

# DISARMAMENT & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE (DISEC)

## Topic 1: Halting the illegal supply of military weapons to paramilitary organizations

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### 1. Definition of Key Terms

**mercenaries:** individuals who fight for financial gain in foreign conflicts that are primarily used by non-State armed groups and more occasionally by governments.

**private military companies (PMCs):** corporate entities providing offensive services designed to have a military impact in a given situation that are generally contracted by governments.

**private security companies (PSCs):** corporate entities providing defensive services to protect individuals and property, frequently used by multinational companies in the extractive sector, humanitarian agencies and individuals in situations of conflict or instability.

**The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT):** an international treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms and seeks to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers.

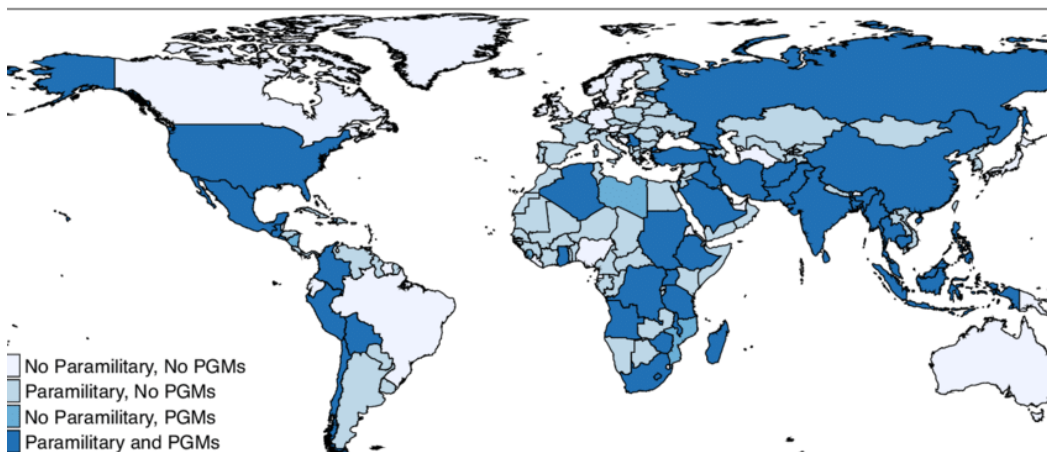
**paramilitary:** an organization whose structure, tactics, training, subculture, and (often) function are similar to those of a professional military, but are not part of a country's official or legitimate armed forces.

### 2. Introduction

The 1990s witnessed a shift in the way wars are fought, as the number of weapons available increased and the types of actors engaged in warfare multiplied. The opening up of the international arms trade, in particular, with new buyers and more supply channels, has raised concerns about who buys arms and for what use. A feature of this changing nature of the conflict has been the continued and growing presence of mercenaries and the emergence of private companies. These are tasked with providing military and security services, ranging from logistical support and training to consultancy, procurement of arms and intervention on the ground. Moreover, as the international community moves to consider how to regulate the activities of actors involved in the international arms trade, such as arms brokers or arms transport agents, so too the activities of private military and security companies should become an area of attention and control.

	Paramilitary Forces	Pro-Government Militias
Government Link	Official	Semi-official, informal
Functions	Regular and irregular activities	Rather irregular activities
Autonomy from Government	Low	High
Example	National Gendarmerie, France	Janjaweed, Sudan

Figure 1: Dominant Form of Auxiliary Security Forces, 1981-2007



### 3. Major Countries Involved

#### a) Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina

In the Balkans, the arms embargo has caused a notable expansion of illicit trafficking managed by criminal groups. This has meant that the Balkans have not only become a transit region from the Middle East to Europe but also a substantial source of weapons and drugs on the international illicit market, even though, after the conflict, the countries of the peninsula Balkans had signed UN conventions against arms trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Furthermore, arms trafficking is in the hands of local mafias and Balkan crime has not assumed a hierarchical structure. The Balkan mafias supply weapons to other criminal groups or terrorist organizations. Nonetheless, there are also legal trades, i.e. those controlled by governments. The Balkans are among the major exporters of arms.

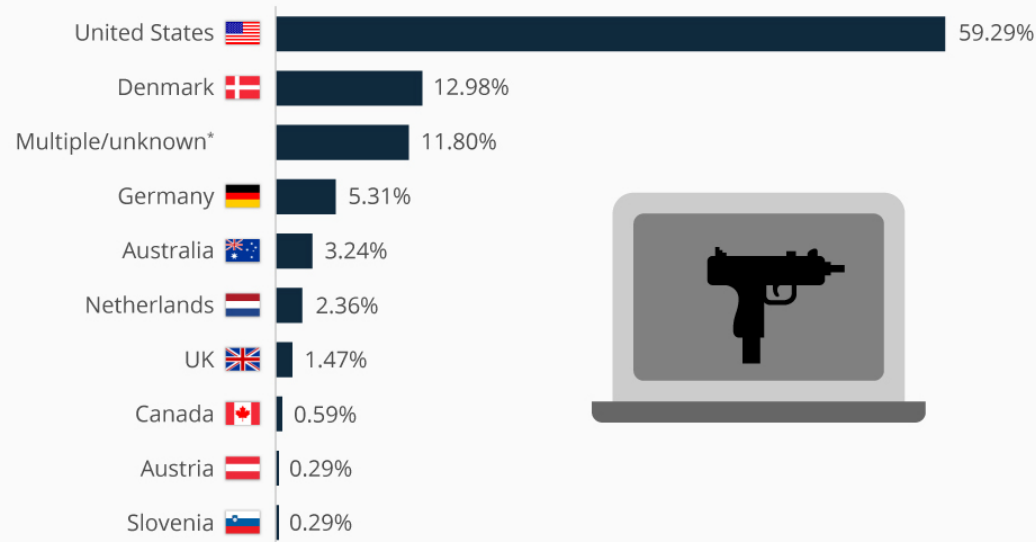
#### b) Syria

The Syrian Civil War represents one of the deadliest ongoing conflicts in the world. All parties to the conflict have leveraged an array of conventional weapons as well as unconventional ones, like the chemical weapons predominately used by the Assad regime to sustain more than five years of conflict. Syria is saturated with weapons, raising concerns about the long-term consequences of a steady supply of arms amid the country's ongoing civil war. The continuation of the war in Syria has also fuelled arms trafficking, with illicit networks operating in the region, capitalizing on the chaos and availability of weapons to advance profits. The boost in grey and black-market arms sales can have lasting effects on access to, and availability of, weapons, and contributes to destabilizing proliferation across the region.

Indeed, the diversion of arms to illicit markets makes weapons nearly impossible to trace and can improve the arsenals of armed groups, criminal organizations, and terrorist groups. For example, Islamic State fighters acquired advanced weaponry from Syrian opposition groups and Iraqi Security Forces, adding to the threats posed to national, regional, and multilateral forces combating the terrorist organization.

## Where Guns Are Sold Through The Darknet

Worldwide distribution of darknet firearm vendors by country in 2017



\* Cases where identity of country or region could not be ascertained  
n=339 listings for firearms  
Source: RAND Corporation

statista

## 4. General Overview

The illegal manufacture, transfer and use of small arms and light weapons jeopardize social development in several countries. This is a problem that prevents the full development of civilian populations, thus endangering respect for human rights and the ability of governments to implement social welfare in areas in which it is most needed. Small arms and light weapons are the most widely-used weapons in 46 out of 49 international armed conflicts since the 1990s. During the last decade, an average of 52,000 deaths have taken place each year in armed conflicts. Furthermore, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is currently the only universal and legally-binding instrument that covers these transfers.

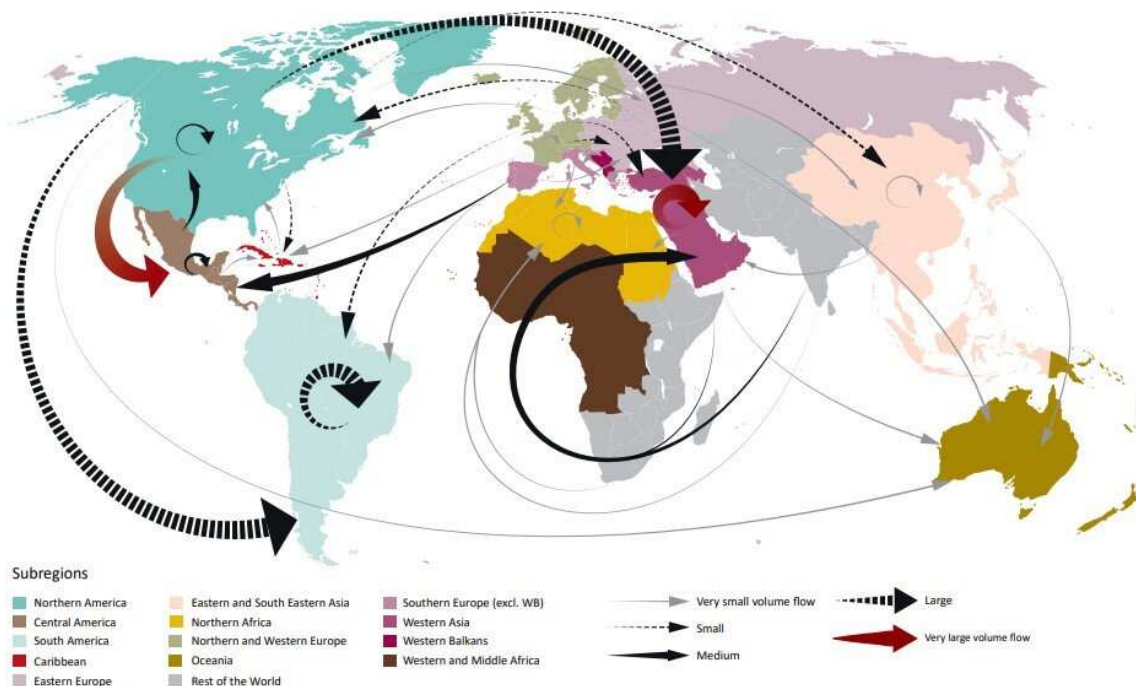
## 5. UN involvement

The international community has already responded to traditional mercenary activity by developing international norms to prohibit it. In 1987, the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the right of people to self-determination, and in 1989 the UN adopted an International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries. The UN Special Rapporteur, however, whose role it is to report to the Commission on Human Rights and General Assembly, has drawn attention to the numerous gaps and ambiguities in international legislation and the persistence of, and increase in, mercenary activities. On the issue of private military and security companies, the way forward is not so straightforward. There are certain legitimate and acceptable roles for PMCs and PSCs, acting in accordance with national and international law. However, there are situations in which certain services performed by PMCs and PSCs have increased the amount of weaponry in a region, prolonged or exacerbated conflict or facilitated human rights abuses.

## 6. Background Information

The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) is a globally agreed framework for activities to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and control their negative consequences. It was adopted by all UN member states in 2001. Since that time the UN has worked to support the implementation of the PoA at national, regional, and international levels. By-products of the PoA include the International Tracing Instrument and the recommendations of a Group of Governmental Experts on Brokering Controls.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Asia and the Pacific has been the result of several factors. Parts of Asia remain affected by armed conflict, from inter-state war and sectarian conflict to protracted or guerrilla warfare. Organized crime, the drug trade and smuggling by illicit actors have also been contributing factors to the illicit trafficking of small arms, particularly in South and South-East Asia. Despite its extensive maritime borders, the Pacific region suffers minimally from large-scale arms trafficking.



The implementation of the PoA is judged based on national reports submitted by the Member States. To date, 28 countries from Asia and the Pacific regions have submitted national implementation reports since the adoption of the PoA in 2001. China and Japan have reported six times, which is the highest number of reports submitted by any state in Asia, while Australia is the only state to have submitted a report every year.

## 7. Useful Links

- [https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/recenttexts/18-12\\_c\\_e.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/recenttexts/18-12_c_e.pdf)
- <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/>
- <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>
- [https://brill.com/view/journals/ihls/13/2/article-p251\\_004.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/ihls/13/2/article-p251_004.xml)
- <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/effective-arms-control-measures-needed-block-diversion-ukraine-weapons-senior-united-nations-disarmament-official-tells-security-council>
- [https://presidenza.governo.it/UCPMA/doc/ALLEGATO\\_B.pdf](https://presidenza.governo.it/UCPMA/doc/ALLEGATO_B.pdf)
- <https://globalinitiative.net/about-us/network/>

- <https://www.imf.org/en/Data/Statistics/informal-economy-data/Reports/Eurostat-Trafficking-of-Arms>

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- <https://unrcpd.org/conventional-weapons/poa/#:~:text=The%20UN%20Programme%20of%20Action,Small%20Arms%20and%20Light%20Weapons.>
- <https://www.claws.in/arms-smuggling-a-threat-to-national-security/>
- <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2019/09/02/the-arms-trade-and-syria/>
- <https://www.statista.com/chart/13327/where-guns-are-sold-through-the-darknet/>