

Summaries

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The fight against illegal arms trade; the policy of the United Nations and the European Union

C.J.C.F. Fijnaut

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) make up the real weapons of mass destruction in today's world. It's estimated that some 300.000 people in (post) conflict zones are being killed every year by means of SALW. This problem is fuelled by the illegal or in any case 'grey' trade in SALW all over the world. This article gives an overview of the international agreements and negotiations on measures against illegal arms trade within the United Nations and the European Union. Efforts to redefine standards for legal arm trade and the creation of a conduct code for countries exporting arms are also discussed. Clearly the Firearms Protocol based on the third protocol of the Palermo Convention 2000 has had an enormous impact on the European Union's policy against the illegal arms trade between 2000 and 2005. Tangible results are for instance more qualified legislation and regional agreements, specialist training of police and customs officers, and the destruction of arms stocks from the former Soviet Union. Overall, however, low political prioritization, limited coordinated efforts to reach common understandings and the lack of dedicated resources hamper the fight against illegal arms trade.

The position of the Netherlands in the international arms trade; salesman and clergyman

F. Slijper

Since many years the Netherlands belong to the world's major arms exporters. Transparency in the trade has increased significantly over the past ten years, enabling thorough analysis of individual

transfers. While a EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports was agreed in 1998, flexible interpretation of the criteria has allowed for major exports to dictatorships, regions of conflict, and developing countries. In other areas control is insufficient (transit of arms, export of components, arms brokering) or lacking ('non-strategic' trade with military customers). Trade and industry policies, as well as geopolitical relations tend to weigh heavier than a real ethical foreign policy that would require much more restraint on arms exports.

Arms trafficking and the exploitation of natural resources in West Africa

T. Boekhout van Solinge, W. Huisman and D. Siegel

In this article the authors analyse the relationship between arms trafficking and the exploitation of natural resources in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Exploitation of natural resources is an important source for financing violent conflicts and civil wars. The authors describe the origin, destination and illicit trade in weapons based on information about specific cases of individuals and business companies involved in this trafficking. Also, the topic of regulation of the weapon market is discussed.

The fight against illegal firearms trade within the EU countries

A.C.M. Spapens

Within the European Union illicit arms trafficking is considered to be a particularly serious form of criminality. Most of the people buying weapons that are smuggled within the Union itself, are criminals. This is, at least on the basis of the Dutch figures, for a large part an internal problem of the Union. In 2001 and 2002, 80% of the pistols seized by the Dutch police were produced in the member states. Most of the firearms are first manufactured and sold legally and then enter the illicit domain only later on. Very diverse methods can be used to do this, for instance fake exports, conversion of non-lethal firearms, recycling of discarded weapons, and theft from legal dealers or private owners of legal firearms. Tackling these flows proves to be very complex. The measures taken in the Council Directive 91/477 on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons only provides a minimum level of harmonization. Until now, joint police actions with regard to arms trafficking have been limited to experiments.

Tackling illegal firearms trade; the Dutch approach

M.S. de Vries

Recently, the demand as well as the supply of illegal firearms in the Netherlands seems to decrease. However, it is questionable whether these developments are the result of successful efforts of the Dutch police in fighting the illegal arms trade. The reliability of the information in police systems is limited and police investigations fail in tracing the origins of seized firearms. Furthermore, the fight against the illegal arms trade is hampered by several factors that lay outside the sphere of influence of the Dutch police, for example limitations in the European context of control, differences in the arms legislation of the Netherlands and other European countries, and the characteristics of the criminals that are involved in this particular criminal business. The market for illegal firearms may be disrupted by measures like joint control activities of European police forces, identifying and tracing the origins of seized firearms, and measures of situational crime prevention.

More categories of stabbing weapons prohibited

F. Beijgaard

General anxiety on the perceived easy availability of illegal types of knives in the Netherlands recently was the reason for setting up a research among regular selling points like weapon shops and outdoor stores all over the country. The researchers concluded that in general shopkeepers are law abiding and do not sell illicit types of knives. However, various types of knives, although permitted legally, are considered to be quite dangerous. Exactly these types of knives are widely sold. Also the (il)legality is sometimes difficult to establish since this distinction depends on the length or the form of the knife. Therefore new legislation will be more explicit by prohibiting certain types of knives like flick-knives, balisong (butterfly) knives and jack knives altogether, no matter their size or form.