small arms

3.1. Volume of production, evaluation of trade and of non-commercial exports; legislation

[3] Act No 156/2000 Coll., on the authentication of weapons, ammunition, and pyrotechnical articles and on an amendment to Act No 288/1995 Coll., on firearms and ammunition (the Firearms Act), in the wording of Act No 13/1998 Coll., and to Act No 368/1992 Coll., on administrative charges, as amended, in the wording of Act No 119/2002 Coll.

In 2002, according to information supplied by the Ministry of Industry and Trade in the scope of statistical surveys in accordance with Act No 89/1995 Coll., the following numbers of small arms were *manufactured* in the Czech Republic:

37,608 pistols of varying types and calibre;
5 sub-machine guns;
1,326 sniper rifles.

Individual figures on the output of individual manufacturers cannot be published due to restrictions imposed by the above-mentioned law.

Arms *trading* is regulated in particular by:

- Act No 156/2000 Coll., on the authentication of weapons, ammunition, and pyrotechnical articles and on an amendment to Act No 288/1995 Coll., on firearms and ammunition, as amended;
- Act No 455/1991 Coll., on licensed trading (the Trades Licensing Act), as amended;
- Act No 38/1994 Coll., on foreign trade in military material and on an amendment to Act No 455/1991 Coll., on licensed trading (the Trades Licensing Act), as amended, and to Act No 140/1961 Coll., the Penal Code, as amended;
- Act No 62/2000 Coll., on certain measures related to the export or import of products and on licensing procedure and on an amendment to related legislation;
- Act No 119/2002, on firearms, as amended;
- Ministry of Industry and Trade Regulation No 89/1994, implementing certain provisions of Act No 38/1994 Coll., on foreign trade in military material and on an amendment to Act No 455/1991 Coll., on licensed trading (the Trades Licensing Act), as amended, and to Act No 140/1961 Coll., the Penal Code, as amended.

As for the control of exports of military material, including small arms and light weapons, it has been stated in the past that the effectiveness of Act No 38/1994 Coll. can be enhanced by conducting a more thorough examination of the integrity and credibility of authorized representatives and other corporate bodies. Certain steps in this respect are included in the National Action Plan for Combating Terrorism, approved by the Government of the Czech Republic under Resolution No 385 of 10 April 2002.

On 1 January 2003, *Act No 119/2002 Coll., on firearms*, as amended, entered into effect and fully replaced Act No 288/1995 Coll. This new Act is based on Act No 288/1995 Coll. and preserves certain institutions established under this Act, e.g. firearms permits, weapons registration, weapon waybills, etc. The reason for the adoption of this Act was primarily the need to harmonize Czech legislation with Community law. The new Arms Act is fully compatible with Community law. During the preparation of the Act, the principal EC provisions regulating arms and ammunitions were applied, i.e. Council Directive 91/477/EEC of 18 June 1991 on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, Council Directive 93/15/EEC of 5 April 1993 on the harmonization of the provisions relating to the placing on the market and supervision of explosives for civil uses. Commission Recommendation 93/216/EEC of 25 February 1993 on the European firearms pass, as amended by Commission Recommendation 96/126/EEC, and the European Convention on the Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Firearms by Individuals were also respected.

In the past, the control of exports and imports of small weapons has encountered problems regarding firearms classification, in particular the classification of certain types of pistols and

pump guns in the category of military or civil firearms. Under the amendment to the Firearms Act, firearms are classified in one of four categories depending on their lethality and the risk of misuse:

Category A – prohibited weapons (including military weapons and military small arms and light weapons);
Category B – weapons subject to registration;
Category C – weapons the possession of which must be reported;
Category D – all other weapons.

Under section 3 of the Firearms Act, as of 1 January 2003 the Czech Office for the Testing of Weapons and Ammunition is the official decision-maker in cases of doubt as to which category a weapon should be classified in.

The law regulates the reasons for granting exemptions in cases of prohibited weapons and lays down the method used to issue such exemptions. The law introduces an authorization system for weapons subject to registration and appoints other terms and conditions for the treatment of all weapons regardless of category.

Act No 119/2002 Coll. established ten groups of arms licences, which replaced weapons authorizations. A weapons licence is an official document authorizing a legal person or a natural person engaged in business or analogous activities to acquire and possess a weapon or ammunition in the scope of authorization stipulated for the individual groups of weapons licence. Natural persons who are not entrepreneurs may acquire and possess weapons or ammunition only if they hold an arms permit.

Although the arms trade is primarily in the competence of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Act No 119/2002 Coll. is one of the links in the system of arms trading. An entrepreneur who holds the relevant trade permit certificate, issued in accordance with the Trades Licensing Act, may trade in arms provided that he has also been issued with an arms licence of the corresponding group in accordance with Act No 119/2002 Coll. The arms licence issuance procedure requires that the relevant police department screen applicants to ensure inter alia that they are reliable and that they do not have a criminal record. The law also introduces authorization for weapons to be transported by an entrepreneur. An arms dealer who imports, exports, or transits weapons over the Czech Republic is obliged to apply for a transportation licence, which is issued by the competent police department. In addition to weapons waybills, which have been taken from previous legislation and which are used for non-trade weapons exports, imports, or transits, the issuance of licences for the transportation of weapons by entrepreneurs enables an administrative authority to acquire relevant information about the movement of weapons across the borders of the Czech Republic and to run checks on such movement. This acquired information also allows the Czech Republic to fulfil its international obligations stemming from the European Convention on the Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Firearms by Individuals and to supply other signatory states with relevant information about the movement of weapons.

The Ministry of the Interior and the Czech Republic State Police Force are responsible for monitoring observance of the whole of the Firearms Act and the related implementing regulations. Unlike the previous legislative provisions, the competence of the Czech Office for Testing Weapons and Ammunitions has been amended by the Firearms Act to include decision-making when there are doubts regarding the classification of a type of weapon or

ammunition into a particular category. The new legislation has also modified the management of information systems on weapons, ammunition, and firing ranges currently in operation, including the provision of information from these systems.

Table No 1
Military small arms and light weapons exported from the Czech Republic between 1 January and 31 December 2002

1. Machine guns

7.62 mm UK 52/57, 59L	93
12.7 mm vz. 38/64	600
14.5 mm KPVT	8

2. Sub-machine guns and automatic pistols

7.65 mm, 9 mm Skorpion vz. 61, vz. 68, vz. 83	573
9 mm PM 98 Glauberyt	1
7.62 mm PPSH vz. 41	400
9 mm CZ 75 AUTO automatic pistol	205

3. Automatic rifles

7.62 mm vz. 58	11
5.26 mm CZ 2000 LADA	5

Table No 2
Military small arms and light weapons imported into the Czech Republic between 1 January and 31 December 2002

1. Machine guns

7.62 mm UK 52/57, 59L	73
5.56 mm Minimi	2

2. Sub-machine guns and automatic pistols

9 mm PM 98 Glauberyt	2
9 mm MPA5 and MP5 K	314
5.56 mm SIG SG 552 P	1

4. Self-loading rifles

7.62 mm SKS Simonov	50

5. Silencers

	2

6. Mortars

Heckler and Koch hand grenade	112

Table No 3
Small arms and light weapons for civil purposes exported from the Czech Republic between 1 January and 31 December 2002

Rifles	67,844
Pistols, revolvers	62,501

Table No 4
Small arms and light weapons for civil purposes imported into the Czech Republic between 1 January and 31 December 2002

Rifles	15,445
Pistols, revolvers	14,401

In addition to commercial exports of military small arms and light weapons in accordance with Act No 38/1994 Coll., on foreign trade in military material, and exports of civil weapons for hunting, sports, self-defence purposes, etc., in accordance with Act No 62/2000 Coll., on certain measures related to the export or import of products and on licensing procedure and on an amendment to related legislation, permanent exports of weapons were made in 2002 in the framework of *non-commercial exports.* These exports were regulated by Act No 288/1995, on firearms and ammunition. The Czech Republic State Police Force issued permits in the form of weapons waybills for permanent exports.

In 2002, 217 permanent exports of firearms and ammunition were permitted on the basis of weapons waybills; 319 weapons and 14,604 pieces of ammunition were exported from the Czech Republic.

Exports of firearms included:
148 short ball-cartridge weapons
111 long ball-cartridge weapons
44 shotguns
16 other category firearms

For non-trade weapons imports and exports, weapons waybills were issued for permanent import or permanent export. Commercial imports or exports of weapons and ammunition were not regulated by Act No 288/1995 Coll.

3.2. Numbers of small arms possessed by holders of arms permits and authorizations; offences and crimes in this field; legislation

In 2002, the possession of small arms and light weapons was regulated by Act No 288/1995 Coll., on firearms and ammunition, as amended. This law laid down the terms and conditions for the acquisition and possession of firearms, firearms registration, and certain conditions for the operation of permitted trades connected with firearms, etc. Only holders of an arms permit of the relevant groups or holders of arms licence were able to acquire, possess, and handle weapons subject to registration. Act No 288/1995 Coll. laid down the terms and conditions under which an arms permit or arms licence could be issued. These included the principal conditions of integrity (no criminal record), reliability, eligibility on expert and health grounds, age, etc. Arms permits were issued to natural persons, arms licences primarily to legal persons.

Arms permit and arms licence holders and registered weapons

Arms permit holders and registered weapons in their possession in the Czech Republic as at 31 December 2002:

Table No 5

Year	Arms permit holders in the Czech Republic	Registered weapons in the possession of arms permit holders					
		Short ball-cartridge	Long ball-cartridge	Shotguns	Other	Prohibited	Total
2002	310,201	220,769	147,600	169,382	36,494	401	574,245
2001	321,215	215,358	54,173	168,700	33,089	355	562,320
2000	303,904	199,934	139,108	164,358	30,744	308	534,144

Arms licence holders and registered weapons in their possession in the Czech Republic as at 31 December 2002:

Table No 6

Year	Arms licence holders in the Czech Republic	Registered weapons in the possession of arms licence holders					
		Short ball-cartridge	Long ball-cartridge	Shotguns	Other	Prohibited	Total
2002	1,827	17,849	8,400	1,346	763	817	28,358
2001	1,894	18,679	8,858	1,310	721	801	29,568
2000	1,889	18,569	9,227	1,294	586	726	29,676

The police force reported 4,991 offences against the law perpetrated by arms permit holders (a rise by 3,018 offences compared with 2001, i.e. by 153%!). Of this number, 2,530 offences were settled in the framework of hearings of administrative delicts, where penalties totalling CZK 1,141,450 were imposed. The police force reported the remaining 2,461 offences to the relevant administrative authorities for settlement. The most serious long-term offences include cases where weapons and ammunition are not sufficiently safeguarded against theft, loss, or misuse. In 2002, arms permit holders reported 487 cases of arms theft, in which 592 weapons were stolen (a rise by 136 weapons, i.e. by 30%).

In the case of business entities in the field of weapons and ammunitions, as well as other arms licence holders, the police force detected and investigated 69 cases of administrative delicts, where penalties totalling CZK 541,500 were imposed. The most serious faults were identified in the keeping of the relevant records and in the safeguarding of weapons. Arms licence holders reported 6 cases of arms theft, in which 15 weapons were stolen.

In 2002, the Administrative Operations Service of the Czech Republic State Police Force registered 2,623 cases of loss or theft of arms permits (a rise by 484 cases, i.e. by 23%) and two cases of loss or theft of arms licences (a decrease by seven cases). Purchases of weapons based on stolen or lost arms permits are a very serious problem; in 2002, ten such cases were registered, in which a total of eleven weapons were acquired.

In 2002, the police force in the Czech Republic investigated 638 crimes of unlicensed armament, as set forth in section 185 of the Penal Code (a fall of eleven cases). The clear-up rate was 87.77%.

Trafficking in military arms is punishable under sections 124(d) to 124(f) of the Penal Code, which cover breach of the regulations on foreign trade in military material. Seven cases were discovered in 20002.

One of the repressive units of the Czech Republic's state administration responsible for actively combating trafficking in arms, explosives, military material, radioactive material, and dual-use goods is the Customs Headquarters of the Ministry of Finance. In 2002, customs authorities investigated 14 cases in this field. Specifically, these cases involved:

- 3 short firearms (pistols and revolvers);
- 282 pieces of various types of ammunition for small arms and light weapons;
- 5 articles of various military material.

An analysis of the individual investigations revealed that one pistol with 23 pieces of ammunition was to be illegally exported as an ordinary parcel, a percussion revolver was to be illegally imported as a parcel, and one pistol with 49 pieces of ammunition was discovered during a narcotics operation. With regard to exports and imports of ammunition, four cases involved 'negligence', where foreigners evidently failed to see forgotten hunting weapon ammunition in their vehicle after a hunting trip and carried this ammunition over the state border without the relevant documents. In one case, three submachine gun magazines with ammunition were discovered in a specially built box in a railway carriage. In one case (as is mentioned above in connection with a pistol) ammunition was discovered in a parcel. In two cases, ammunition was discovered during narcotics operations by the customs authority (49 pistol cartridges and one submachine gun magazine with cartridges).

As for military material and dual-use goods, the overwhelming majority of cases involved the non-observance of the licensing duty during the import or export of goods. In these cases a valid licence was not produced in customs procedure or the goods were intentionally incorrectly classified with the aim of evading the licensing duty.

In 2002, an the D-Zbrane IS, and information system of arms permit holders, arms licence holders, and registered weapons, was completed at the Czech Republic State Police Force. According to available information, the Czech Republic is the first country in Europe to have such a database.

The Administrative Operations Service of the Czech Republic State Police Force conducted running checks on explosives in accordance with Act No 315/2001 Coll., amending Act No 61/1988 Coll., on mining activities, explosives, and on the State Mining Authority, as amended, and amending Act No 44/1988, on the protection and use of mineral resources (the Mining Act), as amended. No serious breaches of generally binding legal regulations were discovered in this field.

4. Conclusion

During discussions on small arms and light weapons in the relevant international organizations and agreements, the Czech Republic actively contributed to the search for and formulation of necessary measures, in particular in the field of trafficking in small arms and light weapons, including increases in the effectiveness of export controls and transparency. The Czech Republic honours its internal obligations.

When the new Act No 119/2002 Coll., on firearms and ammunition, came into effect, the control of the manufacture, acquisition, and possession of small arms and light weapons was harmonized with the European Union. The amendment to Act No 156/2000 Coll. will introduce the legislation necessary for weapons marking in accordance with OSCE requirements.

In the light of the Czech Republic's initiatives focused on combating illegal activities involving small weapons and light weapons, and from the aspect of combating terrorism, it is necessary to emphasize Resolution No 1282 of 16 December 2002, under which the Government tasked the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior with the preparation, in cooperation with the Minister of Industry and Trade, of a motion to ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, further to the ratification of this Convention.

Based on statistics concerning the extent of SALW exports and imports, in 2002 – as in the year previous – there was a fall in exports of small arms and light weapons (in 2001, 5,436 SAWL were exported, compared with 1,896 SALW in 2002, i.e. a decline by 65%). In contrast, imports rose by 57% (from 353 SALW in 2001 to 556 SALW in 2002).

Statistics also reveal that in 2002 there was a decline in the number of arms permit holders but an increase in the number of registered weapons in their possession. At the same time, the number of arms licence holders and the number of registered weapons in their possession fell.

The number of offences among arms permit holders escalated to 4,991 cases (an increase of 153%). The number of arms permits lost or stolen rose to 2,623 cases, i.e. by 23%. The number of crimes involving unlicensed armament remained at approximately the same level as in the preceding year (638 cases, i.e. a decline by 1.6%).