

**Center for Peace and Disarmament Education
and Saferworld**

Turning the page:

Small arms and light weapons in Albania



December 2005



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CENTER FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT EDUCATION AND SAFERWORLD

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Executive summary

Turning the page: small arms and light weapons in Albania, is a report of the findings of research conducted on small arms and light weapons and security issues in Albania from April to September 2005 by the London-based non-governmental organisation Saferworld.

The report is a contribution towards the development of a co-ordinated policy response to the outstanding SALW problems facing the Republic of Albania following the crisis of 1997 during which hundreds of thousands of weapons were looted from government stockpiles. It charts the achievements of the Albanian Government and international and civil society organisations in combating SALW to date and identifies the challenges that still lie ahead. The report's main findings were reviewed during a series of meetings with a wide range of officials from the Albanian Government and international organisations and also at an inter-ministerial roundtable in October 2005. The final report reflects comments received during these consultations. A separate briefing paper containing the research team's recommendations for enhancing SALW control in Albania exists as an accompanying document to this report and was submitted for use by the Government of Albania.

The report's main findings are as follows:

Perceived impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW)

- Although the direct impact of SALW on crime and public health was a major concern in the late 1990s, the number of casualties attributable to firearms misuse has consistently declined since then
- One third of Albanian citizens think that it is acceptable to possess a gun when the law is not enforced, when there is political instability or because others have them. Other common motives for weapons possession include the fear of political instability and a perceived need for revenge
- Despite progress in tackling blood feuds, their continued occurrence and importance in Albanian society is an issue of concern and a significant driver for the use of weapons
- Property disputes, jealousy, alcohol and depression are the reasons most commonly cited in the Albanian media for people resorting to the use of firearms
- Most Albanians are aware that the possession of weapons carries dangers; however this knowledge does not represent enough of an incentive for many illegal gun owners to surrender their weapons during government-run amnesties. This indicates that many Albanians have now become accustomed to the presence of weapons in their homes and communities

- Most murders in Albania are committed using firearms, and the majority of these occur within families
- Young males in their teens and twenties are the group most likely to be involved in the misuse of SALW
- SALW are often used to commit acts of domestic violence and, according to women's groups, domestic violence is a serious problem that is not given adequate recognition by law enforcement and justice agencies
- Media reports indicate that on occasions police officers and private security guards have misused weapons provided by their employers while off-duty
- Historically poor record-keeping by the police, hospitals, coroners' offices and courts hinders comparative analysis and the development of evidence-based policy responses to SALW problems. Methods used to compile information also vary, and the quality of official records of firearms-related injuries differs across the country

Distribution of SALW within Albania

- By working in collaboration with international organisations and civil society, the Albanian Government has helped to pioneer new approaches to weapons collection such as the 'weapons in exchange for development' approach which has since been taken up worldwide
- Despite nearly a decade of SALW collection activities during which some 200,000 weapons have been retrieved from civilians, it is estimated that a similar number of illicit SALW (some 200,000 units) still remain in civilian hands
- There is a widespread perception among the general public that politicians and businesspersons have ready access to SALW
- Aside from weapons displayed by the police and army, SALW are most commonly visible to the public during celebrations
- The continued reorganisation of the Albanian Armed Forces makes it difficult to identify both the number of weapons required for service at any time and the number of surplus units currently held in stores. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the military currently holds some 80–140,000 units of surplus SALW
- An illegal private security market exists alongside a state-regulated market. In the illegal market individuals make themselves available as security for hire thereby undercutting registered private security firms
- Under the current legal framework private security guards are permitted to use assault rifles in their work. Assault rifles are inappropriate for such purposes and the Ministry of Interior has plans to restrict their use in the future
- Despite Ministry of Interior regulations regarding the storage of weapons and ammunition at home, there still appear to be cases in which Albanian gun owners store these items in an unsafe manner

Stockpile management and security

- The Albanian Armed Forces have significantly reduced the number of storage depots in the country from 167 in 1998 to 57 in 2005, thereby improving stockpile security. However, although many Ministry of Defence storage depots employ stockpile security procedures there is no single site which fully conforms to the standards required for effective stockpile security and management
- The Ministry of Defence currently classifies half of all its ammunition depots to be at high-risk of detonation as a consequence of historic overstocking and the relocation of old stocks. This poses a significant public health threat, particularly in view of the fact that dwellings are sometimes built dangerously close to stockpiles and storage sites, in contravention of planning laws

- An unknown level of threat is posed by ‘mixed’ packages of loose ammunition surrendered during weapons collections that has not yet been sorted and cannot therefore be stored according to hazard type
- Despite an electronic SALW accounting system having been successfully piloted within the Ministry of Interior, armed forces units and government ministries still rely on paper-based accounting methods which are slow, difficult to compare, and sometimes inaccurate. Under these conditions any stockpile thefts would likely go undetected
- Despite the existence of general rules and procedures developed for the police and military forces on safe storage, in some cases inventory and storage procedures within private security companies appear inadequate. This allows SALW to be exchanged between guards without the necessary paperwork being completed and sometimes allows weapons to be taken home in contravention of the law

Collection of SALW and ammunition

- Successive weapons collection initiatives have occurred in Albania since 1997 with notable success, leading to the surrender of more than 200,000 illicit weapons by the public
- Ongoing cycles of weapons collection have however created several problems, including:
 - ‘collection fatigue’ among the public, police and international community
 - confusion amongst the public about the rules regarding weapons possession and collection
 - patchy enforcement of the existing legislation on civilian possession by the authorities

Destruction of SALW and ammunition

- Good progress has been made so far with the destruction of SALW and ammunition. More than 140,000 weapons and 22,000 tonnes of ammunition have been destroyed in the last four to five years
- Despite having made commitments to destroy surplus weapons to a number of international organisations and forums, including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, sizeable surplus stocks of weapons (something in the order of 80–140,000 units) and ammunition remain in storage, with no indication as to when or how they will be destroyed
- Toxic waste products created as a by-product of ammunition destruction have not always been managed so as to minimise their environmental impact
- Some Explosive Ordnance Destruction units within the Albanian Armed Forces have only received training in the destruction of single items, yet they carry out large-scale demolitions without the necessary knowledge or equipment. In doing so they pose a significant threat to public safety

International transfers of SALW and other conventional weapons

- Recognising that implementation of the national legislation and regulation on arms transfer control has been historically poor, the Albanian Government has moved to introduce new and improved regulation in this area. However, although a new law on the import and export of military goods has been drafted it has not yet been passed by parliament
- The degree to which Albania’s arms export control system complies with the country’s international commitments is unclear, due to a lack of government transparency in this area

- There is currently very little scope for ensuring effective post-export verification of compliance with end-user certificates, since Albania has very limited diplomatic representation worldwide

Trafficking and organised crime

- Albania participates in a number of regional anti-trafficking, border security and anti-organised crime initiatives. Successive exchanges of information on SALW trafficking through these channels have proved effective, in part because of the high-level support provided to them by the Government of Albania
- According to the Ministry of Interior, many of the illegal SALW seized by police in the course of their work were trafficked into the country rather than originating from Albanian government stocks
- The type of items trafficked into and out of Albania has changed since 2002, with fewer bolt-action rifles and AK47s being intercepted and an increasing number of missiles and mobile phone detonated bombs being seized

Justice and law enforcement

- The capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat SALW crime and illicit possession has increased over time in tandem with reforms to the national police service, including the introduction of specialised anti-trafficking units and strategies and a move to adopt community policing methods
- Under the current law on SALW possession, a significant proportion of those civilians who possess unregistered weapons are liable to prosecution. The draconian nature of this law, in a society which accepts gun ownership, deters some police officers from making arrests and some judges from handing down the sentences stipulated in the penal code. Moreover, the prison system lacks the capacity to handle the massive increase in inmates that strict adherence to the penal code would entail
- There exists a degree of confusion among citizens and some law enforcement officials over the legal basis for weapons possession and collection. This not only prevents effective law enforcement in this area, but may contribute to accusations that police officers and judges have received bribes in return for not arresting or prosecuting civilians who possess illicit weapons

Policy co-ordination, continuity and development

- The Albanian Government responded promptly and decisively to the national looting of weapons in 1997 by establishing a high-level inter-departmental commission to co-ordinate weapons collections shortly afterwards
- More recent attempts by the Government of Albania to deliver a co-ordinated response to SALW and security problems in the country have been undermined by a lack of inter-ministerial and inter-departmental co-ordination and high staff turnover within government institutions
- The effectiveness of otherwise welcome international support for SALW control activities in Albania has been reduced at points during the last decade as a result of poor co-ordination between international agencies and donors and a lack of sustained engagement
- Although it has made good progress in domestic SALW control, the Government of Albania has often taken a back seat in the development of international policy and regulations, with the result that other states have not benefited from the country's considerable experience

Acronyms and abbreviations

AAF	Albania Armed Forces	MOI	Ministry of Interior
ACP	Albanian Communist Party	MOJ	Ministry of Justice
AEPC	Association of European Police Colleges	MOPO	Ministry of Public Order
AIA	African International Airways	MOPOWCS	Ministry of Public Order Weapons Collection Section
AIIA	Albanian Institute for International Affairs	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
ANA	Albanian National Army	NAMSA	Maintenance and Supply Agency
APL	Albanian Party of Labour	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ASDIT	Ammunition Storage and Disposal Implementation Team	NDC	National Demilitarisation Centre
BESC	Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organisation	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CAM-A	Customs Assistance Mission Albania	NISAT	Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe	NLA	National Liberation Army
CEI	Central European Initiative	OCI	Organised Crime Initiative, CAM-A
CNR	Committee of National Reconciliation	OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
COM	Council of Ministers	PAMECA	Police Assistance Mission of the European Community to Albania
CPI	Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International	PfP	Partnership for Peace
DCAF	Democratic Control of the Armed Forces	PSC	Private Security Company
DEPC	Disarmament Education and Peaceful Culture	RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
DfiD	Department for International Development (UK)	SAA	Stability and Association Agreement
DP	Democratic Party	SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	SALWC	Small Arms and Light Weapons Control
EC	European Commission	SALWCP	Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Project
ECPA	European Commission Police Assistance Mission	SECI	Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal	SEE	South Eastern Europe
EODASTT	EOD Ammunition Support Training Team	SEESAC	South Eastern Europe Clearing House for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
EU	European Union	SHISH	National Intelligence Agency
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	SP	Socialist Party
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	SSSR	Support to Security Sector Reform
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	TIMS	Total Information Management System
GNP	Gross National Product	UCK	National Liberation Army (Macedonia)
GPP	Gramsh Pilot Programme	UCPMB	Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac
IBM	Integrated Border Management	UNDDA	United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs
ICG	International Crisis Group	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ICMPD	International Centre for the Migration Policy Development	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICVS	International Crime Victimisation Survey	UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
IOM	International Organisation for Migration	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Organised Crime
IWPRBCR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting: Balkan Crisis Reports	UNPoA	United Nations Programme of Action
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LSI	Socialist Movement for Integration	WED	Weapons in Exchange for Development
MANPADS	Man-portable air defence system	WEU	Western European Union
MAPE	Multinational Advisory Police Element	WHO	World Health Organisation
MEICO	Military Export Import Company		
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
MOD	Ministry of Defence		



Background and methodology

1.1 Background

OVER RECENT YEARS, much work has been undertaken in Albania by both the Government and the international community to address the main SALW problems. Since the crisis in 1997, during which hundreds of thousands of weapons were looted from state stockpiles, a number of weapons collections have been organised, both by the Government and through a series of UNDP programmes; various awareness and education campaigns have been implemented; border controls are being strengthened and destruction of ammunition is ongoing.

Following preliminary research and discussions that took place between the Government of the Republic of Albania and Saferworld between September and December 2004, it emerged that much still remained to be done, and that progress towards the full and successful implementation of Albania's commitments would be seriously hindered without first understanding the full scope and nature of the small arms problem in Albania by conducting a comprehensive national small arms assessment.

With funding from the UK Government's Global Conflict Prevention Pool, a six-month research phase commenced in April 2005 and was completed in September of the same year. The aim of the research was to:

- Assess and highlight the geographic and demographic extent of small arms possession and use;
- Assess and highlight the nature of small arms trafficking and circulation;
- Demonstrate the human and social impact of small arms use;
- Outline measures established and needed to control small arms use;
- Outline the scale and scope of the small arms problem vis-à-vis other socio-economic and political issues.

It was also envisaged that the Survey would form the first stage of a wider process of developing a co-ordinated response to SALW issues. The drafting phase of the Survey was accompanied by in-depth discussion of the findings generated by the research, and of possible policy responses to them. A separate document containing the preliminary findings and recommendations was submitted to all the relevant Government ministries and some international bodies. Their comments were solicited in a series of individual meetings, and in writing. Finally, an inter-ministerial roundtable was held in October 2005 to discuss the findings and to enable the different ministries to co-ordinate their response. The comments received are reflected in the final recommendations document as well as in the relevant sections of the Survey.

1.2 Methodology

To gather the data required for a comprehensive survey, the Saferworld team used a wide variety of sources with a view to ensuring a higher level of accuracy, as well as to allow for deeper analysis of factors and dynamics relevant to SALW. The sources included:

- A nation-wide **household survey**, conducted in partnership with the Institute of Surveys and Opinions, a Tirana based market-research organisation. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the SEESAC Survey Protocols, adapted to take into account the specific environment and issues present in Albania. A sample of 1200 respondents was drawn up, allowing for a margin error of less than 2% with a confidence level of 95% and representing the proportional distribution of the population.

In order to develop the sample, the municipality was selected as the basic stratum and a fixed number of sampling points were then drawn up, using the Enumeration Areas (EAs) from the 2001 Population Census. This technique was considered to be the most scientific and random that could be performed with the current status of registers in Albania. To select cases, the random walk technique was used. Instead of selecting families from a nominative register, e.g. the Population Census, the random walk involves interviewers starting from the central point of each EA and selecting every 3rd house, or every 5th apartment in tall buildings. This technique allows for the random selection of people living in the specified area at that time. If the nominative technique had been applied it would have been extremely difficult to find the selected names due to internal population movement.

- **Case studies** of seven towns (Berat, Fier, Gjirokastra, Korca, Kukes, Shkodra and Tirana). When selecting case study locations, the following criteria were taken into consideration:
 - ☐ Proximity to stockpiles
 - ☐ Previous existence of SALW industry
 - ☐ Trafficking/border issues
 - ☐ Level of international interest
 - ☐ Historical or contemporary gun culture
 - ☐ Levels of poverty
 - ☐ Crime rates
 - ☐ Presence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
 - ☐ Ethnic minority populations

Within each town, between seven to fourteen people were interviewed, including the mayor, the head of the district council, relevant representatives of the local police directorate, judges or chief prosecutors, NGO representatives, hospital directors and directors of local schools. Topics covered in the interviews included the impact of SALW, the distribution of SALW, weapons collection programmes and issues related to trafficking. Besides interviews, local level statistics were collected, in order to compare against, or supplement, national level statistics.

- **Six focus groups.** In three case study locations, Fier, Shkodra and Tirana, focus groups were organised with a group of men and a second group of women. The age of participants in the focus groups ranged from 18 to 57. Topics covered included experience of crime, both in general and SALW related, perceptions of SALW possession, options for SALW collection and personal experience of SALW possession. In Shkodra an emphasis was also placed on tradition and its impact on SALW possession.
- **53 key informant interviews** to access information on, and assess, state capacities and resources, official data, policy, practice, identified problems, past measures and initiatives relevant to SALW control. Key informants included Government officials, police, international actors, NGO representatives, former army officers and journalists.

- A **desk review** of relevant research (both international and national) published on SALW or associated issues, including for example, previous small-scale surveys on SALW, research on military reform and security, human rights reports, etc.
- **Media monitoring** of articles appearing in the national news paper Shekulli between January 2002 and May 2005. During this period, articles were analysed for events such as murders, attempted murders, illegal weapon possession, armed assault and armed threats, in order to develop a picture of the frequency of such events. Shekulli was the sole source used for this research component, as it is the only national newspaper in Albania with an electronic archive.
- **Official statistics** to support information provided in interviews and to provide a picture of the impacts of SALW in Albania. Given current limitations to data collection in Albania, for example the lack of computerised databases, this research component was of restricted value to the Survey, in particular the impact section.

1.3 Introduction

Accounts of Albania generally highlight the economic underdevelopment, international isolation and domestic repression of the communist regime of Enver Hoxha (1946–1985) and the continuing struggle to overcome these legacies in one of the smallest, poorest and least developed states in Europe.¹ In 2003, Albania had the second lowest GDP per capita of the seven Balkan states considered by the International Commission on the Balkans, at €1709, and the second lowest net inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) at €158 million.² At the same time, however, between 1998 and 2001 it was reported to have had the highest growth rate of any Balkan state, averaging eight percent per year,³ and six percent in 2003.⁴ While growth rates do not tell the full tale of the low base level of development, these macroeconomic statistics also mask the considerable regional disparities that exist in Albania. There is reported to be a huge gulf between the capital of Tirana and wealthy coastal cities such as the port city of Durrës, and the rest of the Albanian hinterland. Furthermore, they do not reveal the extent to which remittances, grey and black market activities contribute towards the living standards of Albania's population.⁵

Albania was the first former communist state to apply to join NATO, has been active in its Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and praised for its progress in reforming the military and improving parliamentary oversight.⁶ In 1992 it became the first west Balkan state to sign a trade and co-operation agreement with the European Community, although progress on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Albania and the European Union (EU) has been problematic for a number of reasons. Albania must overcome a number of serious challenges to stand any chance of meeting EU and NATO membership requirements, with the European Commission (EC) SAA reports highlighting a number of issues that are directly and indirectly related to the SALW situation in Albania:

The EC's SAA report lists the following priorities for Albania:

- Enhance the fight against organised crime and corruption;
- Strengthen border and customs controls;

¹ Biberaj E, *Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy*, (Westview Press, 1999); NGO representative P, *The Search for Greater Albania*, (C. Hurst & Co., 2003); Saltmarsh D, *Identity in a Post-Communist Balkan State: An Albanian Village Study*, (Ashgate, 2001). These sentiments are regularly echoed in international media reports on Albania.

² Bosnia was reported to have the lowest per capita GDP in the region on €1611, while Macedonia had the lowest net FDI inflows on €83.5 million. *The Balkans in Europe's Future* (Report of the International Commission on the Balkans, Sofia, April 2005), p 39.

³ Pettifer J, *Albania, FYROM & Kosovo: Evolving states and the European Union*, (Conflict Studies Research Centre G116, 2002), p 5.

⁴ *Albania in Figures 2004*, (Tirana: INSTAT), p 35.

⁵ One analyst has suggested that more than 40 percent of Albania's real GDP is located within the grey and black spheres of the economy. See: Moustakis F, 'Soft Security Threats in the New Europe: The Case of the Balkan Region', *European Security*, 13(1–2), 2004, p 149.

⁶ Boyne S, 'Albanian communists paying for the past', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 8(10), October 1996, pp 440–1.

- Strengthen the judiciary and administrative capacity;
- Improve the democratic process and political stability to carry out reforms;
- Improve the human and minority rights situation;
- Formalise and reform the economy.⁷

In recent years, Albania has taken many important steps to address its SALW problems. These include weapons collection, destruction of surplus, enhanced stock-pile management and better international/regional intelligence and law enforcement co-operation. As time has passed, dynamics of the problem have changed from an immediate threat to national security in 1997 to the current situation where illicit weapons fuel crime and trafficking and where security concerns of the population are manifested in a lack of trust in the state and its institutions, economic uncertainty, poor access to justice and decision making. It is therefore critical that SALW problems continue to be tackled in all their manifestations in Albania.

1.4 Albania in the twentieth century

Ever since Albania's borders were drawn in 1912, they have been regarded as a potential source of regional instability as they failed to satisfy Albanian, Greek and Serbian nationalists. Fears arose throughout the twentieth century that Greek or Serbian claims on territory recognised as Albanian would lead to inter-state violence. The presence of sizeable ethnic Albanian minorities in parts of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), especially Kosovo and western Macedonia, prompted concerns that Tirana would seek to establish a 'Greater Albania' by incorporating these neighbouring territories through force.⁸ Although statements have occasionally been made in the distant and recent past along these lines,⁹ no mainstream political party in Albania openly associates itself with such a position today.¹⁰

The task of modernising Albania and forging a common national identity within the existing borders of Albania has been regarded by a number of commentators as a far more pressing concern for Albania's political leaders than seeking to annex neighbouring territories.¹¹ The cultural, economic, linguistic, political and social differences which separate the inhabitants of northern Albania (Gegs/Ghegs) and the inhabitants of southern Albania (Tosks) are well documented. The power struggle between groups from the north and the south for the control of Albania's cultural and economic resources, led in the twentieth century to regional disparities in economic development, but occurred at the same time as efforts were made to construct a national narrative masking regional differences and homogenising the population.¹²

The second half of twentieth century history in Albania was dominated by Enver Hoxha, the leader of the Albanian Party of Labour (APL, until 1948 Albanian Communist Party (ACP)).¹³ From an early stage, southern influence was strong in the ACP, which was the foundation for the brutal Stalinist regime through which Hoxha

⁷ Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Paper: Albania – Stabilisation and Association Report 2004, (Brussels, SEC(2004) 374/2); Ilirjani A, 'Albania and the European Union', *Mediterranean Politics*, 9(2), 2004, p. 261.

⁸ Op cit Biberaj; International Crisis Group, Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability? (Tirana/Brussels: Europe Report 153, 25 February 2004); Judah T, 'Greater Albania?', *Survival*, 43(2), 2001, pp 7–18; op cit NGO representative; op cit Pettifer.

⁹ One of the most recent causes of concern relating to the idea of a 'Greater Albania' arose when the Albanian Academy of Sciences published a platform that mapped out 'new' borders for an Albania that would include areas with a sizeable ethnic Albanian population and 'ancient' Albanian lands. Platform for the Solution of the National Albanian Question, (Academy of Sciences of Albania, 1998).

¹⁰ Despite this lack of political representation, the International Commission on the Balkans has suggested that the threat of a 'Greater Albania' remains. This is based upon opinion poll data that they collected. Source: op cit The Balkans in Europe's Future, p. 17.

¹¹ Op cit Biberaj; Blumi I, 'The politics of culture and power: The roots of Hoxha's postwar state', *East European Quarterly*, 31(3), 1997, pp 379–98; op cit NGO representative; op cit Saltmarshe.

¹² For example see the collection of essays in eds Scwander-Sievers S and Fischer B J, *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, (Hurst, 2002). See also: op cit Blumi, pp 379–98.

¹³ See for example: Bailey R, 'Smoke without fire? Albania, SOE and the Communist 'Conspiracy Theory'', in eds Scwander-Sievers and Fischer, (2002), pp 143–53; op cit Blumi, pp 379–98; Doll B, 'The relationship between the clan system and other institutions in northern Albania', *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 3(2), 2003, pp 147–162; Saltmarshe, (2001); Standish A M J, 'Enver Hoxha's role in the development of socialist Albanian myths', in eds Scwander-Sievers and Fischer, (2002), pp 115–24.

attacked Geg/Gheg culture, economic bases, leadership, language and way of life,¹⁴ to create a Tosk dominated state.

The fear of invasion was the rationale for the creation of a highly militarised and internationally isolated society.¹⁵ There was military training in schools and factories, up to three years of compulsory military service and civilian defence units, all of which were supposed to ensure that Albania could be defended by civilian mobilisation with Guerilla tactics.¹⁶ Under Hoxha's rule Albania became isolated not only from Western Europe, but also from other members of the socialist bloc. Even in the four years after Hoxha's death, while communist regimes were falling throughout Europe, Hoxha's successor, Ramiz Alia, sought to ensure that Albania persisted as the last communist regime in Europe.¹⁷ The APL even managed to cling to power by winning a majority of the seats in multi-party elections that were held in 1991. However, it was finally ousted following a landslide victory by their main opponents, the Democratic Party (DP), in 1992. When the DP took power, inflation was running at 300 percent, GDP per capita was \$222 and Albania was receiving \$116 per capita in international aid, the highest per capita assistance given to any former communist state.¹⁸ With the northerner, Sali Berisha, as its party leader, the DP Government was expected to redress the economic imbalance in favour of the north.¹⁹

1.5 Pyramids and Kalashnikovs: civil unrest in 1997

The collapse of pyramid scheme companies in Albania in late 1996 and early 1997 has come to be regarded as the proximate cause for the civil unrest that took place throughout Albania in the first half of 1997. The collapse of these schemes is thought to have hit the savings of hundreds of thousands of Albanians. One estimate stated that over one billion dollars, around one third of Albania's GNP at the time,²⁰ had been invested in pyramid schemes that were promising interest rates of up to 50 percent.²¹ Protestors took to the streets in the southern cities of Albania and Tirana, with Government and DP buildings in Berat, Lushnje and Vlorë the targets of looting and fires. By February, the demonstrations had spread across the south, with military depots and police stations targeted by looters. On 2 March 1997, President Sali Berisha declared a national state of emergency and announced: "Armed communist rebels, helped and financed by foreign espionage services, have started military actions to overthrow the Government with force and establish their rule across the country (...) They will soon feel the iron hand and the full punishment of the laws of this state."²²

It was said at the time that Vlorë was the focal point for unrest in the South as the former recruiting ground of the communist-era secret police, the Sigurimi.²³ A number of other sources have suggested that former communist-era security forces personnel and SP officials took advantage of the popular discontent with the Government's response to the collapse of the pyramid scheme companies. Personal economic dissatisfaction rather than political redress may well have been the motivating factor behind much of the unrest:²⁴ the fact that the rebels did not seem to be calling for anything more than Berisha's resignation confused some commentators, who expected the looting of weapons to be accompanied by a greater sense of political purpose.²⁵

¹⁴ Op cit Biberaj, p 16; op cit Blumi, pp 385–6; op cit Doll, pp 157–8.

¹⁵ Bumçi A, 'Security sector reform in Albania', in Defence and Security Sector Reform in South East Europe: Insights and Perspectives – Albania: A Self Assessment Study, (DCAF, 2003), pp 3–26.

¹⁶ Op cit Boyne, pp 438–41; de Leonis Andres, 'The remains of Albania's defences', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 7(7), July 1997, pp 295–8; Smith C and Sagramoso D, 'Small arms trafficking may export Albania's anarchy', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 11(1), January 1999, pp 24–8.

¹⁷ Op cit Saltmarshe, p 60.

¹⁸ Ibid p 61.

¹⁹ Op cit Biberaj, pp 205–6.

²⁰ Op cit Hunt.

²¹ Op cit Biberaj, p 317.

²² Robertson J, 'Albania declares emergency', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1997, p 1.

²³ Pettifer J, 'Secret police play by old rules', *The Times*, 4 March 1997.

²⁴ Interview, NGO representative, 23 July 2005; Op cit Biberaj, p 319–26; op cit Bumçi, p 5; op cit NGO representative.

²⁵ Loyd A, 'Berisha's offer of deal serves only to fuel rebel fury', *The Times*, 11 March 1997.

Others argued that many people were simply angry, and took weapons for self-defence and as a form of reimbursement from the state. It was alleged that some of the officers and soldiers tasked with guarding military depots were actively involved in the looting and ransacking of weapons and ammunition stores.²⁶ There was also speculation that tensions between the north and south of the country would erupt into a civil war when military depots in northern Albania were raided.²⁷

By the time Operation Alba, the multinational force led by Italy and supported by the UN Security Council, arrived in April 1997, commentators were reporting that the possibility of a civil war had been dispelled.²⁸ The force did little to affect the situation, as its main objective was to accompany aid convoys, and it “lacked the political will to launch an operation to disarm armed gangs, restore law and order and help to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections”.²⁹ These tasks were largely left to the Albanian authorities in the immediate aftermath of the unrest. Shootings and killing continued, with the official figure for the number of people killed between 1 March and 20 September 1997 was 1,311,³⁰ with a further 1,450 wounded.³¹

In September 1997, Minister of Defence, Perikli Teta, assessed the extent of damage in the spring unrest, initially estimating that 1,200 military depots were destroyed, with around 652,000 weapons of different calibres, 1.5 billion rounds of ammunition, 3.5 million hand grenades, 3,600 tons of explosive devices and one million mines looted from these depots.³² He did not state the percentage of total stocks this represented, but a former high level security service official informed the research team that no more than 50,000 SALW remained in the hands of Albania’s military forces after the 1997 unrest, with an estimated 600,000 SALW looted.³³ Other unofficial estimates are higher, with some arguing that between 750,000 and one million SALW were looted in 1997.³⁴ According to official figures released after a full inventory carried out in 1998, the total number of SALW looted from MOD depots was 524,226.³⁵ In addition, 23,929 SALW were looted from police stores and 1,620 from secret police stores. Therefore, the official total of SALW looted from Government stores in 1997 is 549,775.

The reliability of this figure continues to be questioned for a number of reasons,³⁶ and this makes estimating the scale of current illicit civilian possession difficult (see section 3.5.2 – ‘Illegally held weapons’). Problems with the 1998 physical inventory that was conducted following the looting included the fact that mines had been placed in front of stores to deter civilians from entering. But this also meant conscripts were sometimes reluctant to enter a building, that storemen were nervous of getting in trouble and had kept extra weapons back in some cases. The inventory certainly was not 100% accurate.³⁷

In August 1997, the Albanian Government declared an amnesty for those who

²⁶ Op cit NGO representative.

²⁷ Some sources say that the depots were opened on Democratic Party orders – see for example: Bahaja Z, ‘Civil-military and inter-agency co-operation in the security sector of Albania’, in *Security Sector Reform, Does it Work? Problems of Civil-Military and Inter-agency Co-operation in the Security Sector*, Philipp H. Fluri & Velizar Shalamanov (eds), (DCAF/George C. Marshall Association, Bulgaria), 2003; op cit NGO representative P, p 323. Others say that they were looted – see for example: op cit Biberaj, p 325; Walker T, ‘Berisha loyalists raise spectre of North-South war’, *The Times*, 12 March 1997.

²⁸ Sikorski R, ‘War and order’, *The Times*, 3 May 1997.

²⁹ Op cit Biberaj, p 326. Borger J, ‘Albania racked by regrets’, *The Guardian*, 26 April 1997; Owen R, ‘UN approves plan for aid protection troops in Albania’, *The Times*, 29 March 1997; Walker T, ‘Troops run media gauntlet to take Albanian beaches’, *The Times*, 16 April 1997.

³⁰ Of this total, 126 had been killed accidentally, 75 were children and 52 were on-duty policeman.

³¹ Twenty three percent of those wounded in the spring and summer of 1997 were children. The police announced that for the same period in Tirana alone, 197 people were killed by firearms (including four children), six by grenades (including three children) and 29 died in explosions (including five children). Source: ‘Firearms kill 197 in Tirana March–September’, Koha Jone, Tirana, in *Albanian*, 2 October 1997, p 2. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

³² ‘Defense Minister provides data on killings, arms returns’, Tirana ATA, in English, 1646 GMT, 22 September 1997. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

³³ Interview, NGO representative, 23 July 2005. Smith and Sagramoso (op cit, p 25) suggest that around 80 percent of the MOD’s SALW stocks had been looted, while MOD officials informed the research team that 95 percent of Albania’s SALW stocks had been looted in 1997 (Interview, MOD officials, 27 July 2005).

³⁴ See for example: op cit Bahaja; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 25. One estimate suggests that around 80 percent of the MOD’s SALW stocks had been looted

³⁵ Source: Weapons Collection Committee Figures.

³⁶ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

³⁷ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

voluntarily surrendered unregistered firearms, a provision which persisted with brief interruptions and modifications for the following eight years.³⁸ By September 1997, police had already begun collecting weapons, stating that more weapons were being voluntarily surrendered than collected by active police interventions.³⁹ By the end of May 2005 Albanian authorities, assisted by UNDP and the NGO sector, had collected, received and seized 222,918 SALW.⁴⁰ Weapons collection officials have subtracted this figure from the official estimate of 549,775 looted SALW and suggest that 40.5 percent of the looted SALW have now been accounted for,⁴¹ to estimate that 326,857 of the looted weapons remain at large either in Albania or abroad.

1.6 Trafficking and regional conflict

Although experts do not generally argue that a ‘Greater Albania’ policy has been directed from Tirana, ethnic Albanian insurgent groups in Kosovo and Macedonia have benefited from direct and indirect transfers of looted Albanian SALW and arms travelling in transit across Albania since 1997. Yet, it has been argued that trafficking in SALW from or through Albania to Kosovo was taking place before the 1997 looting of Albania’s armouries, albeit on a more limited scale than during the 1997–2000 period. Paulin Kola notes allegations made by Xhavit Haliti, the former leader of the Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo, who informed him that Albanian socialist President Ramiz Alia authorised Albanian army assistance and even assisted with the movement’s first SALW shipments in 1987–8,⁴² and that Fatos Nano gave him a *carte blanche* “so that shipments of people and armaments could move unhindered though Albanian territory”.⁴³

However, it is clear that it was between 1997 and 1999, when the Albanian Government and state authorities were unable to control large swathes of Albanian territory and the Albanian borders, that large-scale arms trafficking from and through Albania took place. Several researchers concurred with the view that the 1997 anarchy and its aftermath “provided the founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) with both a supply of small arms and a stretch of ungoverned territory in which they could arm and train a guerrilla force”.⁴⁴ While Kola claims that the KLA had people in Tirana who collected weapons to send to Kosovo,⁴⁵ Northern Albania was generally regarded to be the main site for the thriving arms trafficking business.⁴⁶ The border towns of Bajram Curri and Tropoje served as ‘illegal arms bazaars’ for local traders and KLA sympathisers eager to sell or donate SALW.⁴⁷ After the end of the Kosovo conflict, ethnic Albanian groups based in Macedonia, such as the National Liberation Army (NLA) and the Albanian National Army (ANA), became the recipients of some of the arms that had been smuggled from Albania to supply the Kosovo insurgency in the preceding years.⁴⁸

³⁸ There was one brief interruption between 4 August 2002 and 6 March 2003, when there was no weapons amnesty legislation in place.

³⁹ For example, one newspaper reported that in August and September 1997 the Albanian police force had collected 205 automatic rifles, 487 rifles, 72 light machine guns, 72 pistols and 476 grenades during their searches. In comparison, 2,101 automatic rifles, 102 heavy machine guns, 230 kilograms of explosives, six flamethrowers, eight grenade launchers and 533,000 rounds of ammunition had been voluntarily surrendered over the same period. Source: Op cit ‘Firearms kill 197 in Tirana March–September’. Another set of collection figures for the period 1 August to 20 September 1997 was provided by the Minister of Defence. He declared that the following had been collected: 2,162 automatic rifles, 20,689 rifles, 1,266 light machine-guns, 78 pistols, 518 heavy machine-guns, 116 guns and mortars, 282 anti-tank grenades, 219 anti-aircraft machine-guns, 732 anti-tank and anti-infantry mines, 7,786 assault grenades, 6,060 defensive grenades, eight million infantry rounds of ammunition and 1,070 mortar rounds. Source: Op cit ‘Defense Minister provides data on killings, arms returns’.

⁴⁰ Source: MOPO Weapons Collection Unit.

⁴¹ Although the main focus of international attention has been upon SALW collection, it is also worth mentioning that significant quantities of ammunition, explosives and other military material, including tanks, have been collected since 1997.

⁴² Op cit NGO representative, p 319.

⁴³ Ibid, p 333.

⁴⁴ Op cit International Crisis Group, 2004, p 6; op cit Heinemann-Grüder and Paes, pp 19–21; Judah T, ‘War by mobile phone, donkey and Kalashnikov’, *The Guardian Weekend*, 29 August 1998, p 6; op cit NGO representative, p 343; 393; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 25.

⁴⁵ Op cit NGO representative, p 330.

⁴⁶ Op cit International Crisis Group 2004, p 6; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 25.

⁴⁷ Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 26.

⁴⁸ ‘The NLA’s arms suppliers: Weapons traffickers weave an intricate network to counter increasing KFOR seizures on the Macedonian border’, IWPRBCR 272, 17 August 2001; ‘Kosovo: KFOR detains 27 for trying to smuggle arms into FYROM in past week’, FBIS-EEU-2001-0813, Paris AFP (North European Service), in English, 1422 GMT, 13 August 2001 [FBIS Transcribed Text]. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005; Loyd A, ‘US struggles to seize arms from Albanian rebels’, *The Times*, 6 March 2001; op cit Quin, 2003; op cit Ripley, 2001, p 22.

Even if the Albanian authorities had had the capacity to obstruct the trafficking of arms to Kosovo between 1997 and 1999, the unpopularity of doing so might have made their position untenable.⁴⁹ Northern Albania was regarded as beyond the control of central authorities and continued to be a “conduit for arms and people”;⁵⁰ as weapons made in Central and East European states, and also in NATO member states, were being trafficked through this area.⁵¹ One researcher argued in 1999 that the “KLA probably enjoy greater power and influence in northern Albania than the central Government”.⁵² It certainly remains true that complex political, familial, economic, military and criminal relationships link many individuals in the North of Albania to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia.⁵³

Yet the arms saturated province of Kosovo reportedly no longer demands arms from looted Albanian stores or the black market in the quantities that were once sought. There have been discussions on continuing imports of high-tech weaponry and explosives into Kosovo through Albania, of drug traffickers operating in the region carrying arms for personal use and some cases of individuals purchasing weapons across the borders for personal safety. There have also been claims of arms traffic from Albania to Greece and Italy, but the volume is thought not to be as significant as in the case of other kinds of trafficking, and despite initial fears, the EU illicit arms market was reportedly not flooded with looted Albanian SALW.⁵⁴ It has been argued that the looted Albanian armaments were unlikely to appeal to terrorist or criminal organisations in the EU because of their poor quality and limited application.⁵⁵

A number of reports in recent years have drawn attention to the fact that Albanian organised crime groups are increasingly considered to be one of the main threats to European security.⁵⁶ For most of the 1990s, the main concern relating to Albanian organised criminals and traffickers appeared to be trafficking in humans, either from within Albania or using Albania as a transit point to Germany, Italy or beyond. However, the main fears now seem to relate to trafficking in drugs and Albania’s role as a transit point for shipments of heroin from Afghanistan via Turkey and Albania to consumers in the EU. Albania’s domestic marijuana production has also attracted the attention of EU neighbours, with the Italian Interforza law enforcement agency assisting in combating the growth and trafficking in this commodity.⁵⁷ If indeed weapons trafficking is currently minimal, there remains a need for controls that could effectively deal with the potential for it to re-emerge, as highlighted in UNDP and SEESAC SALW surveys of Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.⁵⁸

The fact that Albania also seems to be a transit route for weapons previously used in the conflicts of the former Yugoslavia conflicts is perhaps something that should be of increasing concern to Albanian authorities and the EU. Some of the problems with accounting for the SALW looted from Albanian stores in 1997 and also SALW from the

⁴⁹ Cf op cit International Crisis Group, 2004, p 13: “It would have been political suicide for the government [of Albania] to have been perceived as cracking down on KLA guerrilla activity in Albania”. The report also notes that during the 2003 Macedonian crisis, the Albanian government also appeared to be reluctant to arrest known NLA activists in Albania.

⁵⁰ Op cit NGO representative, p 345.

⁵¹ Op cit Heinemann-Grüder and Paes, p 13; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 26. Not all of these ‘transit’ shipments reached Kosovo. Perhaps the most infamous case is the discovery in May 1999 of thirty tonnes of arms and ammunition being carried in trucks bearing the logo of the Roman Catholic aid agency Caritas at the Italian port of Ancona and bound for the Albanian port of Durrës. For more information on this case see: ‘Checks on freight bound for Albania stepped up at Bari’, *Corriere della Sera* (Internet version) in Italian, <<http://www.rcs.it/corriere>>, 3 May 1999; ‘Italy halts aid convoy with arms for UCK’, *Corriere della Sera* (Internet version) in Italian, <<http://www.rcs.it/corriere>>, 3 May 1999. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005. See also: Owen R, ‘Arms smugglers used charity as cover’, *The Times*, 4 May 1999.

⁵² Op cit Smith, 1999, p 2.

⁵³ Cf op cit Judah, 2001, p 18.

⁵⁴ Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p 27.

⁵⁵ Interviews, MoPo official, 20 April 2005; international official, 27 April 2005; parliamentarian, 3 May 2005.

⁵⁶ Barnett N, ‘The criminal threat to stability in the Balkans’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 14(4), April 2002, pp 30–2; Bumçi A, Ymeri S and Dakli E, *Debating National Security: The Case of Albania – Border Security, Religion and Security, Corruption*, (Albanian Institute for International Affairs, 2004), p 40–1; Galeotti M, ‘Albanian gangs gain foothold in European crime underworld’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 13(11), November 2001, pp 25–7; Kominek J, ‘Albanian organised crime finds a home in the Czech Republic’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 14(10), October 2002, pp 34–5; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp 24–8.

⁵⁷ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

⁵⁸ Op cit Rynn, Gounev and Jackson; op cit Khakee A and Florquin N; op cit Grillot, Stoneman, Risser and Paes; op cit Florquin and O’Neill Stoneman; op cit Taylor, Phillips and Bogosavljevic.

Yugoslav conflicts could be overcome through better coordination of information exchanges on weapons recovered and collected in the region, with the SECI-coordinated operations 'Ploughshares' and 'Safe Place' treated as first steps towards the establishment of habitual information exchanges on the types and markings of weapons uncovered.

1.7 Organised crime and corruption

A number of reasons can be given to help explain why Albania, like its neighbours in SEE, has come to be seen as a concern with regard to transnational organised crime.⁵⁹ Firstly, Albania's geographical location makes it part of "an important bridge for criminal networks spanning from Western Europe to Asia and Africa."⁶⁰ Coupled with the picture of its border terrain as 'too wild' or difficult to police and control effectively, its geographic position gives it 'natural' appeal for those interested in moving contraband goods and people into the EU.⁶¹

Secondly, Albania emerged from communism as a "weak state in which formal institutions have functioned poorly."⁶² For example, when the DP came to power in 1992, it dismissed tens of thousands of state officials for corruption and suspect political affiliations to the APL,⁶³ but it did not necessarily replace these people with experienced, competent and honest personnel. Officials in border, customs and law enforcement agencies also had low salaries and poor working conditions, making them susceptible to corrupt practices such as accepting bribes or acquiescing with the demands of those threatening violence or other forms of intimidation.⁶⁴ As significant profits were to be made by breaking the sanctions imposed on the FRY (in addition to trafficking arms, drugs, people and other contraband goods within the region and into the EU), the pressure on already weak state controls increased.⁶⁵

It has been argued that "Europe's organised crime bosses see the Balkans as a good place to do business".⁶⁶ The links between state agents at the highest levels and organised crime groups have led to organised crime becoming embedded in the regional economic, political and social life; this is supported by fear, cynicism and tolerance by a significant part of the population, who continue to lack faith in the state authorities as providers of basic human security.⁶⁷

One of the outcomes of corrupt government and societal breakdown has been the growth of gangs, some of which have developed links with political parties. As

59 See for example: the various articles contained within Athanassopoulou E, 'Fighting organised crime in southeast Europe', special issue of *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 4(2), 2004; Barnett N, 'Lack of funds, surveillance equipment and official corruption hamper task of controlling the illegal trade in people and drugs', IWPRBCR 479, 04 February 2004, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 7 April 2005; Barnett N, 'The criminal threat to stability in the Balkans', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 14(4), April 2002, pp 30–2; Bumçi A, Ymeri S and Dakli E, *Debating National Security: The Case of Albania – Border Security, Religion and Security, Corruption*, (Albanian Institute for International Affairs, 2004); Davis I, Hirst C and Mariani B, *Organised Crime, Corruption and Illicit Arms Trafficking in an Enlarged EU: Challenges and Perspectives*, (Saferworld, 2001); Grillot S, Stoneman S, Risser H and Praes W-C, *A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia*, (SEESAC, 2004); Khakee A and Florquin N, *Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo* (Small Arms Survey and UNDP Kosovo, 2003); op cit Moustakis; op cit Pettifer; Rynn S, Gounev P and Jackson T, *Taming the Arsenal – Small Arms and Light Weapons in Bulgaria*, (SEESAC, 2005); Sagromoso D, *The Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons in and around the European Union: Instability, Organised Crime and Terrorist Groups*, (Saferworld and Centre for Defence Studies, 2001); Taylor Z, Phillips C and Bogozavljevic S, *Living with the Legacy – SALW Survey Republic of Serbia*, (Saferworld, 2005).

60 Op cit Athanassopoulou, p 217. See also: op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli p 18; Totozanni I, 'Civilians and military in defence planning: from a national security concept to a force development plan', in *Defence and Security Sector Reform in South East Europe: Insights and Perspectives – Albania: A Self Assessment Study*, (DCAF, 2003), p 61.

61 Op cit Pettifer, p 5.

62 Op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh, p 133.

63 For example, Elez Biberaj stated that 70% of the SIGURIMI officials were dismissed in the first months after the Democratic Party came into office, with many of the 80% of military officers who were members of the APL also targeted. See: op cit Biberaj, p 152.

64 Bebler A, 'Corruption Among Security Personnel in Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 17(1), 2001, pp 129–45; op cit Moustakis, p 150; Ruggerio V, 'Criminals and service providers: Cross-national dirty economies', *Crime, Law & Social Change*, 28, 1997, pp 27–38.

65 Cukier W, 'Firearms: Licit/Illicit Links', Web-site of the Small Arms Firearms Education and Research Network, <<http://www.research.ryerson.ca/SAFER-Net/Content/Contents/LicitIllicit/Licit-Illicit%20Links.pdf>>, 16 April 2003; op cit Davis, Hirst and Mariani; op cit Saltmarsh, p 62 and 149.

66 Ripley T, 'Instability reigns in the southern Balkans', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 14(3), 2002, p 39.

67 Op cit Athanassopoulou. See also: op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh, pp 133–148.

criminal activity has become more organised, the trafficking in people, drugs, arms and other forms of contraband has become increasingly integrated with international criminal networks.⁶⁸

Thus, it is thought that it has not only been thanks to the acquiescence of border and customs guards that considerable profits have been made breaking FYR sanctions and trafficking in contraband goods from, through and to Albania. The criminal-political nexus appears to have been able to adapt to changes in Government, with allegations made against officials from the DP and SP regarding their suspected links to organised crime and trafficking activities.

Before the recent transfer of power to the Democratic Party, the Albanian authorities came to accept that organised crime and corruption were major problems that need to be addressed. However, according to an ICG report in 2003, “they appear[ed] not to acknowledge the full extent of [organised crime’s] links with individuals in top state offices, the police and politicians”.⁶⁹ The report went on to argue that the main challenge for Albania was to deprive organised crime of its powerful backers in Tirana. While former Prime Minister Fatos Nano was correct to argue that organised crime is a transnational problem and cannot be successfully combated by Albania alone,⁷⁰ Albania’s efforts in this sphere were described as ‘poor’ in the EC’s 2004 SAA Report.⁷¹ It highlighted poorly defined legislation, deficient intelligence and analysis capacity, limited coordination between the centre and regions and between different agencies, the corruption and intimidation of investigators, corrupt and poorly trained prosecutors and judiciary, all of which have resulted in low output.

In an effort to combat corruption and organised crime, Deputy Prime Minister Meta drew up an anti-corruption plan in September 1999.⁷² However, in early 2003 the anti-corruption drive was assessed as ‘ineffective’,⁷³ although an annual action plan for the prevention and fight against corruption had been established in the previous year.⁷⁴ One of the main problems could be that the rule of law has weak foundations in Albania, with one analyst noting that the “rule of law was alien to communist Albania”, as even the Ministry of Justice was abolished during Hoxha’s reign.⁷⁵ Fotios Moustakis has argued that there have been significant improvements since 2001, but there is still a gap between the letter and the application of the law.⁷⁶

The EC’s 2004 SAA Report argued that there was too much corruption, political interference, lack of human and financial resources, high staff turnover and lack of professionalism throughout the Albanian state, with the judiciary and law enforcement agencies highlighted as particular sources of concern for their very ‘limited improvements’. The report stated that:

*The rule of law in Albania remains deficient. Albanian law enforcement bodies do not yet guarantee consistent enforcement of the law, in accordance with international standards. Widespread corruption and organised crime continue to be serious threats to the stability and progress of the country.*⁷⁷

Similar concerns were listed in the OSCE’s 2004 *Legal Sector Report* for Albania, in which a lack of public confidence and transparency were highlighted as the two main issues facing the legal sector in Albania.⁷⁸ The report highlighted the fact that officials

⁶⁸ Op cit Saltmarshe, p 62.

⁶⁹ Op cit International Crisis Group, 2003, p 7.

⁷⁰ Op cit Nano, pp 8–9.

⁷¹ Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Paper: Albania – Stabilisation and Association Report 2004, (Brussels, SEC(2004) 374/2), p 34.

⁷² Op cit Smith, 2000, p 1.

⁷³ Op cit International Crisis Group, 2003, p 7.

⁷⁴ Council of Ministers, Republic of Albania, Action plan for the prevention and fight against corruption 2003–2004, Tirana, July 2003.

⁷⁵ Op cit Biberaj, p 71.

⁷⁶ Op cit Moustakis, p 154.

⁷⁷ Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Paper: Albania – Stabilisation and Association Report 2004, (Brussels, SEC(2004) 374/2), p 2.

⁷⁸ OSCE Presence in Albania, Legal Sector Report for Albania (2004).

had often been unable to enforce the decisions of courts, that political interference had prevented prosecutors from carrying out their duties and that false certification of property ownership was a major problem for public security. However, the report did state that “the legal sector in Albania possibly has a reputation worse than it deserves”. A lack of public understanding of legal process and lack of transparency were thought to be the two main reasons behind this reputation, but it was also clear that sanctions had not been applied in a strict and uniform manner against individuals in the legal profession who had succumbed to bribes and indulged in corrupt practices.

1.8 Police reform

As the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) states, “In 1997, following a general breakdown of public order, the Albanian National Police (ANP) began the slow process of creating a modern police force that is modelled after law enforcement institutions in democratic societies.”⁷⁹ Since then the issue has only grown in importance as the fight against organised crime, trafficking, corruption and the improvement of public order have become strategic priorities in line with the country’s Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. As further described below in section 5 ‘SALW Control Capacity’, the Government of Albania has itself introduced new strategies and units specifically designed to improve performance in these areas. Significant international support, both bilateral and multilateral, has been made available in recent years to assist these reforms, including:

- The UNDP’s Support to Security Sector Reform (SSSR) Programme, a successor project to the weapons collection support project Small Arms And Light Weapons Control (SALWC) Project which has run Community Policing projects in the Prefectures of Kukës, Shkodër, Lezhe, Tirana, and Vlorë from 2003 onwards to strengthen police capacities, promote a positive police image and help the police build trust with communities.⁸⁰
- The OSCE Presence in Albania which provides assistance with public order and security matters through its Police Assistance and Border Management Unit, including cross-border co-operation, advising the Albanian Government on legislation and strategy plans.⁸¹
- ICITAP, which has worked since 1998 to provide the Albanian National Police with training and advice on strategic planning and anti-smuggling techniques, eventually helping to create a dedicated organised crime unit.
- Similar assistance has been provided by the Police Assistance Mission of the European Community to Albania (PAMECA) since December 2002, including assistance with strategy development, training on investigative techniques and provision of equipment.
- Bilateral assistance has also been provided by donors such as the Governments of Denmark and Norway who have funded small-scale community policing projects from around 2001.

According to the OSCE, an ‘International Consortium’ acts as a forum for co-ordinating police assistance, police reform and programmes on combating trafficking and organised crime. There are several working groups within the Consortium dealing with different policing issues.⁸²

As described further in section 5.1.2, the internal structure of the Albanian National Police has changed over time in response to perceived challenges such as organised

⁷⁹ ICITAP website, <http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/icitap/albania.html>

⁸⁰ <http://www.sssr.undp.org.al/?background>.

⁸¹ <http://www.osce.org/albania/13144.html>.

⁸² <http://www.osce.org/albania/13144.html>.

crime and trafficking and dedicated units and departments have been created with a view to combating these challenges, such as the Sector for the Fight Against Illegal Trafficking. More recently, the MOPO has been transformed into a Ministry of Interior, taking on a local government, corrections and information collection role⁸³ in addition to its previous policing duties. Though this restructuring will create numerous challenges, it should go some way to resolving co-operation problems such as those that the Ministry of Local Government and MOPO experienced during weapons collections.

1.9 Privatisation of security

Private Security Companies (PSCs) have been operating in Albania since 1993⁸⁴ as economic growth and liberalisation has created demand for static security services. Particularly from 1993 onwards PSCs have offered ever more services, including close protection, rapid response and the secure transit of cash and valuables. Clients now routinely include private banks, international business, international institutions, and construction sites as well as a small number of individuals in need of close protection.⁸⁵ Since the law caps the number of staff that any one security company can employ (they may not exceed more than five per cent of the number of police in the same district) most companies have remained small.⁸⁶ Most firms operate in Tirana where the largest client organisations are based. Overall, locals seem to believe that PSCs have made a positive contribution towards crime prevention.⁸⁷ For example the installation of security cameras and the presence of private security guards in banks appears to have a discouraging effect on crime, and many public institutions, such as museums, now contract PSCs in the belief that this will give them added protection.

Within the General Directorate of State Police a three-person commission is responsible for licensing firms. However, day-to-day monitoring of PSCs falls to the Directorate for Community Policing and Weapons Collection in the General Directorate of State Police and its specialists in the various directorates of state police in the districts. This commission and its specialists in the District Police Directorates are responsible for carrying out periodic inspections of companies, their documentation and employees during service and training sessions. Company licences are reviewed annually by the police and if there have been irregularities, the licence is apparently not renewed.

Although the law currently prohibits serving police from also working as security guards,⁸⁸ Technical Directors are required by law to have between five and ten years of police or military experience, which means that many ex-police officers end up working as guards. This accounts for only a minority of guards working in the sector however and most employees have no such background. New guards are required to receive training before they may obtain a licence (the law requires that staff be trained by the Technical Director of a company for 15 days after which they must pass a test administered by the State Police). Training covers the regulations that govern the sector and the use of weapons among other things. However as the training is administered by the PSCs themselves, its quality varies widely and although the police have the right to inspect the training, they do not administer it or certify it. The degree to which

⁸³ The governmental research unit INSTAT now also comes under the new MOI.

⁸⁴ Before 2001 the work of PSCs was regulated by the Law No 7696, dated 07 April 1993, 'On the Service of Civil Guards' and Law No 7985, dated 13 September 1995, 'On some Supplements and Changes in Law No 7696,' dated 07 April 1993, 'On the Service of Civil Guards'. This legislation was abrogated after the approval of the new legislation in 2001. See Page et al., p 9–16.

⁸⁵ Generally, individuals do not feel the need to contract PSCs for personal protection. As a rule, if a person perceives a threat against his life or property he asks for temporary protection from the state police. The state police usually provide protection to politicians.

⁸⁶ The law demands that technical directors and employees of PSCs be Albanian citizens and have their permanent residence in Albania. Law No 8770, dated 19 April 2001, 'On the Guarding and Physical Security Service,' Article 2, Paragraph 2. (State Gazette No 23, May 2001).

⁸⁷ See Page, *Op Cit.*. The crime prevention impact of PSCs was also mentioned by State Police officials interviewed and in the speech of Director General of State Police in the meeting with administrators of PSCs on 06 December 2004.

⁸⁸ *Op cit* Page et al.

the police monitor training also varies from district to district.⁸⁹ Although a trade association has recently emerged it is not thought to have developed a code of conduct for its members or to have raised standards.

A manual prepared by MOI for PSCs instructs security guards on the use of force, calling for:

*[The] guard to use the minimum of necessary force. This means that force is exerted immediately upon the appearance of circumstances that make its use necessary and the exertion of force stops immediately with the disappearance of those circumstances. The scale and intensity of the force depends on the resistance and means of the adversary.*⁹⁰

The manual states that firearms may only be used in 'extreme cases' for the protection of the guard's life, other lives, or to prevent the destruction of property and goods they have been tasked with guarding. However, it is thought that the legislation governing PSCs would benefit from further clarification and elaboration on the use and handling of firearms, while the actual firearms currently in use are not thought to be appropriate for security work. Several administrators and technical directors of PSCs advocated the replacement of Kalashnikov assault rifles with weapons that are less cumbersome to carry and of a lower calibre.

Despite low standards of professionalism in the sector, an examination of media reports for the last few years shows only a few cases of PSC employees misusing force, committing crimes or abusing human rights. For example, on 23 January 2005 a PSC employee living in Shkoza, 6 km away from Tirana, was involved in a fight over rights to a property and shot two people, killing one and wounding the other.⁹¹ The fact that this incident occurred while the guard was off-duty raises questions about both the wisdom of permitting PSC employees to take company weapons home, and about the background checks that are currently being run on new guards. Human rights NGOs working in Albania have no reports pertaining specifically to excessive use of force or firearms by PSCs on record.⁹² In 2004 the Director General of Police cited two instances when PSC employees had used their weapons unlawfully and 57 instances of fines being given to administrators, technical directors and employees.⁹³

The fact that private security guards are legally permitted to carry military weapons, use their own weapons and to store weapons at home, does however bring with it the danger of misuse of weapons in the domestic environment. Given that organised criminality is a significant problem in Albania, one might expect links to exist between criminal groups and PSCs, and even for these companies to serve as fronts for crime. No strong evidence appears to be available to support such a link though. Political affiliations may be more of a problem and allegations have been made that in the first years after the law on PSCs was approved, licences to run security companies were only granted to supporters of the Democratic Party, which was then in power.⁹⁴ Perhaps more problematic than the formal sector are the numerous individuals who offer to provide security cover for a fee. They are generally employed by smaller private companies who cannot afford or do not want to pay for a PSC. Clearly these individuals work beyond the regulatory framework, and though it has yet to be proven, possibly with illegal weapons.⁹⁵ It is also common practice for middle-sized companies and organisations to employ individuals as security guards on the company payroll rather than issuing a contract to a PSC. This practice is not recognised in the relevant laws and is therefore illegal.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Tusha, P and Softa, F, *Shoqerite e ruajtjes*, (Europa, 1997), p 53.

⁹¹ Topollaj D & Karaj V, 'Si me qelluan per nje cope toke,' *Panorama*, 24 January 2005.

⁹² Interviews with Prof. Dr.Valentina Hysi, Albanian Helsinki Committee, 27 January 2005; Edmond Prifti, Albanian Human Rights Group, 21 January 2005.

⁹³ Speech by the Director General of State Police, 06 November, 2004.

⁹⁴ Op cit, Page et al.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

1.10 Political and societal impacts of military reform

In December 1992 Albania became the first CEE state to request NATO membership, and has subsequently committed itself to a very demanding task in trying to meet the standards set by NATO.⁹⁶ Although military officers have expressed some unhappiness with civilian controls,⁹⁷ it could be argued that it is perhaps an expression of unhappiness with attempts to use the military for political means and battles. For example, a number of military units were reportedly unwilling to fire at civilians during the 1997 unrest. However it is not only the DP that has removed military personnel due to their political affiliations. When the SP took power in 1997, one of its first acts was to dismiss 1,500 officers with DP affiliations.⁹⁸ It is perhaps as a result of these incidents, in addition to international norms, that Article 168 of the 1998 Albanian constitution calls for the AAF to be neutral on political questions, in addition to being placed under civilian control.

Despite the manifest difficulties involved in reduction of military personnel in some ways, it is possible to regard the AAF as “one of the most, if not the most, successful sector in the reform process”.⁹⁹ Between 1992 and 1997, there was reportedly a 66 percent drop in the number of military personnel, and a sharp drop in morale as experienced officers and old friends left, living conditions worsened and ‘ownership’ of the military was lost to politicians.¹⁰⁰ Serving and pensioned military personnel had enjoyed privileged living conditions under Hoxha, and thus following the reform process, former and current personnel feel themselves to have lost out considerably.

A lack of retraining programmes for military officer has led some former military personnel to empathise with their former colleagues’ participation in criminal activities such as arms trafficking.¹⁰¹ As stated above, some of the former security and military personnel that organised the looting of arms depots in 1997 were interested in the profits that could be gained from selling these weapons rather than orchestrating a political uprising. Elez Biberaj has argued that former Albanian military, police and secret police officers became engaged in transnational organised crime activities,¹⁰² while others have noted that their smuggling activities may have been overlooked by serving state personnel for ideological reasons (e.g. if arms were being smuggled to the KLA), profit or other personal reasons (e.g. a member of the family is involved).¹⁰³ The fact that the skills and contacts gained during a military career can be successfully transferred to the world of organised crime and trafficking activities is not a problem that is unique to Albania. It has also been discovered in other parts of the former communist bloc and beyond.¹⁰⁴ Further measures need to be taken to ensure that this transition path is closed for former military personnel and that organised crime and trafficking activities do not involve serving personnel.

1.11 Arms, coups and elections

Parliamentary oversight has been the victim of Albania’s fierce bipartisan political landscape, with the DP boycotting the Albanian parliament for much of the SP’s tenure.¹⁰⁵ Yet there were also reportedly attempts for elections and parliament to be

⁹⁶ Since the mid-1990s, the Albanian MOD has submitted Individual Partnership Programmes for PfP and Annual National Programmes under the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). Greenwood D, Transparency and Accountability in South East European Defence (George C. Marshall Association, Bulgaria, 2003).

⁹⁷ Op cit Bahaja.

⁹⁸ Op cit Bumçi, p 6.

⁹⁹ Kajsiu B, ‘Transparency and accountability in governance’, in Defence and Security Sector Reform in South East Europe: Insights and Perspectives – Albania: A Self Assessment Study, (DCAF, 2003), p 120.

¹⁰⁰ Op cit Bahaja.

¹⁰¹ Interview, NGO representative, 25 April 2005.

¹⁰² Op cit Biberaj, p 322.

¹⁰³ Op cit International Crisis Group, p 13.

¹⁰⁴ For example, see: Arms Transit Trade in the Baltic Sea Region (Saferworld, 2003); op cit Bebler; op cit Davis, Hirst and Mariani; Galleotti M, ‘Russia’s criminal army’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 11(6), June 1999, pp 8–10; Galleotti M ‘The challenge of ‘soft security’: Crime, corruption and chaos’, in *New Security Challenges in Postcommunist Europe: Securing Europe’s East*, eds Cottey A and Averre D, (Manchester University Press, 2002), pp 151–71.

¹⁰⁵ Between 1997 and 2003, the DP boycotted parliament on several occasions and for lengthy periods.

bypassed, as one commentator wrote in 1999 that there were “some indications that elements of the Democratic Party may be willing to use extra-political methods of struggle in an attempt to regain power”.¹⁰⁶ In the years following their 1997 election victory, the SP alleged on a number of occasions that Berisha and the DP were planning a coup. For example, firearms were brandished by DP supporters on a number of occasions in 1998, with the episodes in Shkodër in February and Tirana in September labelled as ‘coup attempts’ by the SP Government – a claim hotly denied by the DP.¹⁰⁷

The last of these episodes was sparked off by the assassination of the senior DP member Hajdari in September 1998. The DP alleged that members of the SP were behind the assassination. Thus when the 2002 investigation into allegations of illegal activities by former national intelligence service head Fatos Klosi did not reveal his involvement in the assassination of Azem Hajdari, the final report on Klosi was boycotted by the DP and in January 2003 the DP began another boycott of parliament.¹⁰⁸ Although Biberaj stated that the 1992 transfer of power from the socialists to the DP was “remarkably peaceful and smooth”, the past thirteen years have seen a level of polarisation and non-co-operation between the two main parties which has hindered the development of democratic political practices within Albania,¹⁰⁹ with power struggles within the DP and SP causing further political paralysis.¹¹⁰

According to international observers, despite some intimidation and violence, electoral procedures and campaigning methods have improved in each local and national election since 1997. The 2005 parliamentary election was therefore seen by international observers as a litmus test for Albania’s democratisation processes, as it was expected to be very close – an exit poll taken on 26 June 2005 gave the DP and SP 35 and 34 percent respectively.¹¹¹ The campaign was marred by reports of intimidation and attacks on candidates and supporters of different parties,¹¹² and on polling day an election observer for the Republican Party, himself carrying a gun, was shot dead at a polling station in Tirana.¹¹³ Some international observers highlighted the positive elements of the election campaign,¹¹⁴ and the general international assessment was that the elections were ‘partially’ or ‘generally fair’.¹¹⁵

1.12 Transparency

One of the main problems with the winner-takes-all approach to politics adopted in Albania is that parliamentary scrutiny has failed to take root. To criticise or call for significant amendments to Government legislation appears to be a preserve of the opposition, or opposition factions, only. The particular merits or challenges of

¹⁰⁶ Smith M A, Albania 1997–1998, (Conflict Studies Research Centre S42, 1999), p 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid; op cit Bowcott; op cit Coleman; op cit Pettifer, 1998.

¹⁰⁸ Op cit International Crisis Group, 2003, p 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; op cit Greenwood.

¹¹⁰ For example see: Aliaj I, ‘Albania: Infighting unsettles government’, IWPRBCR 450, 6 August 2003, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; Harizaj E, ‘Berisha ditches co-operation deal’, IWPRBCR 397, 13 January 2003, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; Ilirjani A, ‘Albania and the European Union’, Mediterranean Politics, 9(2), 2004, pp 258–264; Ilo M, ‘Albanian ballot sparks political storm’, IWPRBCR 126, 21 March 2000, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; op cit International Crisis Group, 2003; Nazi F, ‘The hope of the West – that a new generation would bring normality to Albania’s political scene – has been dashed’, IWPRBCR 83, 12 October 1999, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; Semini L, ‘Albania: Political Deadlock Broken’, IWPRBCR 345, 26 June 2002, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; Semini L, ‘Albania: Political infighting threatens economy’, IWPRBCR 315, 6 February 2002, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005; Shemeti S, ‘Albania: Power struggle comes to a head’, IWPRBCR 467, 6 November 2003, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005.

¹¹¹ Elections 2005 Public Opinion Polls: Overview of Key Findings (Mjaft and Gallup International, Tirana, 26 June 2005), p 15.

¹¹² Musta S, ‘Albania election campaign turns nasty’, IWPRBCR 561, 23 June 2005, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 24 August 2005.

¹¹³ ‘Republican Party official said to be killed for political reasons’, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 2–8 July 2005. Source: Shekulli, 5 July 2005. ‘Republican Party observer dies in election shooting in Albania’, BBC Monitoring Service, United Kingdom, 5 July 2005. Source: Shekulli, Tirana, in Albanian, 4 July 2005, p 7. The various accounts journalists offered of the incident did not raise the question of why an election observer was carrying a gun at a polling station.

¹¹⁴ According to one report, PAMECA reported that the state police were “efficiently managed and organised” during the election and that their work was carried out “impartially on time and in compliance with requests made of them”. Source: ‘Albanian police head shows commitment to ensuring calm elections’, BBC Monitoring Service, United Kingdom, 5 July 2005. Source: ATA news agency, Tirana, in English, 1400 gmt, 5 July 2005.

¹¹⁵ The European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations, the EU and the OSCE made these assessments. For example, see: ‘Albanian elections partially meet democratic standards – OSCE update’, AFX Europe (Focus), 4 July 2005; ‘EU foreign policy chief calls for probe into Albania election problems’, AP Worldstream, 4 July 2005; ‘International monitoring body says Albanian elections “generally fair”’, BBC Monitoring Service, United Kingdom, 4 July 2005, Source: Albanian TV, Tirana, in Albanian, 0600 gmt, 4 July 2005; ‘International monitors critical of Albania poll’, AP Worldstream, 4 July 2005.

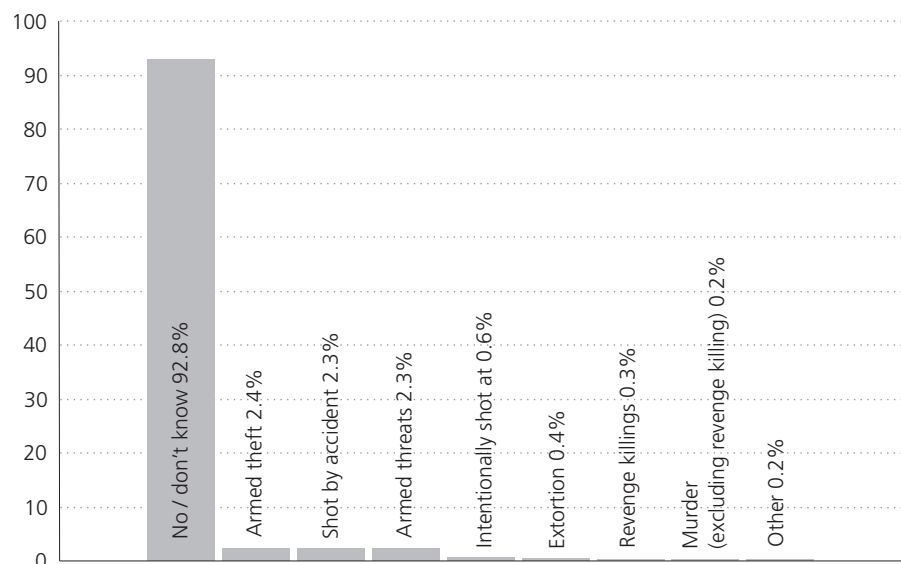
legislation, or national strategies, are not debated and assessed by Albania's parliamentarians. In addition, the fact that large sections of the media limit discussion of current affairs to character assassination, politicised polemics and sensational news items does not help to inform the general public and equip them with the necessary information for engaging in political life.

Of course, one of the problems with achieving greater public engagement and informed debate about issues of governance in Albania is that basic national data is not available. For example, when data was made available to the research team, almost every international interviewee, and many Albanian interviewees, drew the research team's attention to the unreliability of Albanian figures. It must be noted that this unreliability was not necessarily ascribed to any duplicitous intentions, but rather because of the difficulty of real-time communications and accurate record-keeping in Albania. For example, when the USA discovered that the results for the MANPAD destruction programme that they had funded were two MANPADs less than the Albanians had stated they possessed, the US Government began to put pressure on the Albanian Government to explain. The outcome was that the two 'missing' MANPADs had reportedly been destroyed before the US-funded programme commenced. This information had simply not reached those who had given the USA the figures for Albania's MANPAD holdings. This is just one example of the problems posed by Albania's poor communications infrastructure.

Impacts of SALW

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS of this report, and one which gives a useful overview of a range of firearm-related impacts on Albanian society, was that 7.2 percent of respondents to the ISO 2005 Survey stated that they or a member of their family had been a victim of a crime in the previous twelve months, with almost all of these (at least 84.7 percent, not including murder, extortion and 'other' crimes) involving a firearm. As the chart below shows, armed theft, being shot at by accident and armed threats together represented the most commonly suffered misuses of firearms, while 0.6 percent of respondents reported that a member of their family had been intentionally shot at, and 0.5 percent could report a revenge killing or other kind of murder amongst their family members (the vast majority of which are likely to have been committed with a firearm).¹¹⁶

Were you or a member of your family a victim of any of the following types of crimes in the last twelve months?



These findings can be compared with those of a 2004 report entitled *Human Security in Albania*, in which it was reported that 2.4 percent of respondents had been involved in a firearms incident, while 34 percent of respondents stated that they thought that an accidental or intentional shooting was a high and likely security risk in Albania.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Reportedly, in 1998 87.6 percent of intentional injuries causing death in Albania were inflicted with a firearms. Krug E G et al, World Report on Violence and Health, (World Health Organisation, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Institute for Contemporary Studies and Center for Rural Studies, Human Security in Albania, (Prepared for the United Nations Development Programme, November 2003), p 42.

Despite the limited amount and reliability of data available on the mental and physical impacts of guns in Albania, the most recent data available suggests that crime in Albania is higher than the average for East-Central Europe. Armed robbery and banditry, which was common after the turbulence of 1997, is a diminishing but serious threat, and while it is hard to assess the implications of the figures, reported crime is also steadily rising. Likewise, the proportion of suicides committed with firearms in Albania was significantly higher than global averages when last measured in 1998. This suggests (but does not prove) the negative impact of the accessibility of guns, particularly where property disputes, jealousy, alcoholism and depression generate a risk of violence or suicide. Such an impact is also suggested by the analysis of qualitative information in Albanian media reports on firearms incidents from 2002–2005. There is little reliable monitoring of domestic violence, but the information available suggests that such violence may be alarmingly widespread, and involve the use of SALW on a regular basis. Better information gathering on these issues would help to clarify the most effective course of action in these areas.

Also significant is the clear indication from information supplied by two hospitals that admissions related to firearms are steadily decreasing, which may reflect the success of the weapons collections since 1997 in decreasing the accessibility of weapons. Likewise, the MOI figures for reported murders and blood feud killings indicate a similar steady decline. Furthermore, the focus groups conducted for this report revealed a sense that ‘good citizens’ are, by and large, fairly safe from violent crime. It appears, then, that the level of violent crime is decreasing in Albania, and is not a daily disturbance to the average Albanian household. One view of the significance and impact of weapons possession in contemporary Albania was offered by a MFA interviewee, who noted that if one ranks human security threats in Albania, weapons come out below all the others – like pollution, it could be categorised as a constant but low-intensity threat.¹¹⁸ However, with at least 6.1 percent of families stating in the household survey that they had experienced a firearms-related crime in the past twelve months, it remains clear that further progress in reducing the accessibility, visibility and misuse of weapons is necessary, in tandem with other measures to increase public safety and confidence, and continues to have the potential to enhance the downward trend in violent crime.

2.1 Firearms fatalities

Unfortunately, as there is no system for recording and monitoring what proportion of overall murders is committed with firearms, the most detailed recent national statistics for firearms fatalities that the research team was able to obtain were those for 1998 which were used in the World Health Organisation’s *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002).¹¹⁹ According to these figures, 741 of these 846 intentional injuries that led to death, homicides, and suicides involved a firearm.¹²⁰ In other words, 87.6 percent of manslaughter, murder and suicide cases involved a firearm. Put another way, there were 22.1 firearm fatalities per 100,000 people. Of these 741 cases, 591 were reported as homicides, 98 as suicides, 50 as unintentional and 2 undetermined.

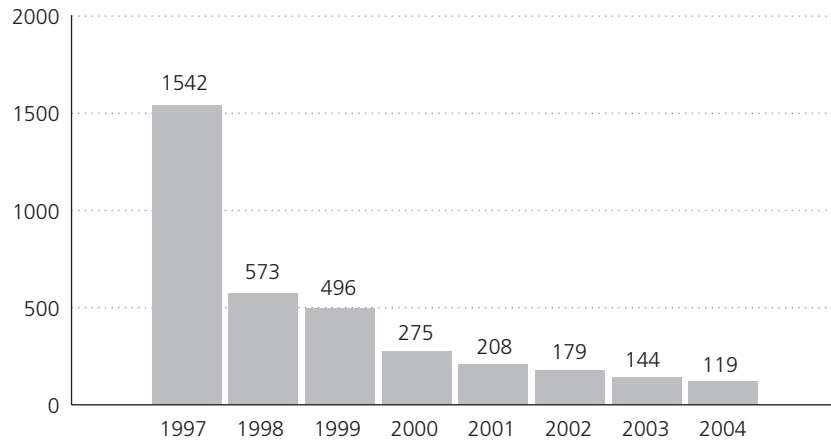
2.1.1 Firearm-related homicides

Of the 660 murders reported in the WHO report, 89.5 percent were committed with a firearm. However, possibly because of problems with reporting mechanisms, the WHO reports 87 more murders than the then MOPO in 1998 (as shown in the chart opposite).

¹¹⁸ Interview, MFA official, 24 April 2005.

¹¹⁹ Krug E G et al, *World Report on Violence and Health*, (World Health Organisation, 2002).

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p 322.

Reported murders since 1997 (Source: MOPO, op cit, pp.73–74)

Although there has been a continual decrease in murders since 1997, in the absence of indicative statistics the research team are unable to report on whether the percentage of homicides committed with a firearm has increased or decreased from the 1998 level of 89.5 percent. However, according to a Tirana police report, in 2004 twenty murders were committed in the city using firearms, as well as one armed robbery which resulted in a fatality.¹²¹ In addition, there were a further 93 reported attempted murders, 22 injuries and 399 other crimes against the individual in which firearms were involved. The report also noted an increase in robberies and suicides using swords, knives and ‘cold steel’.

The mayor of Fier, Baftjar Zeqo, informed the research team that the majority of murders in Fier were carried out with firearms.¹²² He believed that these murders were revenge killings carried out by members of organised crime groups. According to Robert Metaj, the head surgeon at Fier hospital, the number of firearms-related admissions increases during the summer, a period that he states is also known for the return of Albanian émigrés to Fier.¹²³ In his opinion, the increase is the result of vendetta or ‘criminal business’ murders. He also stated that the number of females killed by firearms, and those reported to him as suicides, has been rising in recent years. At the same time, the number of injuries incurred through celebratory fire at weddings and other family festivities appears to be falling. In general, however, firearms fatalities are the second most common type of injury or casualty after traffic fatalities in Fier. In Berat, we were informed that of the three murders committed in the first six months of 2005, one had been committed with a firearm, in line with recent trends for murders in the region around Berat in which a third have been committed by firearms.¹²⁴ However, in Gjirokaster, unregistered firearms were thought to have been used in only around ten percent of recent accidental and intentional injuries and fatalities.¹²⁵

2.1.2 Firearm-related suicides

According to the WHO’s *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002), at 2.9 per 100,000, the rate for suicides committed with a firearm in Albania was lower than levels in North America, but higher than other areas of the world according to data for the period 1997–1999, as the following chart demonstrates.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Source: ‘Survey on the collection and surrendering of weapons, ammunitions and other military materials during the 1997–2004 period’, Police Directorate of Tirana, 2 March 2005.

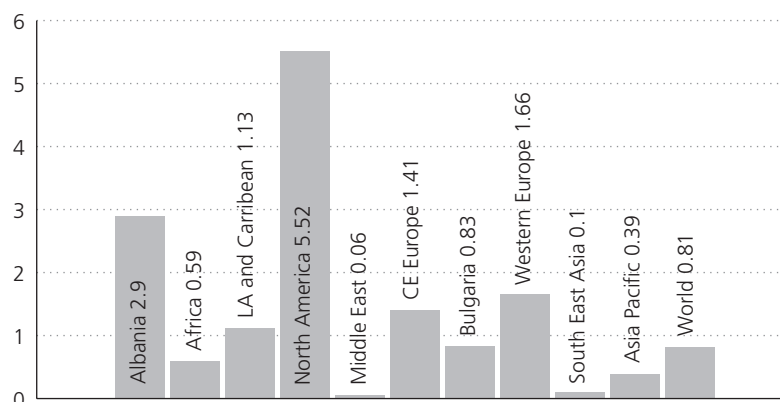
¹²² Interview, local government official, 12 May 2005.

¹²³ Interview, Metaj, 15 May 2005.

¹²⁴ Interview, hospital official, 29 July 2005.

¹²⁵ Interview, hospital official, 6 August 2005.

¹²⁶ Op cit Krug et al. p 322.

Firearm suicide rates per 100,000 population (Source: WHO, 2002)

According to the WHO report, in 1998 just under twenty percent of intentional killings were suicides, while around thirteen percent of all firearms fatalities were suicide cases. Overall, Albania's suicide rate of 6.5 per 100,000 in 1998¹²⁷ was below the European average (13.6 for males and 4.3 for females 1999–2001).¹²⁸ The table below gives the WHO figures for overall numbers of suicides in 1998 by gender and age group, and indicates that 98 of a total of 165 suicides were committed with firearms.

Table 1: Suicides committed in Albania in 1998¹²⁹

	Female	Male	Total
Suicides	61	104	165
Suicides aged 5–14	1	2	3
Suicides aged 15–29	42	46	88
Suicides aged 30–44	9	28	37
Suicides aged 45–59	4	18	22
Suicides aged 60+	4	10	14
Suicides per 100,000 population	3.6	7.1	6.5
Suicides committed with a firearm	–	–	98

With improved epidemiological surveillance, more accurate data gathered over several years would enable more confident analysis of overall trends. In the absence of such surveillance, the research team were unable to generate an estimate of suicides committed in Albania using firearms since 1998. However, the WHO figures for 1998, which show that over 59 percent of suicides in Albania were committed with a firearm in that year. This is well above the worldwide average of 19.5 percent for countries where data was available for the 2002 WHO report,¹³⁰ and suggests the hypothesis that access to firearms was too easy for those at risk of suicide at this time. This is known to have been the case, as the figures refer to the year after the looting of over half a million SALW. The effect of subsequent collections on the firearm suicide rate, cannot be examined without more routine information gathering and reporting mechanisms being in place among healthcare providers.

The figures from the media content analysis undertaken for this Survey, (included below in section 2.5), indicate that on average 20.2 reports of firearm related suicides appeared in the newspaper *Shekulli* per year in the period 2002–15 May 2005.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Op cit Taylor, Phillips and Bogozavljevic, p 30.

¹²⁹ Op cit Krug et al, pp 314 and 315.

¹³⁰ This is the percentage of the aggregated total of all suicides which were committed with firearms in countries where firearm-related suicides were recorded, rather than a mean of the rates in countries listed, calculated from data in op cit Krug et al, pp 314–323.

¹³¹ The average takes into account the monthly rate in the first 4.5 months of 2005.

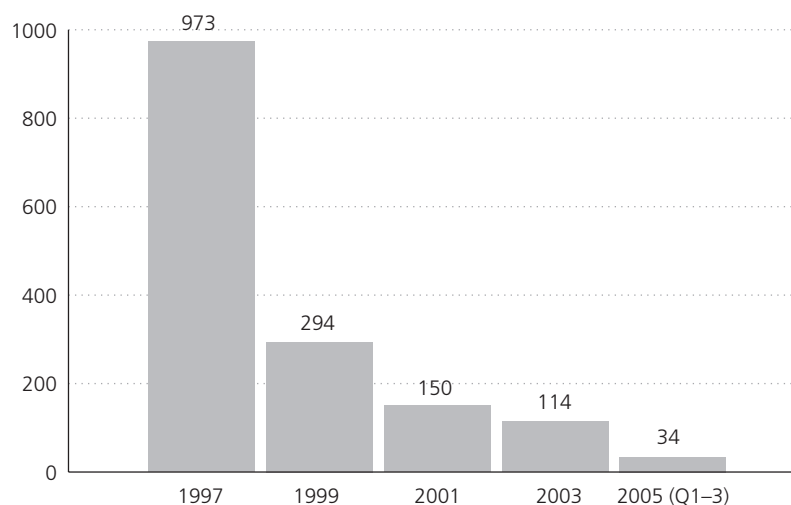
2.1.3 Firearm-related accidental deaths

As stated above, 2.3 percent of Survey respondents reported that they or a member of their family had been shot at by accident in the previous twelve months, while the WHO reported in 2002 that in Albania in 1998 there were 50 unintentional deaths caused by firearms (a rate of 1.5 per 100,000 population). The figures for accidental shootings from Fier hospital which are shown in section 2.2 suggest a slight decline in numbers for the period 2000–2004, but the accuracy of the classification as ‘accidental’ is correctly applied to the numbers of cases shown. The absence of stories about firearms-related accidents from the media survey findings suggests that the danger of accidental shooting presented by firearms is under-reported – especially if the rate of 50 deaths per year from this cause has been maintained since data was last collected on the topic in 1998.

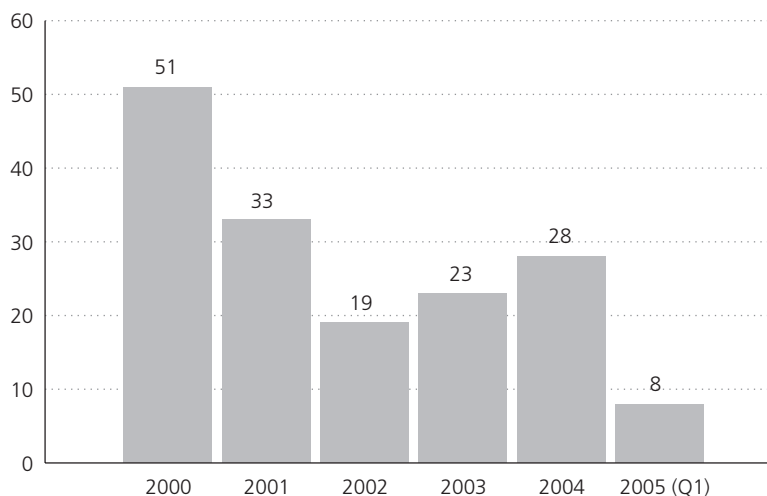
2.2 Firearms injuries

Although it was not possible to obtain authoritative national statistics on firearms injuries and fatalities, two individual hospitals, the Military Hospital in Tirana and Fier Hospital, did provide statistics which provide a reliable impression of the overall rate of injury. The pattern of total injuries recorded by the two hospitals in recent years (in the case of the Military Hospital for 1997–September 2005, and in the case of Fier Hospital for 2000–March 2005) is shown in the charts below as one of gradual decline.

Firearms injuries recorded at the Military Hospital 1997–September 2005



Firearms injuries recorded at the Fier Hospital 2000–September 2005



The statistics for the Military Hospital in Tirana include most cases of firearms injury from Central Albania, but only severe firearms injuries from the North and the South

of Albania, therefore the breakdown by region should not be taken as indicative of the actual geographical distribution of such cases.

Table 2: Firearms injuries recorded at the Military Hospital 1997–September 2005¹³²

Month	Southern Albania		Central Albania		Northern Albania	
	Non-fatal injuries	Fatal injuries	Non-fatal injuries	Fatal injuries	Non-fatal injuries	Fatal injuries
1997						
January			4		1	
February			9		2	
March	14		110		23	1
April	32	2	64	6	38	2
May	28	2	59	8	24	1
June	27	1	61	5	27	7
July	40		58	1	29	3
August	21	2	37	1	25	1
September	13	3	30	4	28	2
October	1	1	31	2	21	
November	3	2	30	3	5	1
December	2	2	7		6	
Total	973					
1999						
January	8		19		9	
February	6		16		8	
March	6		10		9	1
April	7		17	3	14	
May	1		11		4	
June	4		13	1	9	1
July	6		10	1	8	
August	2		18		6	
September	5	1	10		5	2
October	2		9	5	4	
November	1		11	1	5	
December			3	1	1	1
Total	295					
2001						
January	5		7	2	8	
February	4		5		5	
March			3	1	6	
April	2		5		4	
May			5		3	
June	1		3		6	
July	2		3		6	
August	2		5	1	6	
September	3		10		2	
October	3		5	1	5	2
November	2		3	1	3	1
December	1	1	5	1		1
Total	150					

¹³² Admissions to the Military Hospital are classified into five categories: trauma, orthopaedics, radiology, internal diseases and infective diseases. The admissions register assigns each admission a number which indicates the treatment category, and records the following information: the patient's name and address; the category of the admission and a complete diagnosis; the date of the patient's admission and discharge. Most firearms injuries were classified as trauma, or occasionally also as orthopaedic cases because they involved fractures. As the numbers for classifying injuries indicate only whether the injury was a trauma or an orthopaedic fracture, the only way to compile data specifically on firearms injuries is to retrieve information covering the diagnosis of the disease from individual records.

2003

January	1	4	1	5
February		3		3
March	2	6		4
April	3	5		1
May	1	2		3
June	1	8	1	4
July	1	7		7
August	2	6	2	3
September	2	3		5
October	1	4		2
November	1	4		2
December	2	2		
Total	114			

2005

January		2			1
February		3		1	1
March		1	1		
April					1
May	1	3	1		1
June	1	3			2
July					4
August	1	1			2
September		3			
Total	34				

Total	274	18	776	55	415	29
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(all years)

1567

The statistics for Fier Hospital record not only the total number of recorded firearms ‘incidents’ admitted to Fier Hospital for the period 2000–March 2005, but also reflect the gender, urban/rural status and age of the injured parties.¹³³

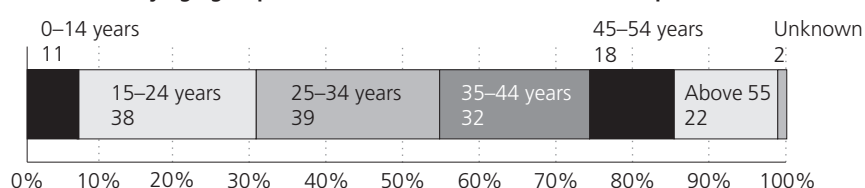
Table 3: Firearms cases admitted to Fier Hospital 2000–March 2005

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 (Q1)
Male	43	29	13	17	23	8
Female	8	4	6	6	5	0
Urban	20	10	7	5	11	3
Rural	31	23	12	18	17	5
0–14 years old	1	2	2	1	4	1
15–24 years old	6	8	8	12	4	0
25–34 years old	14	7	2	6	5	5
35–44 years old	11	12	3	3	2	1
45–54 years old	11	4	1	0	2	0
Above 55	7	0	3	1	10	1
Age unknown	1	0	0	0	1	0
‘Accidental shootings’	39	25	19	21	24	6
‘Accidental shootings’ by males	34	21	13	15	20	6
Intentional shootings	12	8	0	2	4	2
Intentional shootings by males	9	8	0	0	3	2
Total firearms incidents	51	33	19	23	28	8

133 Source: hospital official, 15 May 2005.

Although it cannot be argued that this table can be used as an accurate representation for firearms injuries and fatalities in Albania, it offers clues as to the situation in Albania as a whole. Thus, notwithstanding concerns over the use of weapons in domestic violence outlined below in section 2.3 (cases which may never reach hospital), these figures would suggest that more males than females are injured by firearms in Albania, just as the household survey findings indicated that more males than females own guns in Albania. Also notable here is the fact that more firearms incidents occurred in rural than in urban settings. This tallies well with the strong perception that firearms are primarily held in rural rather than urban areas (reported in section 3.5.4, 'Perceptions of civilian SALW possession'), and perhaps undermines the impression that the use of firearms in rural areas is predominantly for legitimate, practical rather than criminal use. The distribution of admissions by age group for the five years and three months covered is shown in the chart below, which shows that, as is commonly seen, the victims of armed violence in this dataset fall predominantly in the age range 15–34 years, which accounted for 47.5 percent of the cases.

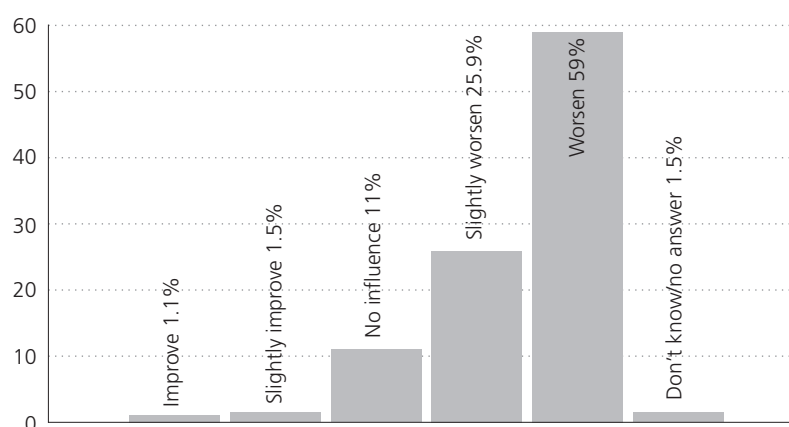
Distribution by age group of firearms cases admitted to Fier Hospital 2000–March 2005



2.3 Domestic violence

When asked whether firearms improve or worsen relations within the family, 84.9 percent of respondents to the household survey conducted for this report replied that they slightly worsen (25.9 percent) or worsen (59.0 percent) them. More women (62 percent) than men held the latter view.

Do you think firearms improve or worsen relations inside the family?



The only known attempt to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence quantitatively in Albania is the figure from a 1996 study of violence against women which reported that almost 40% of respondents suffered physical violence regularly.¹³⁴ According to a report by Eglatina Gjermeni and Majlinda Bregu of the Gender Alliance for Development Centre, official statistics on domestic violence are very unreliable and do not give a true picture of the scale of the problem.¹³⁵ The report thus examines the phenomenon by exploring the coverage of domestic violence in the Albanian media,

¹³⁴ Albanian Women's Association, *Violence Against Women*, (Refleksione Report, 1996), cited in Baban A, *Domestic Violence Against Women in Albania*, (UNICEF, 2003), p 15.

¹³⁵ NGO representative E and Bregu M, *Monitoring Media on Domestic Violence 2001 & 2002*, (Women's Center, 2003).

and concludes that family crimes have been increasing in recent years. It also states that media attention tends to be focused upon more sensational aspects of domestic violence, and that typically reports are inaccurate, lack analytical quality and evade questions of social responsibility. A sample of the headlines for domestic violence fatalities in 2001 are given below:

'Crime in the family: Brother kills sister', (Shekulli, 27 March 2001)

'Son attacks parents with a hand grenade – mother dies', (Shekulli, 11 January 2001)

'Father shoots his only daughter', (Shekulli, 10 March 2001)

'Executes wife and mother-in-law, then kills himself with the last bullet left', (Republika, 17 February 2001).

'Love dies: Jealous man kills girlfriend before turning to himself', (Republika, 22 June 2001)

'Terror, massacre: Man kills wife and son with an automatic gun' (Republika, 7 October 2001)

In the Women's Centre's media report for 2001, the six main newspapers surveyed contained 207 articles on domestic violence, of which 48 reported on domestic murders, five on attempted murders and three on suicides.¹³⁶ Of the instruments used in the domestic abuse crimes, 62 percent of cases involved SALW (36 percent automatic guns, 13 percent handguns and a further 13 percent bombs and grenades). This compares to just thirteen percent of cases involving knives.¹³⁷ Again, the sensationalism of the media means that the findings of such studies cannot be taken as representative of the overall situation in the general population. However, given the greater mortality associated with firearms injuries as compared to injuries inflicted with other kinds of implement, the accessibility of firearms could be aggravating the risk of serious harm to women whatever the actual prevalence of domestic violence in Albanian society overall. The majority of physical abuse cases covered had jealousy as their stated cause (27 percent), with arguments (24 percent), alcohol (10 percent) and mental health problems (10 percent) also cited.¹³⁸

The analysis of the Women's Centre and Gender Alliance for Development Centre also suggests that neither law enforcement and justice bodies, nor the media, take domestic violence seriously. It is generally seen as something that is 'private', between a man and his wife (i.e. the wife is regarded as the 'property' of the husband), with media interest heightened by the gruesome details of the crime.

According to the NGO Stop Violence Against Women, although Article 18 of the Albanian Constitution guarantees equality before the law, there is no specific legislation on domestic violence.¹³⁹ Such violence can be prosecuted as assault under the Code of Criminal Procedure, which prescribes a range of fines and custodial sentences depending on the severity of the offence.¹⁴⁰ Non-serious intentional injury, rape and sexual harassment can be prosecuted only when the victim files a complaint.¹⁴¹

2.4 Reported crime and victimisation rates

According to the key findings of the 2000 International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), Tirana is above average for the capital cities of East-Central Europe in terms of both the number of crimes per 100 inhabitants (incidence) and in terms of the percentage of respondents who were victims of crime (prevalence) in the year preceding

¹³⁶ Ibid, p 19.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p 22.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p 23.

¹³⁹ Stop Violence Against Women, 'Albania', <http://www.stopvaw.org/Albania.html>, accessed 09 November 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

the survey.¹⁴² The average incidence and prevalence rates for capital cities in East-Central Europe was 51 and 27 percent respectively, for Tirana it was 56 and 32 percent. Interestingly, 44 percent of the Tirana-based respondents viewed the performance of the police positively in 2000, while 48 percent of respondents viewed their performance negatively. Although this was very close to the averages for East Central European capitals (47 percent negative and 44 percent positive), the percentage point difference between those who assessed the police positively and those who assessed the police negatively was the smallest of all European capitals surveyed. The survey also recorded that 60 percent of Tirana's respondents felt safe when 'walking alone in their area after dark', compared to 40 percent who did not feel safe, meaning that Tirana was rated as safer than the average East-Central European capital.¹⁴³

Focus group interviewees from Tirana also gave generally positive views about their perceived levels of personal security – although some interviewees were still a little worried about venturing out after dark. According to the focus group and other interviewees, Tirana is regarded to be one of the safest places to live in Albania. For example, one focus group interviewee from Shkodër rated public safety in the capital as better than that in Shkodër when he stated that:

There is a difference between Tirana and Shkodër though. There are people that feel more secure in Tirana. I have known some businessmen who were scared to run their businesses in Shkodër, so they have gone to Tirana.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Male, August 2005.

Other signs of fear in Albania's cities were reported in relation to the times that people would go out at night. For example, a representative of Berat's chamber of commerce stated that one does not see people in restaurants in Berat after nine o'clock in the evening,¹⁴⁴ with a similar view also reported in Shkodër:

I have noticed that people [seem to] have the idea that no real state exists. Maybe you were never raped or robbed in the middle of the street, but you fear that, because you think that the state has no authority over people. Usually, in Shkodër, especially from October till February, I mean during winter, it is very rare for the people to go out at night and have fun, or just simply take a walk after eight o'clock in the afternoon. Two years ago people wouldn't go out after seven o'clock, now it's eight o'clock. And it is very special case to see people out at nine. Why? Because they still have the fear, that it is dark outside, so we have to be home. I mean that even when there is no concrete fear, it is just the overall feeling, that the state cannot protect you, so it is dangerous to go out in the dark.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Male, August 2005.

According to the 2005 ISO poll, 19.9 percent of respondents feared that they or a member of their family might become a victim of crime in the future. According to the Centre for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development report of 2004, only nine percent of respondents thought that their area had a bad or very bad level of security.¹⁴⁵ Most of their interviewees explained that security levels were improving because of: a decrease in crime, and gun crime in particular; less blood feuds; better economic prospects; and the fact that they thought that most of the 'bad' criminals had left Albania. Although the 2004 report concluded that the public perceived crime levels to be lower than they were in 2002, they stated that there was still a belief that crime levels were higher in urban areas compared to rural areas.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, while the public believe that the crime situation in Albania is improving, the number of reported crimes is rising.

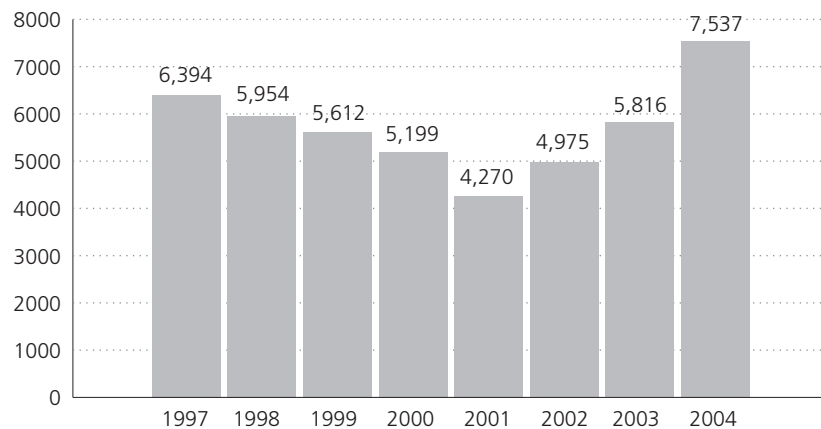
¹⁴² The types of crime covered in the ICVS are: theft of car, theft from car, car vandalism, theft of motorcycle, theft of bicycle, burglary, attempted burglary, robbery, theft of personal property, sexual offences (women only), assault and threat of assault. Source: Alvazzi del Frate A, Van Kesteren, J N, Criminal Victimization in Urban Europe. Key findings of the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (UNICRI, 2004), <http://www.unicri.it/www/analysis/icvs/pdf_files/CriminalVictimizationUrbanEurope.pdf>

¹⁴³ The average responses for ECE capitals were 51 percent of respondents stressing that they were unsafe and 49 percent stating that they were safe. Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, Berat Chamber of Commerce, 30 July 2005.

¹⁴⁵ Op cit Centre for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, p 23.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p 27.

Registered crimes in Albania 1997–2004 (Source: op cit MOPO, p.61)

According to these official crime statistics, the percentage of total registered crimes that are committed against the person is returning to levels comparable to the pre-1997 period.

Table 4: Crimes against the person by year (1992–2004).

Year	Crimes against the person	Total registered crimes	% of total crimes against the person
1992	1,874	11,241	16.6%
1993	2,090	9,412	22.2%
1994	2,007	7,423	27%
1995	1,664	6,370	26.1%
1996	1,486	5,221	28.4%
1997	3,141	6,394	49.1%
1998	1,877	5,954	31.5%
1999	1,909	5,612	34%
2000	1,858	5,199	35.7%
2001	1,631	3,728	38.2%
2002	1,586	4,975	31.9%
2003	1,726	5,816	29.7%
2004	2,019	7,896	25.5%

MOI and international observers agree that the increase in the number of reported crimes and crimes against the person is probably due to an improvement in the recording of reported crimes, rather than an absolute increase in criminal activities.¹⁴⁷ Of course, the poor record-keeping for criminal activities in previous years makes it harder to conclude whether the increase is simply due to improved procedures for registering crimes or increased criminal activities. Increases in the number of reported crimes could also be due to increased public confidence in reporting crimes to the police. Also, as is to varying degrees true in all countries, many crime victims do not report crimes to the police. However, the levels of reporting – or non-reporting – of crimes to the police are apparently comparable with the norms of other European and North American countries.¹⁴⁸ Despite this, according to Dennis J Kenney's analysis, Albanians still remain more susceptible to violent crimes against the person than people in other western countries.¹⁴⁹

Although most focus group respondents did state that public safety and security levels were far higher than in 1997, concerns were still voiced regarding the possibility of

¹⁴⁷ Interview, international official, 27 April 2005; op cit MOPO, p 61.

¹⁴⁸ According to Kenney, while homicide (100 percent), business burglaries (91 percent) and robbery (81 percent) have reportedly high rates for public reporting, thefts (41 percent), sexual assaults (56 percent) and threats of assault (63 percent) are not so frequently reported to the police. Kenney D J, *Public Perceptions of the Police in Albania: Nationwide Surveys of Residents and Police* (City University of New York and UNDP SSSR, 2004), p 11.

¹⁴⁹ Op cit, Kenney, pp 10–11.

being shot and possibly killed by a firearm. One focus group participant linked this to the strategy for collecting weapons, demanding a shift to seizure rather than voluntary collection in the belief that this would reduce insecurity by making ordinary citizens less casual about owning illicit firearms:

It is very obvious that there is lack of security here. No parent is calm about their children going to school, coming back, bringing their children to take part in different activities. There is a lack of security. Why? Because everyone possesses a gun – without permission in most cases. We can see these people possessing guns in everyday life, we hear it in the news – this person was killed, this other killed himself. So all of this information creates an overall sense of the lack of security in the family, society and everywhere else. I think that the Government should do something. It should make inspections time after time, not by revealing secrets, not by telling people that at this time, on this day, a guns inspection will take place. I know that it is difficult to keep this kind of secret, people talk to each other, and then everyone who possesses guns will learn this, and will hide their gun someplace. So, we will always live with a lack of security and will feel insecure – until the day that the authorities take this issue seriously.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Female, August 2005.

These fears are no doubt fuelled by the regularity with which one can still hear of a firearms incident in the region. In the focus groups conducted in Fier and Shkodër, at least one respondent was able to recall a recent firearms incident in the region.

Can you think of any accident that happened recently with a gun?

– In a village last week a man killed his mother-in-law and his wife.

FG, Fier, Female

– Yesterday, there was an accident in a family, there was shooting, but luckily no one got killed.

FG, Fier, Male

– Yesterday, a merchant was killed at the market, he was selling there as usual, and he was killed with a gun.

FG, Shkodër, Female

2.4.1 Armed robbery and intimidation

One of the most common forms of firearms usage in the immediate post-1997 period was reportedly ‘banditry’ and armed robbery.¹⁵⁰ Although this had been thought to be on the decline, in 2004 there were 134 registered cases of violent robbery and 93 involving firearms. In the beginning of 2005, it was reported that a masked and armed gang that had been preying on cars and vans travelling on rural roads in the Mat district had been apprehended by police, thanks to an anonymous tip-off.¹⁵¹ Fifty police officers surrounded the gang of five young men from the Diber district of Albania, who were suspected of stealing weapons from the cars and vans that they stopped. In the home of one of the arrested individuals, police found eight automatic weapons, 4,000 rounds of ammunition, and explosive materials. One report from 2005 also stated that a Shkodër policeman was suspected of armed street robberies, after stolen items and weapons were found in his car and home in February 2005.¹⁵²

There were also a number of reports from late 2004 and early 2005 in which fifteen and sixteen year old youths had brandished weapons and threatened night club owners in Shkodër and Tirana.¹⁵³ In these cases, the youths were found to be in possession of unregistered pistols. In early 2005 an individual from Berat was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for walking into Berat police headquarters on 20th December 2004

¹⁵⁰ Op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh; op cit Saltmarsh.

¹⁵¹ ‘Masked, armed robbers steal guns from cars on rural roads in Mat’, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 8–14 January 2005. Source: Shekulli, 12 January 2005.

¹⁵² ‘Shkodër policeman suspected in street robberies’, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 12–18 February 2005. Source: Shekulli, 17 February 2005.

¹⁵³ ‘Armed adolescent threatens to kill nightclub owner’, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 29 January–4 February 2005. Source: Shekulli, 4 February 2005; ‘Four youths from Puke district arrested for attempted murder of Tirana bar owners’ Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 8–14 January 2005. Source: Shekulli, 14 January 2005.

with a Kalashnikov rifle and threatening to kill the chief of police.¹⁵⁴ In another episode, an off-duty police officer has also been accused of using his firearm to threaten a fellow villager, reportedly firing at the individual, according a report published in January 2005.¹⁵⁵ These cases would appear to support the thoughts of Ali Hajdani, Chief Inspector of the Fier Police Directorate, who argued that the very fact that weapons are easily available means that they are easily resorted to for threatening purposes.¹⁵⁶

2.4.2 SALW in blood feuds, vendettas and their broader impacts

The blood feud is a vendetta regulated by Albanian customary law (the *Kanun*).¹⁵⁷ When a member of one family has been dishonoured or killed by a member of another, the former are entitled to claim 'compensation' from the latter in accordance with the Commission of Blood or Council of Elders' interpretation of the *Kanun*. The wronged family may seek compensation with blood (by the killing of a male member of the other family) or may, after mediation, grant a magnanimous pardon (receiving payment in the form of money or property).¹⁵⁸ While the number of recorded blood feud murders fell as low as 10 in 2004, they have certainly increased as a percentage of all reported murders in Albania since 1991, and continue to be regarded as a cause for concern throughout Albania.¹⁵⁹ The significance of the phenomenon for this report is that the *Kanun* specifically refers to firearms as the implement for committing and avenging murder.¹⁶⁰ Although it cannot be argued that blood feuds are conducted in strict adherence to the letter of *Kanun* law, it is clear that the level of blood feud killings has implications for the level of firearm violence in Albanian society.

In the twentieth century Ahmet Zog and Enver Hoxha sought to end adherence to the *Kanun* as they attempted to construct a modern Albanian state.¹⁶¹ In general, Hoxha's efforts have been regarded as relatively (in some cases, spectacularly) successful in containing the resort to blood feuds:¹⁶² one account states that only one blood feud killing was recorded during Hoxha's 40 year reign.¹⁶³ There is no means of verifying the exact numbers, but it is apparent that the harsh penalties for the perpetrators of blood feuds and the tough reputation of Hoxha's regime for law enforcement may have made the resort to extra-legal revenge much less common.

A number of researchers have stated that with the end of communist rule, the Albanian state became less able to control private and public security. Corrupt practices in the law enforcement and judicial systems increasingly led Albanians to take the law into their own hands, deriving customary legitimacy from the *Kanun*,¹⁶⁴ such that between 1992 and 1994 the number of murders connected with blood feuds reportedly quadrupled.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁴ 'Two-year prison sentence for gunman threatening police', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 5–11 March 2005. Source: Shekulli (Internet Version), 5 March 2005.

¹⁵⁵ 'Policeman arrested by colleagues for firing service weapon', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 8–14 January 2005. Source: Shekulli (Internet Version), 12 January 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Hajdani, 14 May 2005.

¹⁵⁷ The *Kanun* has governed a wide variety of economic and social relations, in particular gender and property relations, throughout Albania since the fifteenth century. The blood feud has come to be regarded as a central element of the *Kanun*, the most well-known version of which has been attributed to Lekë Dukagjini (1410–1481). For example, see: Çobani T, 'Leke Dukagjini and his code (Kanun)', website of the Committee for Nationwide Reconciliation, <<http://www.pajtimi.com/faqebrenda.php?newsID=30&lang=eng>>, 17 May 2005.

¹⁵⁸ Op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh, pp 136–9; op cit Saltmarsh, pp 190–3. For a portrayal of a fictional blood feud in Northern Albania cf. Kadare I, *Broken April*, (Vintage, 2003).

¹⁵⁹ According to the Committee of National Reconciliation (CNR), blood feuds continue to pose problems for families living in Berat, Burrel, Elbasan, Fier, Kruja, Shkodër, Tropoja and Vlora. Source: Website of the Committee for Nationwide Reconciliation, <www.pajtimi.com>, 17 May 2005.

¹⁶⁰ Cf Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 31.

¹⁶¹ Op cit Biberaj; op cit Blumi; op cit Doll; op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh; op cit Saltmarsh.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Arie S, 'Blood feuds trap Albania in the past: Thousands forced to take refuge as medieval code targets fathers and sons', *The Observer*, 21 September 2003, <<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1046385,00.html>>, 17 May 2005.

¹⁶⁴ Op cit Biberaj, pp 16 and 201; op cit Lawson and Saltmarsh, pp 136–9; op cit Saltmarsh, pp 190–3.

¹⁶⁵ Op cit Biberaj, p 202.

Table 5: Number of recorded murders and blood feud killings in Albania 1997–2004¹⁶⁶

Year	Total murders recorded	Murders attributed to blood feud	Murders attributed to blood feud (%)
1998	573	45	7.8
1999	496	41	8.2
2000	275	18	6.5
2001	208	32	15.4
2002	179	13	7.2
2003	144	12	8.3
2004	119	10	11.9

The above table shows a roughly consistent decline in both overall recorded murders and blood feud murders between 1998 and 2004. Meanwhile, the table below reveals that, with the exception of 2004, the percentage of recorded murders attributed to blood feud since 1998 in Shkodër is well above the Albanian national average. Although numbers already appeared to have been declining, a special unit was established within the Shkodër Police Directorate to combat blood feud killings in the region at the beginning of 2005.

Table 6: Number of recorded murders and blood feud killings in Shkodër 1998–2004¹⁶⁷

Year	Total murders recorded	Murders attributed to blood feud	Murders attributed to blood feud (%)	% of Albanian blood feud murders committed in Shkodër ¹⁶⁸
1998 ¹⁶⁹	76	32	42.1	71
1999	82	42	51.2	102 ¹⁷⁰
2000	53	20	37.7	111
2001	45	13	28.8	40.6
2002	28	9	32.1	69.2
2003	22	8	36.4	66.7
2004	17	1	5.8	10

The blood feud permits the killing of any adult male member of a suspected wrong-doer's extended family, who become legitimate targets for 'compensation' purposes. This has reportedly led to 1,270 men fleeing Albania for fear of being killed under blood feud conditions, with an estimated 2,500 families thought to have been involved in blood feuds since the early 1990s.¹⁷¹ According to Committee of National Reconciliation figures, in 2001 there were 1,376 families living under the fear of a blood feud in 746 villages and 17 cities in Albania.

¹⁶⁶ Op cit MOPO, pp 73 and 74.

¹⁶⁷ Interview, MOPO official, 15 May 2005.

¹⁶⁸ The discrepancy between the figures for Shkodër and the figures for Albania nationally that has led to more than 100 percent of blood feud murders in Albania being committed in Shkodër in 1999 and 2000 once more highlights the problems of the accuracy of crime figures in Albania.

¹⁶⁹ The data for this year is reportedly not very accurate and probably under reported because many of the files for this year were burnt or disappeared during the 1998 disturbances.

¹⁷⁰ The fact that the table shows that 102 percent of blood feuds were recorded in Shkodër in 1999 and 111 percent in 2000 is due to the fact that the reported number of blood feud murders in Shkodër in 1999 was one more than the national total in 1999 and two more in 2000. It is assumed that this is the result of reporting deficiencies within Albania between the regions and the centre.

¹⁷¹ Op cit Arie; Source: Website of the Committee for Nationwide Reconciliation, <www.pajtimi.com>, 17 May 2005.

Table 7: Distribution of families under blood feud (2001)¹⁷²

Area	Families under blood feud	Children (1–18 yrs) affected	Children (1–10 yrs) affected	Children (11–18 yrs) affected
Berat	62	26	11	15
Bulqiza	17	17	6	11
Burrel	48	47	15	32
Durrës	98	56	26	30
Elbasan	29	27	12	15
Fier	49	21	8	13
Gjirokastër	9	7	1	6
Has	28	44	18	26
Korçe	15	9	6	3
Kruja	11	13	3	10
Kukës	49	44	17	26
Kurbin	12	10	4	6
Lezha	18	11	2	9
Librazh	4	6	3	3
Lushnje	33	34	10	24
M.madhe	67	53	24	29
Pogradec	6	4	0	4
Puka	13	0	0	0
Shkodër	460	108	51	57
Tepelene	16	20	10	10
Tirana	144	68	22	46
Tropoje	81	46	15	31
Vlorë	111	40	18	22
Total	1,376	711	282	429

A number of NGOs¹⁷³ have reportedly been working as mediators to decrease the number of families living under the threat of a killing through a blood feud. With their assistance, the number of families living under blood feud reduced to 724 in 2003, with only 160 children unable to attend school because of feuding.¹⁷⁴ Specifically in Shkodër, as shown in the table below, the police have identified 320 families that are currently locked up in their homes due to blood feuds:

Table 8: Families involved in blood feuds in Shkodër as of June 2005¹⁷⁵

Area	Families in blood feud	Families 'locked up'	People 'locked up'	Children 'locked up'
Shkodër	215	83	178	–
Puka	55	3	8	–
Malesi e madhe	50	23	62	–
Total	320	109	248	34

Some of the NGOs involved in mediating blood feuds have been criticised for asking the parties involved in the blood feud for money in order to carry out the mediation.¹⁷⁶ In other cases, peace has been mediated, but the police have then arrested a suspect involved in the blood feud. In these cases, it has been reported that the NGO mediators have tried to explain that the arrest is not necessary because the victim has already agreed to 'forgive the blood', and thus in court the victims have not even cooperated

¹⁷² Source: Website of the Committee for Nationwide Reconciliation, <www.pajtimi.com>, 17 May 2005.

¹⁷³ The list includes: Association of Mothers with Orphans (Puka); Association of Peace Missionaries (Shkodër); BESA Association (Puka); Foundation League of Peace Missionaries (Shkodër); Foundation Peace and Justice (Catholic church in Shkodër); Foundation for Resolving the Conflicts (Tirana); Mission of Nationwide Reconciliation (Shkodër) and Reconciliation Mission Mother Teresa (Shkodër).

¹⁷⁴ Op cit Arie; op cit Lawson and Saltmarshe; op cit Saltmarshe.

¹⁷⁵ Source: Ministry of Public Order.

¹⁷⁶ Interview, MOPO official, 15 May 2005.

with the prosecution. Therefore, one could argue that parallel 'law' structures are functioning which hamper the state's efforts when it does try to seek justice for the injured party.

In 2001, there were a number of amendments to the Criminal Code that explicitly referred to blood feuds:

- Article 78/2 states that blood feud killers should receive a minimum of 20 years imprisonment up to the maximum of life;
- Article 83/a states that those who threaten people and insist that they lock themselves in their homes or face being shot due to blood feud can be imprisoned for up to 3 years.

According to the head of Shkodër's crime department, there have recently been a few cases in which elderly interlocutors, who are sent by the family of the blood feud victim to inform the family of the perpetrator that they should lock themselves up, have been arrested by the police.¹⁷⁷ They have also investigated a number of suspected cases of blood feuds in Shkodër in 2005, although the same source suggested that the courts remained too lenient in such cases. While the state justice system continues to dispense justice inefficiently, blood feud killings are unlikely to disappear.

2.4.3 Perceptions of corruption and organised crime

Transparency International has included Albania in its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) since 2002. Since this date, Albania has consistently scored a CPI rating of 2.5.¹⁷⁸ However, as more countries have been added to the CPI, Albania has fallen in the rankings. Thus, in 2002 it was in joint 81st place, but by 2004 it was in joint 108th place. This could be compared with Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, which were in joint 106th place in 2003 when Albania was in joint 92nd place. In 2004, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro were in joint 97th place with scores of 2.7 up from 2.3. It would seem that perceptions of corruption remain stable in Albania, while they are falling in neighbouring states.

In opinion polls carried out on the eve of the 2005 parliamentary election, corruption was the second most acute concern of the electorate, and organised crime the sixth.¹⁷⁹ The poll also revealed that the top three most trusted institutions in Albania were the international organisations the EU, NATO and the OSCE.¹⁸⁰ The media took fourth place, with municipal government coming in fifth place with 47.2 percent of respondents expressing a degree of trust in this institution, followed by the President on 46.2 percent and parliament on 46.1 percent. National government was trusted by a third of respondents with the prosecutors' office (29 percent) and courts (25.7 percent) coming in last in the poll.

Many Albanian and international commentators think that combating organised crime should be one of the Government's main concerns, due to its negative impacts upon the rule of law and the justice system. However, focus group respondents did not make the same direct connection. They complained that they did not perceive justice to be served because criminals are not caught or they are set free by the courts. There is a sense that corruption further limits the capacity of the state to carry out its law enforcement and justice activities. Yet, when asked if organised crime affected them, interviewees replied:

– *Organised crime doesn't affect me, no.*

¹⁷⁷ Interview, MOJ official, 15 May 2005.

¹⁷⁸ Transparency International Website for Corruption Perception Index <<http://www.transparency.org>>, 6 June 2005. The Albanian CPI is based upon assessments from: Business Environment Enterprise Performance Survey, Freedom House, a multinational development bank, World Business Environment Survey of the World Bank, World Markets Research Centre.

¹⁷⁹ Elections 2005 Public Opinion Polls: Overview of Key Findings (Mjaft and Gallup International, Tirana, 1 June 2005), p 7. The main concern of the opinion poll respondents was unemployment.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p 21.

– It won't affect me as long as I mind my own business, if I disturb someone else, then yeah... I fear more the stupid little crimes, like a teenager steals my car, I catch him, I probably beat him, his family kills me and everything. But the crime I fear the most is the political one. They killed someone the day of the elections just because of political ideas. That is what I fear. I don't fear the ones that sell drugs. Because I don't do drugs.

Focus Group, Tirana, Male, August 2005.

2.4.4 Perceptions of the Police

A potentially positive finding of the poll on the eve of the 2005 parliamentary election cited above was that 43 percent of respondents expressed trust in the police, a figure that surprised the poll's organisers.¹⁸¹ This rising level of trust could have been due to the fact that in 2004 the head of the police force, Bajram Ibaj, was seen to have taken a tough response to police corruption by dismissing 304 officers, and arresting 52 of them, on corruption charges.¹⁸² Nevertheless, regular allegations of continued corruption within the police academy, police, border and customs forces, suggest that a lot more work remains to be done before corruption is no longer regarded as a serious problem for effective law enforcement. For example, in a nationwide survey on police performance carried out in 2004 by the Centre for Rural Studies (Tirana) for the UNDP's Support to Security Sector Reform, only 35 percent of respondents viewed the police with great respect.¹⁸³ Twenty-two percent stated that they had little respect for the police, while 42 percent of respondents stated that their respect varied. However, the report suggests that while gender, age and education do not impact upon rating police services, with 39 percent giving a good or very good rating and 45 percent stating that it is at least acceptable, significant regional variations were noted when asked if they believed that they would receive a 'fair outcome' from the police if their services were called upon.¹⁸⁴ In our own interviews and survey, the research team also found that Albanian citizens were still not entirely satisfied with the protection for people and property provided by state law enforcement agencies, as one focus group interviewee stated:

[Unfortunately] no one thinks well of the police here. For instance, when I see a policeman, I don't feel respect or I don't see him as someone that is protecting me. I don't see the policeman as a person that is just, that tries to make justice by respecting the law. So, if I want to commit a crime or break a rule, I don't feel scared of him. This figure in Albania does not exist. There may be just policemen, but most of them are corrupted, they only think about the money, in everything they try to earn something. So I don't see the policeman as a person that respects the law. I just see him as someone who has a job.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Female, August 2005.

Similar responses in other all-female focus groups conducted in 2005 chime with the findings of the survey *Public Perceptions of the Police in Albania*, which suggested that a higher percentage of women fear the police than men, while a lower percentage of women have an improved or great deal of respect for or confidence in the police.¹⁸⁵ As 34.4 percent of respondents think that it is acceptable to have a firearm 'when the law is not being enforced', the lack of confidence in policing is clearly an obstacle to greater control of illicit weapons. Proven incidents of corruption and malpractice (including in relation to SALW trafficking), as well as more persistent rumours, also damage the image of the authorities.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Interview, NGO representative, 21 July, 2005; Elections 2005 Public Opinion Polls: Overview of Key Findings (Mjaft and Gallup International, Tirana, 1 June 2005).

¹⁸² 'Some 304 policemen removed from force in 2004', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 8–14 January 2005. Source: Zeri i Popullit, 12 January 2005.

¹⁸³ Kenney D J, Public Perceptions of the Police in Albania: Nationwide Surveys of Residents and Police (City University of New York and UNDP SSSR, 2004), p 18.

¹⁸⁴ According to Kenney's survey, Berat (73 percent), Fier (75 percent) and Tirana (62 percent) respondents were among the regions with the most confidence in police fairness, while Diber (27 percent), Durrës (28 percent) and Kukës (34 percent) respondents had the least confidence. Source: Ibid, p 14–15.

¹⁸⁵ Op cit, Kenney, p 19.

¹⁸⁶ According to a key MOPO informant, in the past there were cases of police officers being found to have trafficked weapons. Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

The research team carried out a content analysis for the frequency with which firearms incidents appeared in the Albanian daily national newspaper *Shekulli* during the years 2002, 2003, 2004 and the first five months of 2005. The results of this review can be found in the following tables:

2002	Murders	Murders Attempted	Injuries	Suicide	Armed Threat	Hostage Taking	Robbery	Illegal Weapon Possession	Armed Assault
Jan	2	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	1
Feb	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Mar	10	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	1
Apr	11	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
May	7	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jun	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—
Jul	2	3	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Aug	8	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sep	2	1	3	3	5	—	2	2	1
Oct	5	1	—	1	—	1	—	2	2
Nov	7	1	7	2	2	—	1	4	2
Dec	6	—	1	2	4	1	—	—	1
Total	64	11	12	13	11	3	4	11	9
138									

2003	Murders	Murders Attempted	Injuries	Suicide	Armed Threat	Hostage Taking	Robbery	Illegal Weapon Possession	Armed Assault
Jan	11	—	7	3	1	—	1	2	3
Feb	3	2	—	4	—	—	—	1	—
Mar	4	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Apr	4	3	—	1	—	1	—	2	1
May	5	1	1	2	—	—	1	—	1
Jun	7	2	1	1	—	—	—	2	—
Jul	6	4	2	3	1	—	2	2	2
Aug	16	2	6	—	1	2	2	1	4
Sep	2	4	2	—	—	—	—	1	2
Oct	9	—	2	3	1	—	—	—	—
Nov	7	3	1	2	3	—	—	3	—
Dec	5	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Total	79	23	23	22	7	3	7	14	13
	191								

2004	Murders	Murders Attempted	Injuries	Suicide	Armed Threat	Hostage Taking	Robbery	Illegal Weapon Possession
Jan	5	3	–	2	1	–	–	1
Feb	6	2	4	1	–	–	–	
Mar	9	–	–	–	1	–	–	
Apr	7	4	1	1	2	–	–	1
May	4	2	–	4	2	–	–	
Jun	11	2	–	3	1	–	–	1
Jul	1	5	1	3	–	1	–	1
Aug	11	4	1	1	–	–	–	
Sep	5	2	–	3	–	–	–	1
Oct	6	–	–	2	–	–	–	
Nov	4	1	–	2	–	–	–	1
Dec	–	3	–	–	4	–	–	
Total	69	28	7	22	11	1		
138								

2005*	Murders	Murders Attempted	Injuries	Suicide	Armed Threat	Hostage Taking	Robbery	Illegal Weapon Possession
Jan	3	2	–	1	1	–	–	
Feb	2	5	–	3	1	1	3	
Mar	2	2	–	3	–	–	–	
Apr	3	–	1	4	–	–	–	2
May	2	1	–	1	–	–	–	
Total	12	10	1	12	2	1	3	
	41							

*to 15 May

From these tables it would appear that the majority of firearms-related articles in *Shekulli* focussed on murder and attempted murder. It is likely that this reflects the public's interest in such sensational incidents rather than their greater frequency *per se*. The number of articles concerned with injuries varied, while the number of articles referencing suicide almost doubled from 2002 to 2003. While August saw the most stories about murder in 2003 and 2004, April and May had the most features on murder in 2002. There is no sign of a discernible seasonal pattern for attempted murders, injuries or suicide coverage in *Shekulli* from this sample of years.

TT pistols, Kalashnikov automatic rifles and hunting rifles are the main firearms that are featured in these articles, although many articles do not explicitly mention the type of firearm used. It is normally stated that the weapon used is unregistered, and it is generally assumed to have been looted in 1997. However, a number of high-profile killings in 2003 introduced more sophisticated weaponry. For example, a remote control mobile phone-operated bomb was used in the assassination of a Tirana-based businessman in 2003. Explosives are not a very common weapon for murder, although they tend to feature frequently in accounts of accidents, often involving children.

Most reported firearms incidents take place in rural areas or the outer districts of cities. The majority of the murders reported in *Shekulli* were committed against members of the same family. Property disputes, jealousy, alcohol and depression were most commonly cited as the reasons behind the resort to firearms. In almost all of these cases, the firearm – usually a pistol – was close at hand. Property disputes are also cited as the main cause of murders and injuries between people who are not members of the same family, although organised crime vendettas and blood feud cases also appear in the press.

One of the most striking changes is that armed robberies no longer dominate the front page headlines, with more column inches being taken up by suicides. The fact that 22 suicide articles were reported in 2003 and 2004 is thought to be a sign of more media interest in this phenomenon, with 12 articles on the topic already published in the first five months of 2005. The most recent high profile suicide cases have featured young children aged between ten and fourteen years old.

Stories on trafficking in firearms have decreased in quantity since 2002, but the items being trafficked have apparently increased in quality. Thus, interceptions of trafficked weapons that are now reported upon relate to missiles and mobile phone detonated bombs rather than AK-47s and bolt-action rifles. However, these articles tend to portray trafficking as a series of isolated one-off events, and not as part of a larger scale, co-ordinated and regular activity.

Small Arms Distribution Survey

THE FOLLOWING TABLE gives estimated figures for the total number of SALW in Albania. The data has been compiled using a number of sources including official documents, interviews, and opinion poll data. These figures should therefore be treated with caution, with the ranges for estimates testifying to the difficulty of achieving satisfactory levels of accuracy.

Table 10: Estimated number of SALW in Albania

Holder of SALW	Approximate no of units
Active and reserve military holdings	35,000 ¹⁸⁷
MOD surplus	88,742–138,742 ¹⁸⁸
MOPO police	23,930 ¹⁸⁹
Guard of the republic	2,112–3,696 ¹⁹⁰
Other ministerial police	983 ¹⁹¹
Private security companies (PSCs)	938 ¹⁹²
Legal civilian possession	65,747 ¹⁹³
Illegal weapons in Albania	Approximately 200,000 or 150,000–250,000
Estimated total SALW in Albania	440,000¹⁹⁴

In addition, it is very approximately estimated that 117,875 looted SALW have been trafficked from Albania since 1997.

3.1 MOD holdings

The figure of 35,000 for military SALW holdings was given by MOD officials, who stated that there are 10,000 active army personnel, with an average of 3.5 weapons per soldier.¹⁹⁵ Figures for navy and air force were not gathered, so this total figure is almost

¹⁸⁷ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Sources and methodology as in section 3.1 'MOD holdings' below.

¹⁸⁹ Methodology as below in Section 3.2 'MOPO holdings'. Sources: MOPO, The 2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Order, (Tirana, 2005), p 20; Interview, MOPO official, 19 July 2005.

¹⁹⁰ The estimate for the Guard of the Republic SALW holdings is based on the figure of 1,056 employees, with figures given for multipliers of two and 3.5. Source: op cit MOPO, p 20.

¹⁹¹ This figure is taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.191 Unfortunately, it does not provide for a more detailed breakdown by different ministries. Source: draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW, the Republic of Albania, 2004 (hereafter Draft National SALW Strategy).

¹⁹² Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Based on the sum of the above figures using averages and rounding down from a total of 443,244.

¹⁹⁵ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

certainly an underestimate.

The estimate of surplus is based upon adding together the total number of collected SALW and estimates of SALW that were not looted in 1997. From these initial estimates, one should subtract those SALW that have been destroyed or given to the military, police, other state services, exhibitions, businessmen or border inhabitants.

Table 11: Estimated number of surplus SALW held by the Albanian military.

Total of collected SALW	222,918 ¹⁹⁶
Estimates of SALW that were not looted from depots in 1997	50,000 ¹⁹⁷ –100,000 ¹⁹⁸
Initial estimate of SALW surplus	272,918–322,918
Total SALW destroyed (2000–2004)	– 141,000 ¹⁹⁹
Collected SALW taken by MOD for active and reserve service	– 35,000 ²⁰⁰
Collected SALW given to MOI police, exhibits, businessmen and border inhabitants	– 8,178 ²⁰¹
Transferred SALW	– ?
Total SALW surplus	88,742–138,742

These figures are also relatively close to estimates suggested by two different sources. Firstly, a figure of around 80,000 SALW was suggested to the research team by the US consultancy company SAIC, which is advising the Albanian military on its restructuring.²⁰² Secondly, a figure of 126,039 could also be arrived at by subtracting the 25,000 SALW destroyed in 2004 from the 151,039 surplus SALW recorded in the Government Order on SALW Decommission, which provided a comprehensive list of surplus SALW based upon an inventory of Albanian stores in 2002.²⁰³ Of course, both of these figures are several thousand SALW lower than the estimates reached above, but could suggest that the surplus is within a range of 80,000–140,000.

It is possible that transfers of surplus SALW may have reduced levels of state surpluses. Although we were informed that the collected SALW that were not in use by the MOD, MOPO, businessmen and border inhabitants were destined for destruction, according to figures published by MEICO, US\$3,258,917 worth of SALW were sold between 2000 and 2004.²⁰⁴ In addition, in 2002, Albania donated 600 assault rifles and an unknown number of machine guns to Afghanistan.²⁰⁵ The source for these sales is likely to have been MOD stores, but it is unclear how many SALW have been sold or earmarked for sale. The total of transferred surplus should also take into account the documented cases of transfer to sensitive destinations not acknowledged in the MEICO figures – in the case of transfers to Rwanda which allegedly reached Congo in 2003, this may have reduced surplus holdings of weapons and ammunition by up to 400 tonnes.²⁰⁶ One source has suggested that MEICO is able to offer for sale more units of SALW than the upper surplus figure of 138,742 suggested above.²⁰⁷ Neither the information which is publicly available detailing transfers of Albanian SALW, nor the allegations of transfers of concern, provide a solid basis for estimating how far holdings may have been reduced in this respect. Greater transparency regarding the type and quantity of transferred goods would enable more accurate estimations of state holdings to be made and

¹⁹⁶ Source: MOPO weapons collection data, July 2005.

¹⁹⁷ Interview, NGO representative, 23 July 2005.

¹⁹⁸ This figure is based upon the fact that the initial official estimates of looted SALW made in 1997 were 650,000, which was reduced to around 550,000 following a national inventory. It is assumed that the initial estimate assumed that all depots had been looted. However, this could still be a conservative estimate.

¹⁹⁹ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

²⁰⁰ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

²⁰¹ Source: MOPO weapons collection data, July 2005.

²⁰² Telephone interview, SAIC, 20 July 2005.

²⁰³ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

²⁰⁴ See table of MEICO transfers in Appendix 1.

²⁰⁵ 'Albanian Defense Ministry confirms donating assault rifles to Afghan army', AFP (Paris), 28 November 2002. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²⁰⁶ See section 5.1.1.5 'Transfers of concern' and Amnesty International, 'Democratic Republic of Congo: arming the east', AFR 62/006/2005, available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf620062005>

²⁰⁷ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

more open discussion to be held on appropriate solutions to difficulties related to stockpile management.

The military reforms currently underway will continue to create surplus SALW in the coming years through the reduction of active military personnel. Further, military spending is expected to rise from 1.3 percent of GDP in 2005 to 2.0 percent of GDP in 2010.²⁰⁸ New equipment has been targeted as one of the areas in which the increased budget will be spent. Therefore, one can expect more surplus SALW to be generated as the Albanian military re-equips.

In terms of ammunition, MOD officials indicate that having already destroyed around 32,000 tonnes, as of 2005 over 85,000 tonnes of Albanian, Chinese and Soviet produced ammunition still remain in stores. They further estimate that some 70 percent of this stock is over 35 years old. These figures should be approached with some caution given the poor organisation and record-keeping at many stores, discussed further below in section 5.1.1.2 – ‘Stockpile management’. An alternative estimate by a former NAMS official was that stocks of ammunition are in fact around 150,000 tonnes, of which 2,000 tonnes is loose ammunition.²⁰⁹

3.2 MOI holdings

The estimate for the MOI police SALW holdings is based on the figure of 11,965 police officers of all ranks,²¹⁰ to which a multiplier of two weapons per officer is applied. This multiplier is based on the fact that the head of the MOI armoury stated that each police officer is issued with a pistol and assault rifle.²¹¹ Thus, the estimate of MOI police holdings is 23,930 SALW. However, the head of the armoury stated also that most of the working pistols collected by police officers and weapons collection teams are re-distributed to the police after they have been tested.²¹² In general, however, the numbers of recovered pistols are very few, with an even smaller number deemed fit for use. According to the head of the MOI armoury, they have been reliant upon international donations of equipment, and still require more modern equipment, SALW and specialised training in the use of firearms. He could not remember the last time that an order was placed for SALW for the police. Therefore, the figure of 23,930 SALW for MOI police could be slightly higher than the actual holdings.

3.3 Private security companies (PSCs)²¹³

The figure for PSC SALW holdings is taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.²¹⁴ The breakdown of the different types of SALW that Albanian PSCs had registered in 2004 is contained in the following table:

Table 12: Registered Private Security Company SALW holdings

Type of SALW	No of units
Pistols	162
Automatic weapons	767
Rifles	9
Total	938

²⁰⁸ Jazbec M, Defence Reform in the Western Balkans: The Way Ahead, (DCAF, April 2005), p 8.

²⁰⁹ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

²¹⁰ This figure excludes civil servants and administrative staff. Source: MOPO, The 2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Order, (Tirana, 2005), p 20.

²¹¹ Interview, MOPO official, 19 July 2005.

²¹² Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

²¹³ Information in this section has been taken from: Page M, Rynn S, Taylor Z and Wood D, ‘SALW and Private Security Companies in South Eastern Europe: A Cause or Effect of Insecurity?’ (Belgrade, SEESAC/Saferworld/International Alert, 2005).

²¹⁴ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

In 2004, the MOI estimated that there were 269 registered PSCs in Albania, employing 4,093 security guards. This gives an average of 3.5 registered SALW per registered PSC, and suggests that a maximum of 6.5 percent of PSC guards can be armed at the same time. However, one source has reported that around 60 SALW are registered to one PSC in Shkodër,²¹⁵ which suggests that holdings of SALW differ widely between PSCs. It is reportedly common practice for PSC to equip only rapid response squads with firearms, although guards that protect banks or individuals also tend to carry firearms.

The general practice is for weapons and ammunition to be stored together on the company premises and a register to be kept. Some companies also have internal regulations on storage, and the larger companies are generally thought to maintain good storage standards. However, it has also been reported that weapons are often handed over to the next guard at the end of a shift and without going into storage. In other cases, guards are reported as taking pistols home with them.²¹⁶ Therefore, not all companies follow the regulations and norms on safe firearm and ammunition storage contained in the police manual. Thus, there is a danger that weapons issued to guards for security work are not always used for company work.

3.4 Estimates of SALW trafficked

As noted in the introduction to this report, the trafficking of SALW has been a serious problem both for Albania and the wider SEE region in the past, and the problem continues today on a smaller scale. A common estimate is that in total between 100,000 and 150,000 SALW were smuggled out of Albania between 1997 and 2002. An article from 2002 quotes a statement by the head of the UN Development Programme Country Office in Tirana, Ana Stjarnerklint, in which this figure is suggested.²¹⁷ Another report from 2003 suggests that this figure is a Government estimate,²¹⁸ and it was certainly the most commonly cited figure that the research team came across. The former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala, announced during a trip to Albania in June 1998 that “anywhere between 25 and 30 percent of the weapons not handed over to the Government may have been moved out of the country either by individuals or groups engaged in contraband activities”,²¹⁹ A report on his visit stated that Dhanapala suggested that almost 200,000 SALW had been smuggled to Kosovo, Macedonia and other unnamed destinations.²²⁰ However, in our interviews with members of the Albanian anti-trafficking forces, border police and customs, estimates were not given. Respondents in these fields did not feel that enough detailed analysis had been carried out to make a credible estimate.

Table 13: Estimated number of weapons trafficked to various destinations 1997–2002

Destination	Estimate of Weapons Trafficked
Ethnic Albanian rebel groups	40,000
Refugees from Kosovo crisis	39,375
Greece	38,500
Total	117,875

It is of course almost impossible to state exactly how many of the looted SALW have been trafficked out of Albania since 1997, let alone the total number of SALW trafficked from, to and through Albania since 1991. At first glance, the figure of 150,000 units trafficked out of the country since 1997 warrants further scrutiny for a number of

²¹⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 14 June 2005.

²¹⁶ Only 3.1 percent of respondents to an opinion poll carried out by ISO for Saferworld thought that PSC guards should be allowed to take their SALW home.

²¹⁷ Bala A, ‘Balkans weapons roundup’, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Newsline, 6(70), 15 April 2002.

²¹⁸ Op cit Quin D et al.

²¹⁹ ‘Kosovo: UN Estimates 200,000 Weapons Smuggled From Albania’, Paris AFP (North European Service), in English, 2056 GMT, 14 July 1998. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²²⁰ Ibid.

reasons: firstly, the terrain across which trafficking is said to have taken place would have made the trafficking of so many units of weapons very difficult logistically;²²¹ secondly, the best estimates of the holdings of the ethnic Albanian rebel groups who are known to have received illicitly held Albanian weapons suggests that their combined stocks never attained a size of greater than 63,520 weapons at the most.²²² Their actual combined weapons holdings at peak strength are likely to have been considerably lower, and many of these weapons were not of Albanian origin. Moreover, the total weapons trafficked from Albania to supply the groups cannot be simply aggregated from the estimated Albanian-sourced holdings of each group, as there is evidence of the NLA, UCPMB and other ethnic Albanian rebel groups having received weapons formerly held by the KLA.²²³ It is therefore calculated that no more than 40,000 weapons were ever trafficked out of Albania to supply ethnic Albanian rebel movements after 1997. Most commentators are of the view that large-scale and frequent arms trafficking from or through Albania is contingent on conflicts within SEE,²²⁴ with Kosovo and Macedonia considered to be the main destinations for arms shipments emanating from or passing through Albania.²²⁵ Interviewees informed the research team that since 2003 there have been no major interceptions of arms at the Albania-Kosovo and Albania-Macedonia border.²²⁶

How many weapons were trafficked to ethnic Albanian rebel groups after 1997?

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is ultimately believed to have been armed from a variety of sources, including Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Serbia and some NATO countries, while at least one weapons delivery from Croatia was seized by the Yugoslav authorities.²²⁷ However, the types of weapons collected in disarmament initiatives and seizures, as well as interviews with former combatants, suggest that despite acquisition of weapons from a variety of other countries, looted Albanian weapons constituted at least 50% of the weapons used by the KLA, the NLA and the UCPMB.²²⁸ At their peak, the KLA's holdings would have been

- 221 The logistical difficulty of trafficking 150,000 weapons over mountainous terrain to clandestine groups engaged in low-level insurgency without detection becomes clear if one considers that each AK Type weapon weighs approximately 3 kg. Assuming this as the mean weight per unit, over 450 Tonnes of weapons have been moved across the borders if the estimate of 150,000 trafficked weapons is right. Moreover, density of steel is approximately 7900 Kg/m³, therefore using $D = M/V$ ($V = MD$), over 56.96 m³ have been shipped. Once air gaps and packaging have been included it would be fair to estimate that the real cubic metreage is four times this = 228 m³. A standard ISO container has a volume of 38.5 m³, therefore the bulk transit of 150,000 weapons would require in the region of 6 standard ISO Containers as a minimum. The export of ammunition for these weapons would present similar difficulties.
- 222 'The most conservative estimates of Albanians' stocks now start at 25,000 hidden AK assault rifles. Also available are anti-tank weapons, rifle and hand grenades and even small-calibre mortars and anti-aircraft guns.' Zoran Kusovac, 'Another Balkans bloodbath? – Part Two', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1 1998.
- 223 'There is little doubt that the NLA has been supplied from Kosovo, hence the (so far apparently successful) KFOR operation to reinforce the border and prevent supplies reaching the NLA.' Barnett N, 'KFOR tracks evolution of Albanian radicals', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 May 2001.
- 224 Interviews, MOP official 20 April 2005; MoPo official, 20 April 2005; MoPo official, 25 April 2005; MoPo official, 20 April 2005. This would suggest that an increase in trafficking activities from or through Albania could be used as a good guide for anticipating an increase in insurgency activities in the region. The problem, of course, is that such an early warning system is highly unreliable. It depends upon interceptions of arms being trafficked, which are liable to send false signals if the final destination of intercepted arms shipments is not known.
- 225 Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp 27–28.
- 226 Interview, MoPo official, 25 April 2005; Quin, 2003.
- 227 Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 13
- 228 Of fifteen former KLA interviewees 'nine of them indicated that Albania was the most important channel for weapons after 1997', meanwhile 'weapons bought from sources in Serbia amounted to 5–25 percent of total KLA weapons'. Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), pp 13, 14. Ripley T, 'The UCK's Arsenal', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 November 2000 outlines the diversity of the KLA's sources of weapons but supports the consensus position that looted Albanian stocks were 'the most significant'; Davis I, 'Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', (London, Saferworld, 2002), p 56 cites among other evidence an indication by KFOR that the majority of the weapons they had seized since 1999 in the province were of Chinese (i.e. Albanian) origin. Cf: 'Although large weapons caches may not be as common as they once were in Kosovo, KFOR troops still find some hidden caches. In a search operation on 30 September, members of KFOR's 5th Czech-Slovak Battalion discovered a weapons cache containing a significant quantity of military weapons in the village of Barovce. [...] While it is difficult to trace the origin of the weapons, the Chinese ammunition probably originated from Albanian government stockpiles looted in 1997.' Risser H, 'Disarmament in Kosovo stymied by future security fears', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 December 2004. That the Albanian-sourced weapons were the major element in the UCPMB's firepower is supported by the statement of Yugoslav officials who claim that these weapons constitute the majority of seizures in South Serbia since 1997: see Davis I, 'Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', (London, Saferworld, 2002), p 57. 'In three separate incidents on 18 September, 9 August and 17 June, Serbian army and police units uncovered weapons caches near the towns of Presevo and Bujanovac in Southern Serbia. [...] As with KFOR's discovery in Barovce, all of the material in the weapons caches in southern Serbia were of Chinese origin and had probably been buried by ethnic Albanian insurgents of the UCPMB after the end of fighting in 2001.' (Risser H, 'Disarmament in Kosovo stymied by future security fears', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 December 2004.) 'The NLA's arsenal is based primarily on AK-47 assault rifles, the majority of which were acquired during the collapse of the Albanian Army in 1997'. Ripley T, 'The UCK's Arsenal', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 November 2000. In accordance with this assessment, IWPR journalists note that 'It was well known that the bulk of the weapons used by the rebels were AK-47 Kalashnikovs, automatic rifles produced in China and Yugoslavia.' IWPR, *Ohrid and Beyond*, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 63; They also state that on the first day of NATO's 'Essential Harvest' the NLA surrendered 300 Chinese Kalashnikovs. IWPR, *Ohrid and Beyond*, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 95; it is further stated that, after the first phase of operation Essential Harvest, most of the weapons collected were 'light

more or less sufficient to arm approximately 20,000 combatants.²²⁹ Although estimates of their holdings have reached as high as 100,000 SALW, the statement that numbers of weapons remained 'poor and insufficient' suggests that total peak small arms holdings by the KLA may have been less than the 32,000–40,000 estimated by the Small Arms Survey.²³⁰

In 2001 Zoran Kusovac estimated that the National Liberation Army (NLA) in Macedonia held between 10,570 and 14,050 units of SALW (including 5,000 mines),²³¹ while SEESAC, Small Arms Survey and BICC's SALW survey of Macedonia estimated their holdings as between 8,210 (high confidence) and 20,000 (low confidence).²³²

The UCPMB's membership has been estimated at 2,200 at its peak, which using the Small Arms Survey weapons-per-insurgent multiplier of 1.6 meant that it would have held up to 3,520 weapons, many of which, again, would have been weapons passed on from the KLA total rather than freshly acquired from Albania.²³³ As other Albanian rebel movements (such as the ANA, UCPG, and UCK-L) are thought to have armed their estimated 4,900 members from KLA stocks,²³⁴ their holdings are not further added to the estimate of weapons trafficked from Albania since 1997. The estimated combined peak holdings of the KLA, NLA and UCPMB are therefore 63,520, of which a maximum of 40,000 are assumed to have come from Albania (given the other known sources of weaponry, and the fact that many of the same weapons were used by more than one group).

However, there were other recipients for trafficked Albanian weapons after 1997, who may have encountered fewer difficulties in transporting looted stocks: individuals, such as refugees, also took weapons out of the country for personal protection. There are no verifiable methods for calculating how many such weapons there were. However, it is known that approximately 450,000 refugees entered Albania fleeing the Kosovo conflict.²³⁵ A key informant suggests that as many as 70% of family groupings would have taken weapons with them on their way out of Albania, and that refugees typically moved in family groups of eight people. This would give a very rough estimate of numbers departing with the returning refugees of 39,375 weapons.²³⁶

infantry weapons of Chinese and Yugoslav provenance', Ibid, p 96. NATO refused to release details of the types of weapons surrendered by the NLA in Macedonia. UNDP SACIM has supplied information regarding the proportion of weapons originating from Albania in recent destruction events: 'during the destruction events some of the weapons confiscated are Kalashnikovs that bear Chinese inscriptions and thus come from Albania. For example on the destruction of 08 July 2005: out of 32 machine-guns, 27 bore Chinese inscriptions, out of 248 automatic rifles, 243 bore Chinese inscriptions, and out of 10 semi-automatic rifles, 9 bore Chinese inscriptions. However, it should be said that the greater part of confiscated weapons are handguns (pistols and revolvers).' Interviews with combatants in Macedonia suggest other sources for weapons must have been available to the NLA, as Macedonian forces remarked that they were sometimes outgunned by NLA fighters. (Information supplied by Hans Risser). The same observation is made in IWPR, Ohrid and Beyond, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 38.) This is unlikely to have been possible under fire from fighters armed solely with weaponry looted from Albanian stocks in 1997. Corroborating this are statements of NLA commanders and combatants that their weaponry included Bulgarian, Bosnian and Serbian stocks as well as Albanian-sourced weaponry. (Information supplied by Hans Risser.) Reporting at the time also pointed to the ability of the rebels to arm themselves from former Soviet stockpiles, (Ripley T, 'Insurgency in Macedonia drives Balkans arms trade', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 July 2001.) Bulgaria and Serbia. (Ripley T, 'Intentions unclear as NLA hands over arms', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 October 2001.)

²²⁹ 'It is impossible to give a definite troop strength at the end of the conflict in June 1999. Most observers, including Agim Ceku, estimated the number of KLA fighters to have been about 20,000. However, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) received 25,723 applications for reintegration assistance, when it started to register KLA combatants later in 1999.' Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 14. It is unclear whether the estimate of 20,000 includes the 600 to 4,000 fighters of the FARK, many of whom fought under KLA insignia.

²³⁰ 32,000 is derived by applying the 'conservative Small Arms Survey "insurgent multiplier" of 1.6 weapons per combatant' to the estimate of 20,000 combatants. Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 13. But cf: 'Estimates of the number of weapons available vary widely. While Reuter[...] puts the number at 100,000 weapons, others argue that the KLA's armament "remained poor and insufficient" [...]. The latter position is supported by the accounts of former fighters and by General Agim Ceku, the KLA's Chief-of-Staff from May 1999.' Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 13, citing: Reuter, Jens, 'Zur Geschichte der UCK', in Reuter, Jens and Clewing, Konrad eds, *Der Kosovo Konflikt – Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven*, (Klagenfurt, Wieser Verlag, 2000) p 172; Troebst, local government official, 'The Kosovo War, Round One: 1998', *Sudosteuropa*, vol 48, no 3/4, pp 156–190, p 167; Kusovac, Zoran, 'Interview with General Agim Ceku', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 October 1999.

²³¹ Grillot S, Stoneman S, Risser H and Paes W-C, 'A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia', (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 21, citing Kusovac, Zoran, 'How many weapons in Macedonia', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 August 2001. The breakdown of the total by weapon type is: rifles, 5,000–8,000; heavy machine guns (mostly .50-calibre) 150–250; sniper rifles (incl some .50-calibre anti materiel rifles) 100–200; MANPADs 20–50; shoulder-launched anti-tank launchers, 200–350; Mortars (60, 80 and 120 mm), 100–200; anti-tank/anti-personnel landmines, 5,000+.

²³² Grillot S, Stoneman S, Risser H and Paes W-C, 'A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia', (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 24.

²³³ 'Some of the KLA weapons were no doubt transferred to the UCPMB (a splinter group from the KLA fighting Serb police in southern Serbia), which had approximately 2,200 members in 2000,46 when the fighting in southern Serbia was at its peak. Today, the number of fighters is probably slightly lower, perhaps around 1,000 (hence holding an estimated 1,600 to 2,000 weapons).' Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 15.

²³⁴ Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 15.

²³⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Evaluation and policy analysis unit, 'The Kosovo refugee crisis: An independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response', February 2005, p 117.

²³⁶ Interview: Kosovan NGO Representative, 26 October 2005.

Although this estimate is provided with low confidence, the flow of weapons that potentially accompanied the refugees cannot be factored out of the calculations of trafficked weapons.

Estimating the number of weapons that were trafficked across the Greek border for sale to criminals is likewise a challenging topic. In 1999, a Greek newspaper reported that Greek officials estimated that 150,000 SALW had entered Greece from Albania during the preceding 18 months.²³⁷ The article also suggested that the then Albanian Public Order Minister, Tseka, had estimated that around 100,000 SALW had been smuggled to Greece from Albania since the 1997 looting, with perhaps thousands of these destined for third countries. Sizeable caches of arms have also been recently discovered hidden in caves along the Albanian-Greek border.²³⁸ A number of interceptions of trafficked SALW at border crossing points with Greece have also been made and the methods used for smuggling arms across the Greek border are thought to be similar to those used in the north and east.²³⁹ 2,100 weapons were confiscated by Greek police in the 18-month period to July 1999.²⁴⁰ In 1999 Greek police confiscated a total of 1,242 illegal weapons, while in 2000 the figure was 1,243.²⁴¹ Given that in 1995 the same figure was just 680, and slightly less in 1990,²⁴² and ascribing the difference of 550 per year to the increase in supply from Albania from 1997 looted stocks, it can be projected that assuming that only one in ten trafficked weapons were detected,²⁴³ an average of 5,500 weapons entered Greece per year from 1997 until this activity fell away because supplies diminished or because the Greek Government stepped up border security in 2002.²⁴⁴ As 1999 and 2000 are the middle years of the period in which trafficking will have gradually diminished from a peak in 1997, this total is multiplied by the seven years up to and including 2002, to give 38,500 as the estimate of SALW trafficked to Greece since 1997. Although this figure is inexact, because there is no reliable basis for projecting the numbers trafficked over a longer period from seizures in single years, it is again preferable to providing no estimate of these figures at all.

An account of the current distribution of SALW in the country also needs to take into account that weapons may have continued to enter Albania since 1997. As already stated, it is plausible to suggest that ethnic Albanian rebel groups may have brought weapons back within Albanian borders to avoid their detection and confiscation in Kosovo, Macedonia or Southern Serbia, although no estimates of the quantity are available.²⁴⁵ It was argued by local experts that the looted Albanian weapons are of poor quality and of limited use for most terrorist/criminal organisations. Nevertheless, it was stated that if tensions rise in SEE, then large-scale arms trafficking from Albania could become a major concern as the looted weapons were suitable for conflicts in the area.²⁴⁶ Large quantities of weapons may well be hidden in numerous small caches along Albania's eastern border.²⁴⁷ It is similarly plausible to suppose that volunteer combatants from Northern Albania may have returned subsequently to

237 '150,000 Albanian Arms Believed To Be in Greece', Athens ELEVtherotipia in Greek, 24 July 1999, p 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

238 'Heavy weapons arsenal found in cave on Greek border', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 5–11 March 2005.

239 For example see: 'Greek police find, confiscate 300 Kalashnikovs', Athens News Agency, in English, 1815 GMT, 20 February 1998, <<http://www.ana.gr>>. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

240 '150,000 Albanian Arms Believed To Be in Greece', Athens ELEVtherotipia in Greek, 24 July 1999, p 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

241 'Report Details Increase in Circulation of Illegal Weapons in Greece', *Athens To Vima*, [in Greek], 19 Apr 2001.

242 Sombolos Y, '2.5 Billion Drachmas Annual Turnover From Arms Trafficking' *Imerisia* [in Greek] 22 December 2001.

243 Conservative estimate based on an interview with: Sojati, 26 October 2005.

244 European Commission, 'Third Annual Report on the implementation of the EU Joint Action of 12 July 2002 on the European Union's contribution to combating the destabilising accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons (2002/589/CFSP)' (2003/C 312/01), *Official Journal of the European Union*, 22 December 2003, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/source_documents/Regional%20fora/European%20Union/EUJointAction%20Report%202003.pdf, p 4.

245 Discussed as a plausible hypothesis in: Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 14 (with reference to potentially very large storage sites in Bucaj and Krumë); Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army', BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 22; Ripley, Tim, 'The UCK's Arsenal', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 2000. Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

246 Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

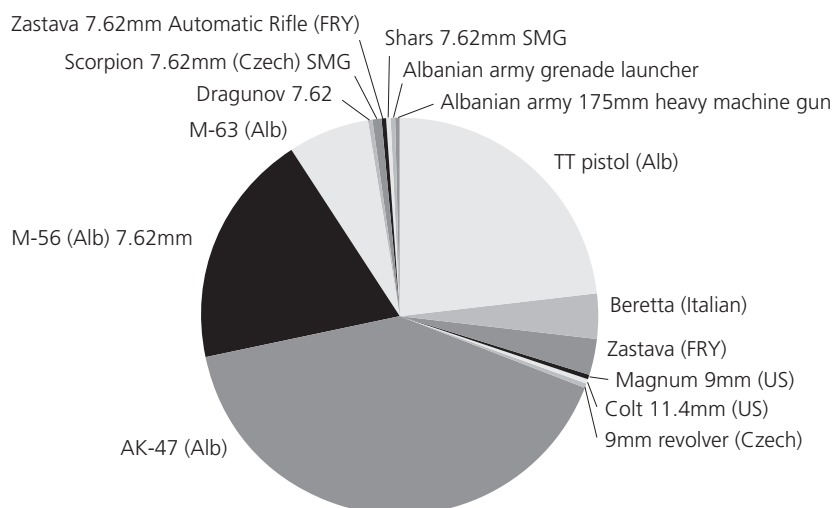
247 Interview, international official, 21 April 2005; Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' (BICC, 2001), pp 20–1; op cit International Crisis Group, 2003, p 10.

248 Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 14.

Albania bringing weapons with them. BICC refers to these combatants in the hundreds rather than thousands, which might suggest a maximum figure of weapons brought back by such individuals of 1,000.²⁴⁸

With regard to weapons entering illicit circulation in Albania after import by individuals or organised crime gangs, evidence suggests that such transfers have been limited to small numbers of high-specification weapons. A MOPO interviewee stated that many of those they arrest for illegal SALW possession nowadays actually tend to have weapons newly trafficked from abroad rather than old Albanian stocks.²⁴⁹ This points to the hypothesis that there is among Albania's criminal fraternity, a continuing trade in higher specification weapons than are generally on offer inside the country. Statistics from the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative (SECI) on seizures by Albanian Police from November 2002 to December 2003 indicate low levels of trafficking activity, such as would not significantly alter the projections of illicit weapons in the country: as the chart shows, the longer-barrelled weapons seized seem in large part to be Albanian, while a greater proportion of the handguns were sourced from abroad.²⁵⁰ Of these, three were known to have been trafficked: one Beretta, which came from Italy to Albania in November 2002; one Zastava, which entered the country from Montenegro; and a pen-pistol, which came from Switzerland to Macedonia in December 2002. The low numbers of seizures, particularly trafficking seizures, suggest either low levels of control or of trafficking – probably both.

Weapons seizures in Albania reported by SECI (November 2002–May 2003)



According to the Head of Sector for Illegal Trafficking, Edmond Bahiti, the increased and improved police presence, changes to organisational structures, the introduction of specific trafficking articles into the Penal Code and the improved economic situation in Albania have helped to diminish the volume of trafficking from, to and through Albania. In his opinion, trafficking in arms has significantly decreased since 2000 and the end of the Kosovo conflict. It was stated that on a smaller scale, individual weapons and small shipments of arms are thought to be smuggled into Greece and Italy from Albania. In these instances, the weapons are thought to be destined for Albanian émigrés, Greek or Italian citizens who desire firearms for their protection or to arms dealers who wish to sell the weapons further afield.²⁵¹ The Albanian police and border police have seized a number of pistols that have been brought into Albania in recent years, with an average of between ten and a dozen pistols seized each month in 2005. Amongst this year's haul, there have been Berettas, Browning and Colt handguns and Yugoslav-made TT pistols. In these latter cases, Albania is thus a transit route rather

²⁴⁹ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

²⁵⁰ SECI Task Force Combating Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives, 'Analysis Report – Operation Ploughshares' (May 2003).

²⁵¹ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p. 25

than a supplier.²⁵² However, according to MOI sources, of 777 instances of trafficking uncovered at the border in 2004, only three related to trafficking in arms. Therefore, one must assume that the majority of the foreign-made pistols were seized during other police operations.

Arms trafficking into Italy across the Adriatic from Albania since 1997 is not thought to have been widespread, and the net figure would also reflect that Italian guns seem to have entered criminal hands in Albania in small numbers in the same period. Arms traffic from Albania was reportedly not considered a major priority for Italian police authorities in the late 1990s, with limited evidence suggesting that around 20 SALW were crossing the straits from east to west per week.²⁵³ In the main, arms were seized in limited quantities when drug traffickers were caught at land borders or attempting to cross by sea, with the arms believed to be for either self-protection or as 'gifts' for recipients.²⁵⁴ Moreover, the majority of the weapons being trafficked from Albania that are uncovered by customs and police officials in Greece and Italy are not of Chinese or Albanian origin, but are mainly of Yugoslav origin.²⁵⁵

For our purposes in estimating net trafficking since 1997, evidence of weapons entering the country on a small scale leads the Survey team to project a balance between the number of weapons departing to Italy and destinations other than Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia and Southern Serbia with those weapons which may have entered the country for the variety of reasons outlined since 1997. It is acknowledged that such a projection is made based largely on lack of evidence to the contrary. In conclusion, if it is assumed that other smuggling to global end users since 1997 from civilian stocks did not exceed weapons entering Albania and pre-1997 illicit holdings, the final estimate of net trafficking since 1997 is that approximately 117,875 weapons have left the country.

Recent examples of trafficking in Albania

In December 2004 three surface-to-air missiles were seized by Albanian authorities, with the suspected traffickers caught thanks to a change in the law allowing evidence to be gathered through bugging and recording suspects' telephone calls for use in trial. Interviewees were unable to give concrete details on the suspected end-users,²⁵⁶ although the media speculated that they were destined for Macedonia.²⁵⁷ One report suggested that Albanian extremist groups in Macedonia had been actively seeking Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADs) from several sources in the second half of 2004.²⁵⁸ However, Albanian authorities were fairly confident that the Albanian dealers had purchased the missiles from Montenegrins, with the origins of the missiles thought to be either Bosnia or Serbia. It has been argued that this route for smuggling arms into Albania was first established in 1991, with varying quantities of arms passing through the border.²⁵⁹

In March 2005, a sting operation resulted in the seizure of six remote-detonation explosive devices designed to be triggered by mobile phones. Again, the Albanian arms dealers had purchased their illicit explosives from Montenegro.²⁶⁰ Interviewees were happy to state that this operation was successfully conducted thanks to new legislation on combating organised crime and trafficking and good co-operation with counterparts in Montenegro. It remains to be seen if these examples are just isolated instances in the continued use of the Montenegro-Albania arms and military equipment trafficking channel, or represent warning signs of an impending increase in ANA or NLA activities in Macedonia or elsewhere.

²⁵² Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; international official, 21 April 2005; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp. 27–8.

²⁵³ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005. See also: op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p. 28.

²⁵⁴ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005. See also: 'Expatriate caught trafficking heroin to Greece', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 18–24 December 2004; 'Greek police arrest Albanian smugglers, seize drugs', Athens News Agency, in English, 1334 GMT, 11 April 1998, <<http://www.ana.gr>>; 'Police arrest 90 mobsters for drug smuggling, arms trafficking', AP, 9 June 1998; 'Italy: Arms, drugs seized in port of Bari', FBIS-WEU-2000-0316, Rome ANSA (Ansaservice database version), in Italian, 1138 GMT, 16 March 2000 [FBIS Translated Text]. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²⁵⁵ Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp. 27–8.

²⁵⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

²⁵⁷ 'Ministry of Interior: Surface-to-Air missiles seized in Albania not destined for Macedonia', <http://www.realitymacedonia.org.mk/web/news_page.asp?nid=3999>, MIA – Macedonian Information Agency, 14 December 2004; Mahmutaj F, 'Prison tapping reveals sellers', Gazeta Shqiptare, 18 December 2004. Source: Centre for South East European Studies website, <<http://www.csees.net/>>, 7 April 2005.

²⁵⁸ Op cit Barnett, 2004.

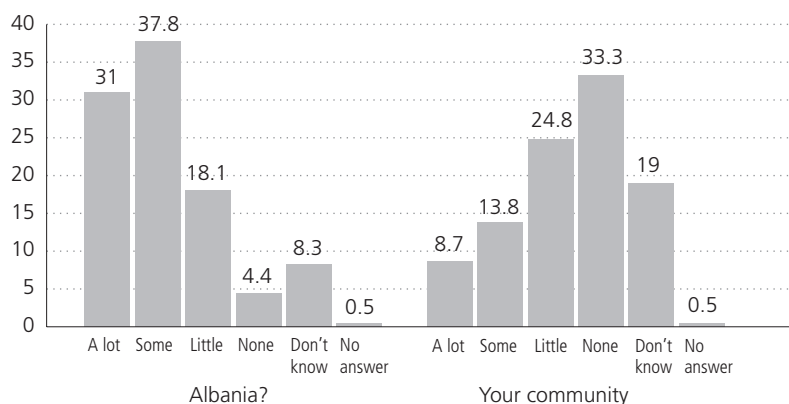
²⁵⁹ 'Albanian prosecutors say arms-smuggling chiefs in Montenegro', 2 March 2005, BBC Monitoring; 'Arms for Kosovo-Metohija through Podgorica', Blic, in Serbian, 28 October 2002. Source: Centre for South East European Studies website, <<http://www.csees.net/>>, 7 April 2005.

²⁶⁰ Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

3.4.1 Perceptions of trafficking

It is interesting to note that the majority of Survey respondents thought that illegal weapons trafficking is still a concern for Albania, with almost a third of respondents suggesting that it remains a serious problem.

To what extent is illegal weapons trafficking a concern in...



Although only 4.4 percent of respondents stated that they thought that illegal arms trafficking is not a problem for Albania, seven times as many thought it was not a problem in their local community. In Tirana, 39 percent of respondents stated that arms trafficking is a concern for Albania, but only 7.5 percent thought the same about their community, with 32 percent of respondents stating that it was simply not a problem there. In comparison, in the north of Albania, only 29 percent of respondents saw it as a big problem for Albania. However, this region had the highest number of respondents stating that it was a big problem for their community (13 percent) and also the largest number of respondents stating that there was no problem at all (35 percent). Similar responses were also given in interviews conducted with officials in case study regions, as they explained that arms trafficking was not considered to be a serious problem for their region.

3.5 Civilian SALW possession

3.5.1 Legal civilian possession

The figure of 65,747 for the total number of SALW registered to civilians in Albania has been taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.²⁶¹ The document gives the following breakdown for SALW registered to civilians:

Table 14: Registered civilian SALW holdings

SALW type	No of units
Pistols	2,585
Automatic weapons	331
Rifles	230
Hunting rifles (single and twin barrel)	62,472
Weapons issued under licence by the republican guard	130
Total	65,747

However, this figure does not completely tally with figures gained from interviews. For example, between 1997 and 2002, businessmen with significant capital and inhabitants of border areas were permitted to register pistols and other weapons for protecting self, person and property, in accordance with Law No. 8388 'On SALWC', 25 August 1998. According to a member of the MOI weapons collection team, about 500 weapons were registered in accordance with this law,²⁶² whereas the draft National SALW

²⁶¹ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

²⁶² Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

Strategy document gives a figure of only 306 (268 pistols, 23 automatic weapons and 15 rifles).²⁶³

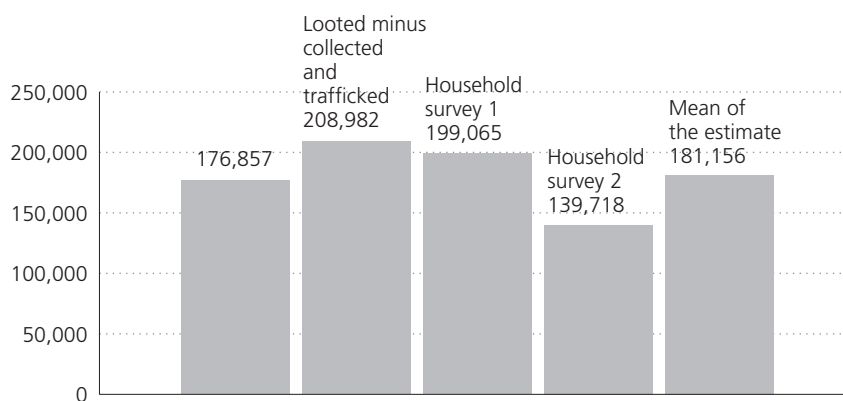
3.5.2 Illegally held weapons

Illicit weapons possession is a sensitive area about which concrete information is rarely available. It is difficult to make estimates with certainty for Albania, as proxies used in other contexts (such as the proportion of overall suicides or homicides which were committed with a firearm) were not available to the research team given the lack of relevant statistics for the country. Nor are such proxies apparently transferable between different cultural environments.²⁶⁴

When beginning calculations on this issue, an initial consideration is that until the amnesty law lapsed at the end of May 2005, an average of 800–1,000 weapons were being voluntarily handed in by civilians per month in Albania without concerted engagement in a high-profile collection initiative.²⁶⁵ Although this does not represent a basis for calculating the exact amount, this underlines the fact that there remains a large volume of illicitly held SALW in civilian hands.

The most widely used official estimate of illicit possession is 176,857. Whereas the highest confidence estimate produced by the research team suggests that there are at least 208,982 illicit SALW in circulation in Albania, although this figure is also not presented as definitive. Two further estimates, based on household survey responses, suggest illicit possession levels of 156,452–241,678 and 70,969–208,466. The fact that the household survey-based estimates are lower than the research team's estimate may indicate that the figure possessed by households or individuals does not account for all of the illicit weapons in circulation, with the remainder perhaps being held in bulk by criminals, traffickers or rebels. The estimates are shown in the chart below.

Estimates of illicit possession



Note: midpoints shown where the estimate is a range between upper and lower thresholds

The figures in the chart are not definitive and are subject to error margins, but have been provided with careful consideration of the contingent factors and evidence set out below. The methodology underlying each figure is presented and its strengths and weaknesses examined in the following section. Although each figure is subject to weaknesses, taking them together it is possible to develop a degree of certainty around the figure of 200,000 illicit weapons, with some of this number potentially held in bulk by criminals rather than by families or individuals.

²⁶³ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

²⁶⁴ Cf Taylor Z, Phillips, C and Bogosavljevic, S, 'Living with the Legacy – SALW Survey, Republic of Serbia', (Belgrade, UNDP/Saferworld, April 2005), p 15.

²⁶⁵ The MoPO reported the collection of 11,307 weapons in 2005. See Rynn S et al, South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005, (Saferworld/SEESAC, 2005), p 26.

Table 15: Differing estimates of numbers of illicit SALW in Albania**Illicit Circulation**

Method	Key problems	Estimate
1. Official figure	Ignores pre-1997 possession; Overestimates weapons trafficked out	176,857
2. Looted minus collected and trafficked	Ignores pre-1997 possession; No means to estimate trafficking to all recipients definitively; Does not account for weapons returning to/entering Albania; Relies on assumptions about insurgent holdings	208,982

Illicit Household Possession

Method	Key problems	Estimate
3. Household survey		
Q1 – 'What percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?' applied to total HH with weapons-per-household multiplier	Doubts over public's ability to estimate nationwide possession levels accurately; Uncertain basis for projecting weapons per household	156,452–241,678
Q2 – 'Have you ever had a weapon at home?' applied to total HH with weapons-per-household multiplier minus collected weapons	Total weapons known to have been illegally held exceeds survey findings	70,969–208,466
Q3 – 'Do you have a weapon at home now?' applied to total households with weapons per household multiplier	Underreporting among respondents; Rate of weapons collection to May 2005 and minimum numbers of looted weapons in circulation discredit this figure	26,425–61,664

Official Estimate

The most commonly quoted estimate for illegal SALW in civilian hands in Albania is 200,000, a figure reached by using the rounded-up total of 550,000 looted SALW and subtracting 200,000 collected SALW and the estimated 150,000 trafficked SALW. This total can be made more accurate by instead subtracting the latest available figure on weapons collected (222,918 as of June 2005) and the 150,000 trafficked weapons from the official figure of weapons looted (549,775), thereby resulting in a total of 176,857 illegal firearms. Few of the looted weapons are likely to have been legalised as the law has never provided for the ownership of military-style weaponry.

Table 16: Official estimate of number of illicit SALW in Albania**Method 1: Official figure**

Looted weapons	549,775
– Collected weapons	– 222,918
– Trafficked weapons	– 150,000
= Total	176,857

Refining the total derived from numbers looted

There are several problems with the official figure. To it should also be added the number of illicit weapons in civilian hands prior to 1997. There are few indications of how many such weapons existed, but the number may well have been low given the repressive social controls enforced under Hoxha's rule. Another likely source for the collected weapons could be weapons that had been illegally possessed since World War II or even before. Although it has been claimed that the Albanian military had a large

number of trophy weapons within their stores,²⁶⁶ it is highly likely that the number of weapons collected of WWII vintage or even earlier is greater than the number held in Albanian military stores before 1997. Indeed, it has been argued that some of the weapons that have been voluntarily surrendered are actually being surrendered because weapons looted in 1997 have replaced older models, which have been illegally held for many years.²⁶⁷ The fact that the quality of collected weapons varied over time, beginning with unusable and rusty items and ending with higher quality units would seem to support this.²⁶⁸ With this in mind, it is clear that the unknown number of weapons illicitly held by civilians prior to the 1997 looting might well, if known, add significantly to the total derived from the number of weapons looted in 1997.

Table 17: Estimated number of illicit SALW in Albania based using statistics for 1997 looting and subsequent trafficking

Method 2: Subtraction from looted stocks

Looted weapons	549,775
– Collected weapons	– 222,918
– Weapons to KLA/NLA/UCPMB	– 40,000
– Weapons to Greece	– 38,500
– Refugees' weapons	– 39,375
+ Pre 1997 weapons	+ ?
+ Other weapons entering/leaving Albania (net)	0
= Total	208,982

Another problem with the official figure is that the number of collected weapons which has habitually been subtracted from the total looted in 1997 includes barrels and weapons parts which did not constitute fully operable units of SALW (see section 6.4 'Results of the amnesty/weapons collection processes'). Therefore the total of collected weapons may be overly inflated. The further key problem with the official figure, however, is that it depends on a questionable estimate of net units trafficked in/out of the country since 1997. This Survey has compiled a revised estimate of trafficking since 1997 as outlined above in section 3.4 – 'Estimates of SALW trafficked'. If this revised estimate of 117,875 trafficked out of Albania since 1997 replaces the previous estimate of 100,000–150,000 SALW, the research team conservatively estimates that approximately 208,982 SALW remain in illicit circulation in Albania.

A final note of caution should be added in relation to this method of calculating illicit holdings: some of the weapons looted in 1997 will have become obsolete since entering illicit circulation, depending on the conditions in which they have been stored.

Calculating illicit household possession from the household survey

The household survey carried out for this research report provides another method for estimating the number of illegal SALW in Albanian households. Since a random sampling technique was used, findings from the survey can be generalised to the wider population. Two HHS questions provide the basis for credible estimates of illicit possession levels. The first of these is the question, 'In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?' responses to which are displayed in the following chart. Represented as a smooth line chart, a peak is generated at just over 27%.

²⁶⁶ Several interviewees involved in previous collection programmes were confident that many of the surrendered weapons were not in fact from the looted stocks but communist era – people replaced their old stocks. Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005 and MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

²⁶⁷ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOPO official 15 April 2005.

²⁶⁸ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?

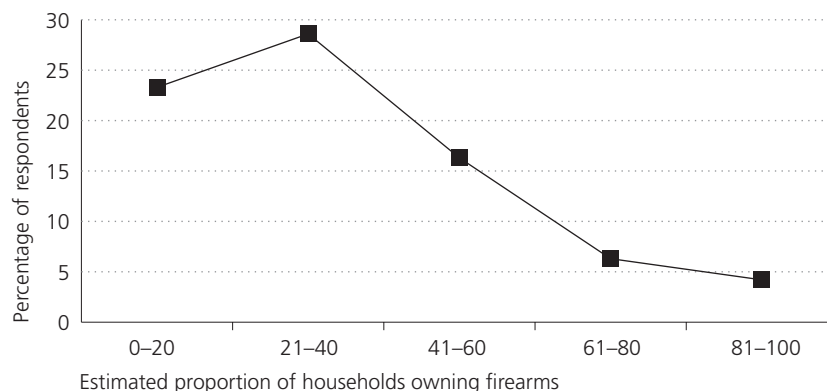


Table 18: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question ‘How many households have weapons?’

Method 3: HHS 1 ‘How many households have weapons?’

27% of households estimated by the general public to have weapons	194,400	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons	– 65,747	
= Total	156,452	241,678

Extrapolating this to Albania’s 720,000 households gives an estimate of 194,400 households currently owning weapons. It must, however, be borne in mind that some households are likely to be in possession of more than one firearm. Projecting the actual number of weapons held by these households using weapons-per-household multipliers of 1.143²⁶⁹ and 1.58²⁷⁰ gives us an estimated total of 222,199–307,152 legal and illegal weapons in civilian possession. Subtracting legally registered guns from that total gives us an estimated 156,452–241,678 weapons in illicit circulation. This figure tallies well with the upward revision of the official figure suggested above. The reliability of this estimate is, however, compromised by the findings of focus group discussions in which participants’ perceptions of levels of weapons ownership were widely divergent. This suggests that the public has no solid basis for estimating the overall level of weapons possession among the nation’s households.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ In response to the question, ‘In your opinion, how many guns are there in a typical Albanian household?’ the majority of survey respondents stated that they did not know. However, a mean figure of 1.143 for weapons possession per household can be generated from the responses of those that gave an answer. This is used in the calculations which follow as the minimum multiplier to apply to estimated numbers of weapons-owning households to project the total of weapons possessed by them. The tendency for survey respondents to under-report on levels of ownership suggests that the correct multiplier would be higher. From a base of 1,200 the responses were: ‘don’t know’ – 709 (59.1%); ‘1’ – 359 (29.9%); no answer – 92 (7.7%); ‘2’ – 26 (2.2%); ‘3’ – 7 (0.6%); ‘4’ – 6 (0.5%); ‘0’ – 1 (0.1%).

²⁷⁰ If the average number of weapons held by each SALW-owning household in Albania is in fact closer to that seen in neighbouring countries, then an upper or medium-confidence Albanian multiplier can be estimated at 1.58. This is based on estimates for SEE countries as follows: Bosnia – 1.75 (This is the ‘high confidence’ guns-per-household multiplier for illicit possession in Bosnia. Small Arms and Light Weapons Survey (SAS): Bosnia and Herzegovina, (BICC, Bonn, 2004), p 24); Kosovo – 1.4–1.7 (Source: Khakee A, Florquin, N, ‘Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo’, (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 2); Macedonia – 1.61 (Derived from responses to the question ‘What is the average number of weapons people have in their household?’ shown in figure 3.1 in Grillot S, Stoneman S, Risser H and Paes W-C, ‘A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia’, (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 19. The figure quoted is a mean where 29% responded 1, 16% responded 2, 4% responded up to 3, 1% responded 3–5 and 1% responded up to 5.); Moldova – 1.5 (In 2004 630 unregistered weapons were collected from 389 households in Moldova during inspections that are carried out by the authorities on a rolling 5-yearly basis across the country (not including police seizures on the streets). This yields a ratio of 1.62 weapons per weapons-owning household. Source: Department for Criminology, Ministry of Interior, Moldova. [This is matched by registered civilian possession figures which have 600,000 (approx.) firearms registered to 400,000 (approx.) households.] In terms of legal ownership, 44,028 individuals hold 49,780 weapons in Moldova, giving a ratio of 1.13 per licensed individual.; Montenegro – 1.55 (Derived by calculating a mean of the numbers of weapons respondents who admitted owning weapons claimed to have (1 gun – 19.5%, 2 – 3.3%, 3 – 1.3%, 4 – 0.7%, 5 – 1.6%): Florquin N, O’Neill Stoneman S, ‘“A house isn’t a home without a gun” SALW Survey – Republic of Montenegro’, (SEESAC/Small Arms Survey, 2004), p 49. In relation to all households in Montenegro, ‘Th[e] notion of one firearm per household came up repeatedly during most meetings held between the Small Arms Survey and a range of academic, NGO, private security and other civilian actors.’ Ibid, p 4); Serbia – 1.5 (The figure applies to respondents who admitted to owning firearms and therefore probably primarily relates to legal owners. ‘In the household survey, respondents were asked if either they or a member of their household owned a firearm and were then asked how many they owned. A total of 20% answered positively, and the average number of firearms per household was 1.5.’ Taylor Z, Philips, C and Bogosavljevic, S, ‘Living with the Legacy – SALW Survey, Republic of Serbia’, (Belgrade, UNDP/Saferworld, April 2005), p 15).

²⁷¹ Cf the increasing uncertainty of respondents when asked the same question about their local community and family circle in section 3.5.4, ‘Perceptions of civilian SALW possession’.

Table 19: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question 'Have you ever had a weapon?'**Method 3: HHS 2 'Have you ever had a weapon?'**

43.7% of households	314,640	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons	– 65,747	
– Collected weapons	– 222,918	
= Total	70,969	208,466

The second question from the household survey to offer a basis for a credible estimate of illicit possession is: 'Have you ever had a weapon at home?' This produced a positive response from 43.7 percent of respondents, suggesting that 314,640 households had at some time been in possession of a firearm. If on average each one possessed 1.143–1.58 weapons²⁷² this suggests that 359,633–497,131 SALW have been possessed by the Albanian population within living memory. After subtracting legally registered firearms, the remainder (293,887–431,384) again falls short of the minimum possible quantity which is known to have been illegally possessed at some stage (549,775 – the looted total from 1997). This may reflect the fact that particular individuals or groups took the remainder of the weapons in bulk. It probably also indicates a reluctance to admit to ownership of illegal military-style weapons at any stage. When the 222,918 weapons collected since 1997 are subtracted from the total, the remainder gives the second estimate derived from the household survey of 70,969–208,466 weapons currently in illicit circulation in Albania. Again, taken on its own this estimate should be treated with low confidence.

The household survey also gathered responses to the question 'Do you have a weapon at home now?', to which 11.2 percent of respondents answered positively.

Multiplying these responses by the total households in the country would suggest that 80,640 Albanian households possess weapons.

Table 20: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question 'Do you have a weapon?'**Method 3: HHS 3 'Do you have a weapon?' (discredited)**

11.2% of households	80,640	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons	65,747	
= Total	26,425	61,664

Using the multipliers on the percentage of households admitting to owning weapons in the HHS yields an estimated total possession level of 92,172–127,411. Subtracting those which are legally registered (65,747), the responses to this question would yield a total of 26,425–61,664 illegal weapons. This figure is incompatible with both the numbers of weapons known to be unaccounted for since the looting of stockpiles and the rate at which weapons were being handed in before the amnesty law elapsed at the end of May 2005. Similar studies have also remarked on a tendency of households to deny ownership of firearms because they are unwilling to indicate that they are breaking the law, which would explain why the estimate derived from responses to this question is much lower than estimates produced by the other methods. This last estimate is therefore not treated as a plausible estimate by the research team.

Illicit possession: households or criminal groups?

Only 28.2 percent of respondents to the household survey thought that unregistered

²⁷² The multipliers should in fact be revised upwards in relation to the number of weapons possessed in living memory (as opposed to those currently possessed), to take into account the probable replacement over time of old guns which had become obsolete.

firearms were possessed by households in Albania, whereas 94.7 percent thought that criminal groups were in possession of SALW.²⁷³ This gives strength to the hypothesis that specific individuals or groups retain a significant proportion of the looted SALW in bulk, which may add several thousand weapons to the illicit total, and explain further why even the two more credible household survey-based estimates fall below the numbers which emerge from estimates based on subtraction from the total of weapons looted in 1997. The latter are presented as the more reliable estimates, as they relate to known numbers of weapons from a fixed point in time which can be assumed to remain in Albania if they cannot plausibly be accounted for elsewhere.

3.5.3 Acquisition of illegal weapons

Police officials in Berat, Fier, Gjirokaster, and Kukës stated that they had no black market in weapons in their areas.²⁷⁴ However, they all continued by stating that of course it was possible to acquire a firearm illegally in their area. For example, a police officer from Kukës stated that although there is no black market, one could still buy weapons illegally from poor families in places such as Tropoje, who would be willing to sell an automatic rifle for around €40. The confusion over what constitutes a ‘black market’ is perhaps dependent upon individual definitions. It may be true that there are no longer physical black markets for arms, comparable to the ‘illegal arms bazaars’ that were present in Bajram Curri and Tropoje in the late 1990s, but this officer was able to give an estimate for the price of an unregistered weapon. Interviewees from Berat, Gjirokastër, Kukës and Shkodër provided us with estimated prices for various SALW in their regions, as shown in the table below:

Table 21: Estimates for black market SALW prices in Albania

	Firearms	AK-47	TT-Pistol
Berat ²⁷⁵	€80–€160	–	–
Gjirokaster ²⁷⁶	–	€25–€40	€245–€570
Kukës ²⁷⁷	–	€15–€200	–
Shkodër ²⁷⁸	–	€110	€240–€400

The prices given in the table may provide a useful guide for the relative difference in prices for these types of weapons in different parts of Albania. It is generally believed that automatic and bolt-action rifles are much cheaper than pistols in Albania, which perhaps suggests that the demand for pistols is still high and/or supply is more complex. In contrast, one could presume that a large number of automatic and bolt-action rifles are still in illegal circulation, despite the fact that they also make up the majority of the SALW that have been seized and voluntarily surrendered. Of course, combat firearms such as AK-47s are also more difficult to hide than a pistol.

Nevertheless, there was a general consensus among respondents from formal and informal meetings that it was not difficult to get a gun in Albania. However, directly entering the black market would not necessarily be the first route taken. Most interviewees suggested that initial enquiries would be made within one’s extended family or circle of friends, with the assumption that it would not be difficult to acquire a weapon. In a survey conducted by the Centre for Rural Studies in 2002, 61 of the 569 respondents expressed views on how one could obtain a weapon in Albania. Of these 61 respondents, 90 percent stated that either members of the family and relatives, friends of neighbours would be the main method for acquiring a weapon.²⁷⁹ In the

²⁷³ Compare the chart in section 3.5.4 – ‘Perceptions of civilian SALW possession’ showing responses to the question ‘In your opinion, which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania?’

²⁷⁴ Interviews, MOPO official, 30 July 2005; MOPO official, 30 July 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005; MOPO official, 27 April 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005.

²⁷⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 30 July 2005.

²⁷⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 6 August 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005.

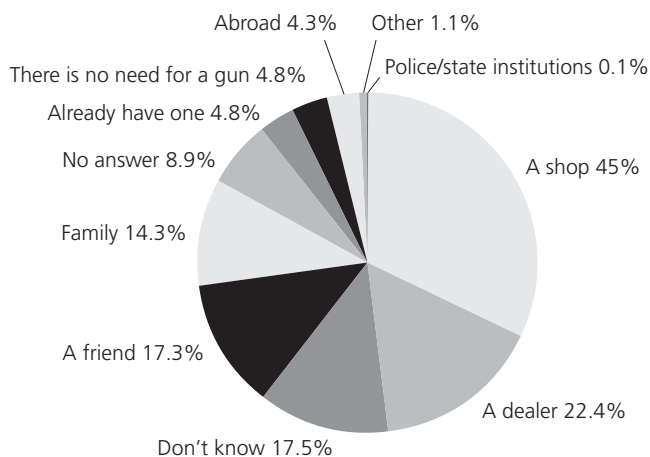
²⁷⁷ Interview, MOPO official, 27 April 2005

²⁷⁸ Interview, international organisation official, 13 June 2005.

²⁷⁹ The percentage was broken down thus: 19.7 percent stated members of the family; 26.2 percent said friends; 36.1 percent stated relatives and 8.2 percent gave the response neighbours. Source: op cit Center for Rural Studies, Table 36.

research for this survey conducted by ISO in 2005, 17.3 percent of respondents stated ‘a friend’ and 14.3 percent said ‘family’ would be the first people that they would turn to if they needed a weapon.

If you needed a gun for any reason, where is the first place you would go?



While the most popular options in the Survey were ‘shop’ and ‘dealer’, one of the focus group discussions produced the following, not atypical, response:

Yes, it is not so difficult [to get a gun in Albania]. If you want, you can find it. You just have to have the money. Go to the black market, and they will bring it to you immediately.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Female, August 2005.

3.5.4 Perceptions of civilian SALW possession

As with the responses to other SEESAC surveys on perceptions of SALW possession, higher estimates were given when respondents were asked to assess the percentage of households in Albania with a firearm, compared to estimates for neighbourhood and family and friends. At the same time, there was also a tendency for the number of ‘don’t know’ responses to increase as the estimates got closer to home. Thus, 20.1 percent of respondents answered ‘don’t know’ when asked to estimate how many households in Albania had a working firearm, while 40.5 percent of respondents gave the same answer when asked to make the estimate for their friends and family.

Table 22: In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	23.5%	28.9%	26.2%	9.0%	23.3%
21–40%	27.6%	22.0%	29.6%	35.0%	28.6%
41–60%	18.4%	14.7%	12.5%	25.0%	16.3%
61–80%	7.7%	14.2%	0.8%	9.0%	6.3%
80%+	5.9%	11.2%	0.6%	2.5%	4.2%
Don't know	15.4%	9.1%	28.6%	18.0%	20.1%
No answer	1.5%	0.0%	1.6%	1.5%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 23: In your opinion, what percentage of households in your neighbourhood have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	39.3%	53.4%	45.8%	36.0%	44.2%
21–40%	12.9%	15.5%	11.9%	10.5%	12.6%
41–60%	13.6%	6.0%	2.4%	4.5%	6.0%
61–80%	5.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	1.3%
80%+	1.8%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%
Don't know	26.1%	22.8%	35.5%	45.0%	32.5%
No answer	1.1%	2.2%	4.0%	3.5%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 24: In your opinion, what percentage of your friends and family's households have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	41.9%	43.1%	38.3%	25.5%	37.9%
21–40%	11.4%	6.5%	6.3%	0.5%	6.5%
41–60%	6.3%	3.0%	2.0%	1.0%	3.0%
61–80%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
80%+	1.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
Don't know	31.6%	37.1%	41.9%	53.0%	40.5%
No answer	3.3%	10.3%	11.3%	20.0%	10.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

For all levels, the respondents located in the north of Albania gave the higher estimates for the numbers of households with at least one working firearm, with the lowest estimates always given by respondents from Tirana. However, in total, more than half of the respondents believed that less than forty percent of households in their neighbourhood and Albania had a firearm.

Most intriguing was the fact that when asked to estimate the percentage of family and friend households with at least one working firearm, more than forty percent of respondents stated 'don't know'.²⁸⁰ While respondents from the south had the highest percentage of 'don't knows' for estimates of the percentage of households nationally with a firearm, Tirana had the highest percentage of 'don't know' respondents for the neighbourhood, friends and family. These high 'don't know' counts could be due to the fact that the respondents were answering the questionnaire honestly by expressing that such an estimate was very difficult to make. Although one would perhaps be more sceptical of the large number of 'don't knows' for friends and family, estimates in focus groups for firearms possession in their region also varied wildly suggesting that 'don't know' is really probably the most honest response.

When asked about the level of guns in their neighbourhood, 36.8 percent again responded that they did not know, while 45.4 percent of respondents believed that the number of guns in their neighbourhood was 'very few', 11.8 percent thought that the level was acceptable and 3.4 percent thought that there were too many.²⁸¹

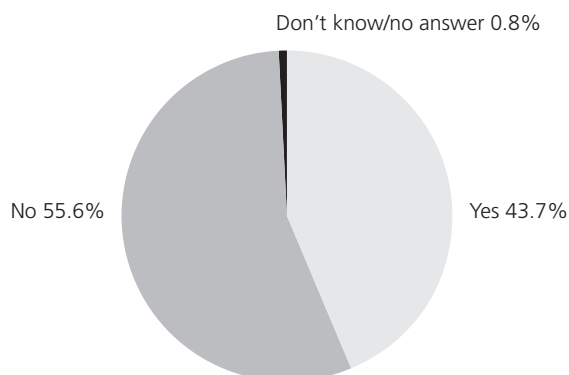
Although only 11.2 percent of respondents confessed to having a weapon at home, 43.7 percent of respondents declared that they had had a weapon at home at some time in

²⁸⁰ In another question, respondents were asked if they thought that their neighbour had a weapon. In response, 44.4 percent of those polled stated that they did not know if their neighbour had a weapon or not, while 15.6 percent stated 'yes' and 38 percent stated 'no'. Two percent of respondents did not answer this question.

²⁸¹ Sixty six percent of respondents from the centre of Albania thought that there were very few weapons in their neighbourhood, with twenty two percent of respondents from this area stating that they did not know. Fifty one percent of respondents based in Tirana stated that they did not know how many guns were in their neighbourhood.

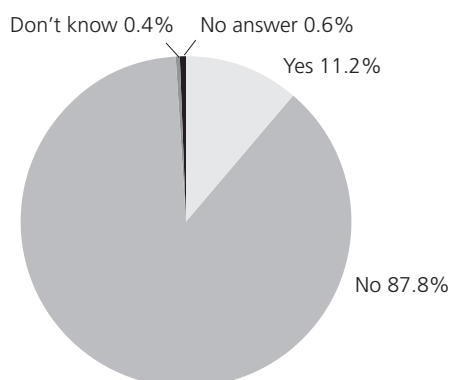
the past (as shown in the chart below). Fifty percent of rural respondents stated that they had at some point had a weapon at home compared to 31.5 percent of urban respondents.

Have you ever had a weapon at home?



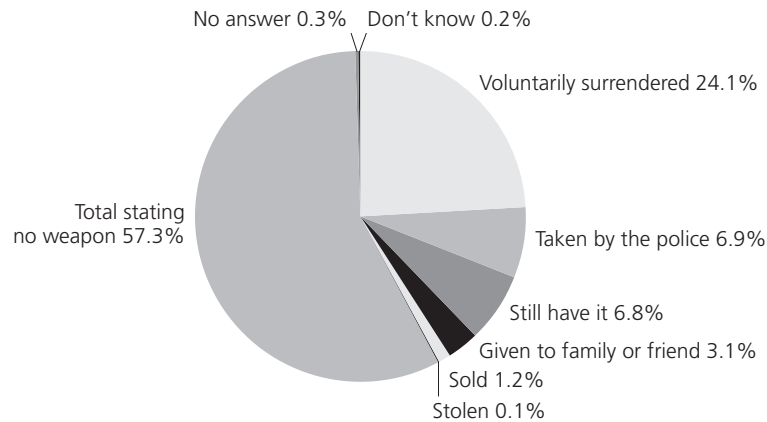
Fourteen percent of rural respondents stated that they had a gun at home now, while seven percent of urban respondents made such a declaration.

Do you have a weapon at home now?



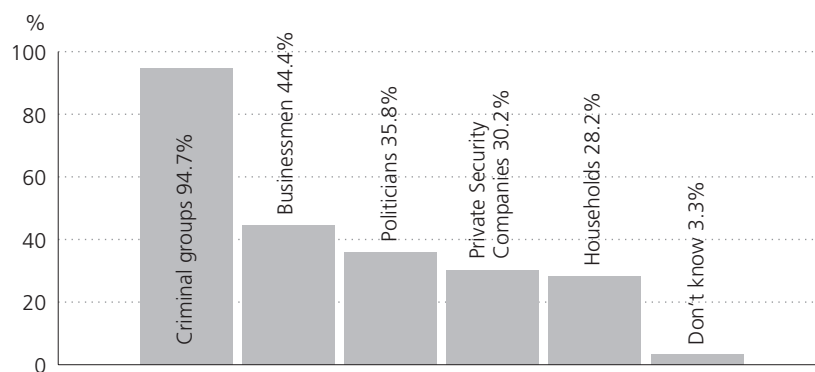
When asked what had happened to their weapon, most respondents who reported having had a weapon stated that they had voluntarily surrendered it or it had been taken by the police. Of those aged over 61, 36 percent stated that the police had taken their weapon, compared to only 18 percent of the 18–30 age group. Respondents aged over 61 had the lowest number of respondents stating that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon with 43 percent, while 64 percent of the 41–50 age group stated that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon. In the north of Albania, 54.5 percent stated that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon, twenty four percent claimed that they still had it, eight percent had sold it and four percent of respondents stated that the police had taken it. The region with the highest percentage of respondents claiming to have voluntarily surrendered their weapon was in the south of Albania (65 percent), followed by the north (54.5 percent), then Tirana (49 percent) and then the centre (47 percent). The responses can be compared to the percentages of leaked weapons recovered by region using the statistics from the table included in section 6.4 – ‘Results of the amnesty/weapons collection processes’. These figures corroborate the household survey responses in indicating that the greatest proportion of weapons were indeed recovered in the south (72.8 percent), but also shows that success was in fact also much greater in the centre (35.6 percent recovered), than in the north (23.3 percent recovered).²⁸² There was also considerable regional variation in the proportion of respondents reporting that the police had taken the weapon they previously owned: the proportion was highest in the centre of Albania (38 percent), followed by the South (15 percent) and Tirana (six percent).

²⁸² The percentage for: the centre is derived from General District Directory totals for Berat, Diber, Durres, Elbasan, Fier, and Tirana; the north is derived from GDD totals in Kukes, Lezha and Shkoder; the south is derived from GDD totals for Gjirokastr, Korca and Vlore.

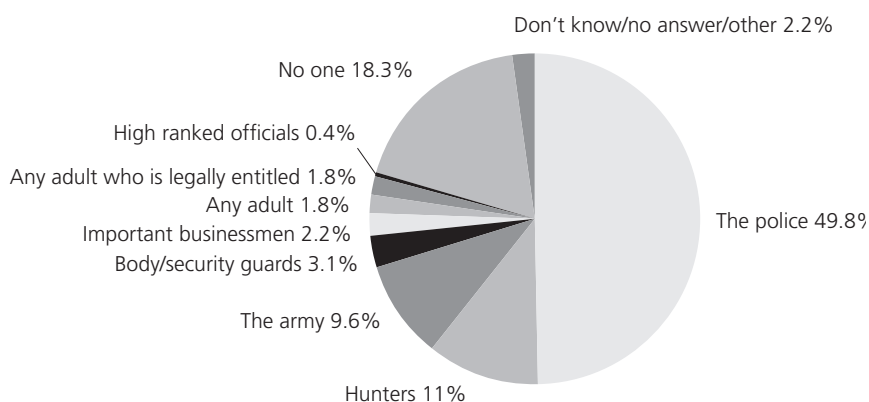
What happened to the weapon that you previously owned?

It is interesting to note that if the proportion of households claiming that their weapon was surrendered or seized (31.0 percent) is used to project a total of weapons collected or seized based on the number of households in the country (720,000) this would suggest that a minimum of 223,200 weapons had been collected or seized from households in Albania within living memory. Although each household surrendering a weapon may have handed in more than one weapon on average, while weapons collections before 1997 would be expected to form a proportion of the collections/seizures reported by respondents for this question, this figure would appear to accord well with the official figure of 222,918 SALW collected since 1997.

When it came to asking in which parts of Albanian society firearms were most likely to be held outside the police and armed forces, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated 'in the hands of criminals'. However, almost half of respondents suggested businessmen, while more than a quarter of respondents thought that householders possessed SALW. The following chart shows the results of a question asking which groups are thought to possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania:

In your opinion, which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania?

When asked which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania, 39 percent of respondents from the centre of the country named households as one of these groups, compared to only 18.5 percent of respondents from the south of Albania. When asked who should be allowed to keep firearms at home, almost half of respondents supported the idea of the police being allowed to do so, while the percentage fell to 9.6 in relation to the army (although 27 percent of respondents in central Albania supported this option).

Who should be allowed to keep firearms at home?

In surveys in 2002 and 2004 by the Centre for Rural Studies the 'police' option was not included with the result that in 2002 77.2 percent and in 2004 73 percent of respondents stated that nobody should have weapons at home.²⁸³ In the 2005 survey carried out by ISO for this report, 17.5 percent of males and 20 percent of females thought that no-one should be allowed to keep a firearm at home. On average, 28 percent of urban and 16 percent of rural respondents supported this idea.

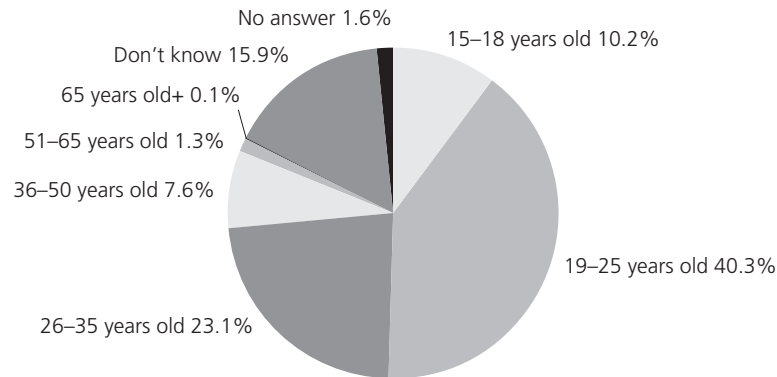
In 2002, an average of ten percent thought that only businessmen should be permitted to carry weapons, with this statement most strongly supported in Durres (17.9 percent), Shkodër (16.7 percent) and Gjirokaster (14 percent), with no respondents in Kukës agreeing with this view. In the 2004 survey, support for this option had risen to an average of twenty percent of respondents, with its strongest supporters now in Vlorë (34.8 percent) and Tirana (25.2 percent). The level of support for this option in Durres had dropped to 11.9 percent, while a similar percentage of respondents in Gjirokaster (14 percent) and Shkodër (17.9 percent) continued to support this option. The idea that each family should have a weapon received an average of 11.1 percent in 2002, with almost a third of respondents in Lezhe agreeing with this idea (30.4 percent) and a fifth in Durres (19 percent). All other areas had responses below this average. In 2004, the overall level of support for this option had dropped to 5.1 percent, with support in Lezhe dropping to 6.6 percent and rising to 20.5 percent from 5 percent in Kukës. One interpretation of these apparently large vacillations in the public's views is that the opinions expressed are not strongly held, and can potentially be altered positively through public awareness activities; a second is that they reflect rapidly fluctuating perceptions among respondents of the security of their immediate environment.

The mayor of Fier spoke of the possibility that different ethnic groups in the area could have different attitudes to weapons and hence different numbers of weapons.²⁸⁴ However, in general, weapons possession in Albania is seen being more prevalent amongst the male gender rather than amongst any particular ethnicity. Many interviewees stated that the main problem group are young men in their teens and twenties, who are engaged in conflicts that were exacerbated by the easy availability of weapons.²⁸⁵ In the 2005 ISO survey, people aged between 19 and 25 years old age group were regarded as the age group most likely to possess firearms.

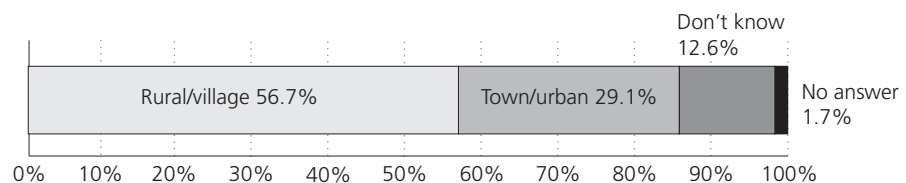
²⁸³ Despite this apparent consistency the regional distribution of those who giving this response shifted markedly from Kukës and Vlorë in 2002 to Durres and Lezhe in 2004, suggesting that impressions on this issue are mutable despite the overt consistency in the overall response to the two surveys. Those under 18 and over 60 most strongly supported the idea that no-one should possess firearms in the 2002 poll with 92.3 percent and 80.6 percent respectively. Sources: op cit Center for Rural Studies, table 44; op cit Center for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, p. 35.

²⁸⁴ Interview, local government official, 12 May 2005.

²⁸⁵ Interviews, former MOD official 27 April 2005; MOD official, 13 June 2005. This was also a common response in all focus group interviews, irrespective of gender.

People from which age group are most likely to have firearms?

However, a number of interviewees also argued that many middle-aged and older men were thought to hold unregistered weapons, as the head of the household, and sometimes the eldest son, traditionally possessed weapons. In general, however, most interviewees spoke of differences between gun ownership in city, urban and rural areas, with rural areas thought to have a higher number of guns per capita than urban areas. This was also the case in the 2005 ISO survey:

In which parts of Albania are firearms most abundant (except in the police, the army, the gendarmerie, etc)?

The higher levels of gun ownership in rural areas are generally thought to be driven by the fact that a lesser police presence serves a more isolated population, which consequently believes in the need for self-protection. The other main reason given for higher levels of rural gun ownership was tradition. Yet, it was also argued that it is not just gun ownership in general that is higher in the rural areas, but unregistered illegal gun ownership. Differences were also mentioned in relation to the types of weapons that one should expect to find in the urban and rural areas. For example, one would expect there to be mainly pistols in the city, whereas in the villages one would expect to find more rifles and machine guns.

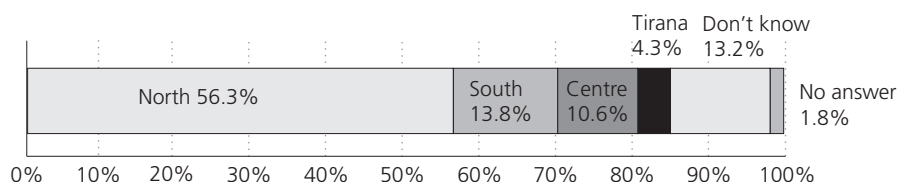
Some respondents even suggested that illegal gun ownership in the major cities of Albania is a problem that rural Albanians bring with them when they move to urban areas.²⁸⁶ Others preferred to highlight certain cities as having more of a gun problem than their own. Thus, for example, one respondent favourably compared his city of Fier with Vlorë, arguing that Fier did not have a gun problem while Vlorë did.²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, according to one prosecutor for the district of Fier, the area has a higher per capita rate of murder and illegal weapons possession than Durres, with a number of interviewees suggesting that illegal weapons possession is actually widespread in the area as cases of illegal weapons possession have been amongst the most frequent cases taken to court in the area.²⁸⁸ In general, however, most interviewees and survey respondents stated that northern Albania has the most firearms in Albania.

²⁸⁶ Interview, MOI official, 15 May 2005.

²⁸⁷ Interview, Ministry of Education official, 14 May 2005. Most respondents from Fier were adamant that there is not a gun culture in Fier, and no real tradition of holding weapons. Interviews, Ministry of Education official, 14 May 2005; MOI official, 14 May 2005; NGO representative, 15 May 2005; local government official, 12 May 2005.

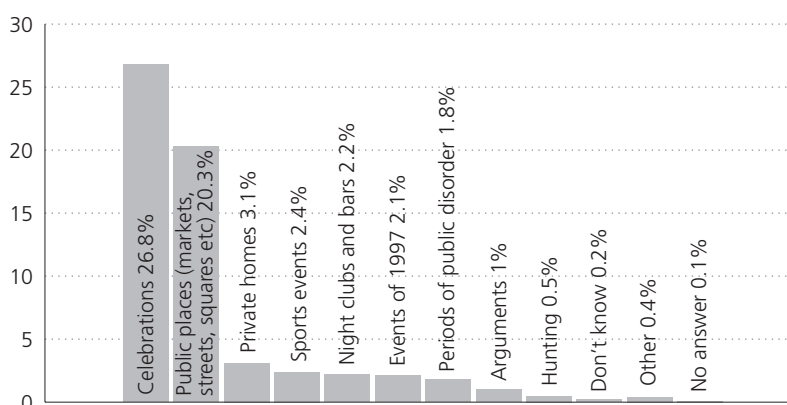
²⁸⁸ Interviews, MOI official, 15 May 2005; MOJ official, 16 May 2005.

In which parts of Albania are firearms most abundant?



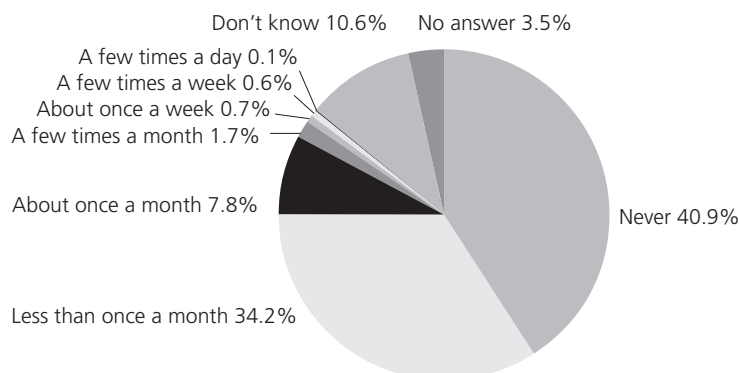
According to the 2005 ISO survey conducted for this report, the most common place to see firearms being used in the community in Albania is during celebrations. Although 19.9 percent of respondents stated that one can never see people carrying firearms in Albania (excluding police or army officers), 41.3 percent of respondents claimed to have personally witnessed firearms being used (47.5 percent of male respondents and 35 percent of female respondents). There were no significant regional differences for this, which may belie the perception that there are more firearms in the North of the country. A greater percentage of older respondents admitted to having witnessed a situation involving firearms – on average, 50 percent of over 65s had witnessed a firearm being used compared to 41.5 percent of 18–30 year olds. The survey also suggested that one is more likely to see a firearm used in a rural rather than an urban area, with 46 percent of rural respondents claiming to have witnessed a firearm being used compared to 36 percent of urban respondents.

What kind of situations where firearms were used have you personally witnessed?



The frequency with which firearms are seen in public is also fairly low considering the estimates of unregistered firearms at large in Albania. This may support the thesis that a significant proportion of illicit holdings are held in bulk rather than by individual households, or it may equally suggest that many weapons are held covertly in case of emergency rather than for frequent use or overt display.

How often do you see people (excluding police or army officers) carrying firearms in your neighbourhood?



Focus group participants added distinctions to the data collected by the survey. They suggested a marked difference between the visibility of firearms in Shkodër and

Tirana, with firearms a more common sight in the former. One of the most interesting insights, however, came from a participant in a focus group in Tirana who stated that:

We are maybe not used to seeing [SALW] but we are used to their presence. Even if people hear a gunshot, they run for two seconds but then they return soon. We're curious but still indifferent. We don't like the law, because if we did, we would tell the police if we saw someone killing with a gun. We never do such a thing, because we are really scared of the person holding the gun. Or, I would say we are also scared of the police themselves.

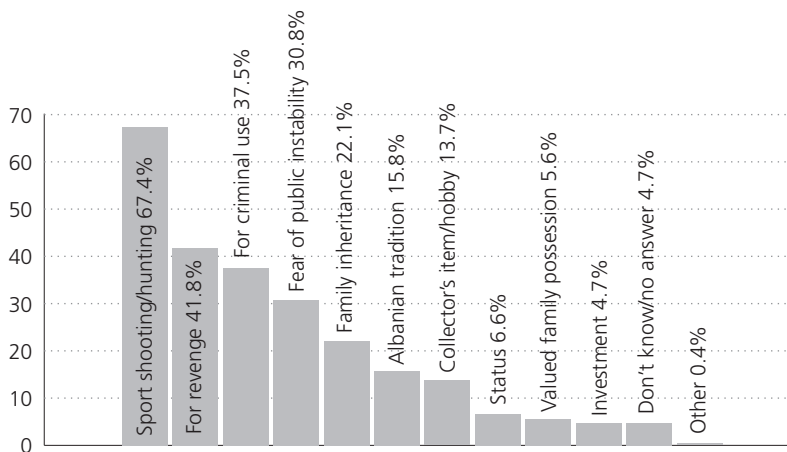
Focus Group, Tirana, Male, August 2005.

3.5.5 Reasons for SALW possession

Two interviewees from the MOI noted protection of self and family as a key motive for firearm possession in Albania.²⁸⁹ One of these officials made the further comment that it would be hard to envisage punishing such people with imprisonment.²⁹⁰ The other, a key figure in the process of collecting weapons, stated that those who were aware that their neighbours retained weapons were therefore unwilling to disarm themselves.²⁹¹ He also pointed out that for some Albanians proximity to a recent conflict zone was a motivating factor for retention of weapons, as the weapons may come to be lucrative assets should conflict-driven demand for guns re-emerge in the future.²⁹² He further drew attention to heightened levels of insecurity (and therefore of illicit weapons possession) among immigrants residing in the north of the country.²⁹³ A third MOI official highlighted the role of tradition as a motive for weapons possession.²⁹⁴

The key household survey question mapping the reasons for SALW possession asked people to select the three main reasons for possessing firearms. The research team omitted the option of 'protecting self, family and property' from the household survey questionnaire, as it was felt that these were already the main reasons that would be given for possessing firearms.²⁹⁵ The options chosen are displayed in the following chart:

Aside from protection for self, family and property, what are the three main reasons for people to keep firearms?



²⁸⁹ Interviews, MOI official, 23 April 2005; MOI official, 14 April 2005.

²⁹⁰ Interview, MOI official, 23 April 2005.

²⁹¹ Interview, MOI official, 14 April 2005.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Interview, MOI official, 21 April 2005.

²⁹⁵ For example, in surveys carried out by the Centre for Rural Studies in 2002, 73.7 percent of the 377 respondents who gave a reason for possessing weapons stated that the main reason for having a gun would be for protecting self and family. This response was most popular in Shkodër (82.3 percent), Gjirokaster (82.6 percent) and Lezhe (83.3 percent) in 2002. Although support for this option had dropped in 2004, these 3 areas still had the highest support for this option too – Shkodër (82 percent), Gjirokaster (68.2 percent) and Lezhe (78.3 percent). It is worth highlighting the fact that support for this option dropped dramatically in Kukes (from 71.9 percent to 53.7 percent) and Tirana (67.6 percent to 39.6 percent). The second most popular reason given was to protect one's business, with 8.2 percent of respondents choosing this option in 2002, with support strongest in Gjirokaster (13 percent) and Vlore (15.9 percent). By 2004, this option had gained more support in all areas, with five of the seven regions in the study returning double the support of the 2002 average – Durres (19 percent), Gjirokaster (22.7 percent), Kukes (16.7 percent), Shkodër (17.7 percent), and Vlore (17.3 percent). Sources: op cit Center for Rural Studies, table 38; op cit Center for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, p. 33.

It is interesting to note that legally acceptable reasons for gun possession (i.e. sport shooting and hunting) were the most popular choices for respondents, followed by 'revenge' and 'criminal use'. It is unclear if the impact of 1997, the July 2005 parliamentary elections (shortly before which the HHS was conducted) or a combination of the two factors could perhaps have pushed almost a third of respondents to choose 'fear of political instability'. As expected, in the focus group interviews, protecting self, family (in particular among females) and property were most frequently mentioned as reasons for possessing firearms. The following reasons were given in interviews and focus groups for registered and illegal weapons possession in Albania:

- To protect self, family, property or business (because the state is unable to do this);
- To protect livestock and property in rural areas;
- To protect oneself in a conflict between families, including blood feuds;
- To 'solve problems' such as property disputes (a common reason for people living in rural areas);
- To commit crimes;
- 'The curse of tradition';²⁹⁶
- Poor education;
- As an investment (to sell on the black market or to a state-organised buy-back scheme).

Of course, not all of these options were popular with interviewees and focus group participants, and many questioned ideas such as an Albanian gun culture or people's need to have weapons for self-protection. In most cases the focus group interviewees stated that the weakness of state agencies in apprehending criminals and bringing them to justice was a major concern, with one focus group exchange literally justifying the use of firearms for bringing 'justice' when the state cannot:

– A person in Albania is often forced to use the gun and to kill, because the state doesn't provide him with the necessary protection. Especially after 1997, the state takes no responsibility and no credibility that it will protect its people, so the people are forced to take this responsibility and protect themselves and their properties. Of course there are special cases.

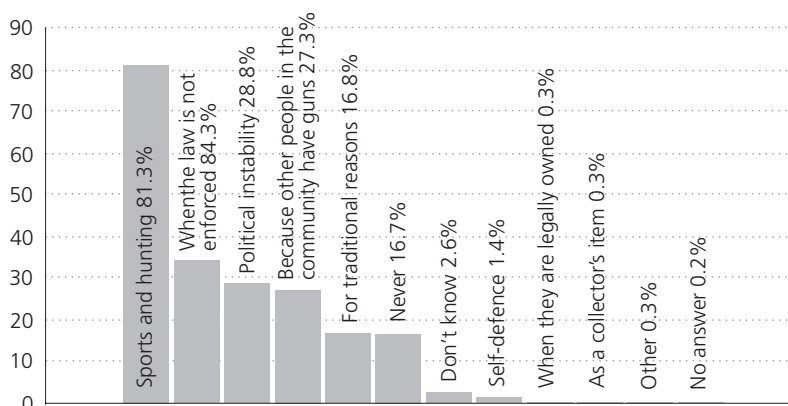
– So the lack of responsibility by the state, in combination with the high number of guns in the hands of the people, has caused the actual situation.

[...] When there is no state authority, no security, you have to provide yourself with self-defence. You always hear in the news, the criminal escaped, or the police caught the criminal, but then he was set free by the court.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Male, August 2005

The ISO poll for this Survey also asked respondents to suggest when it was acceptable for people to possess a gun, with most respondents again selecting the legally acceptable reasons of 'sports and hunting'. Poor law enforcement, political instability and fear of neighbours were also deemed acceptable by between a quarter and a third of respondents. Again, traditional reasons were chosen by less than a fifth of respondents.

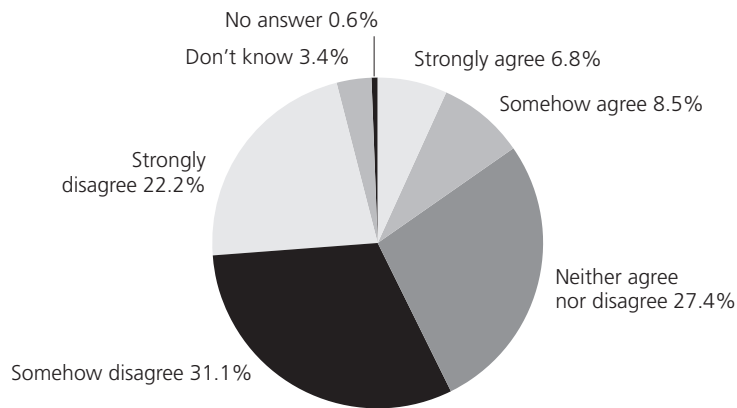
In your opinion, under what circumstances is it acceptable for people to have a gun?



²⁹⁶ Interview, NGO representative, 27 April 2005.

A set of interesting responses were captured when respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement – ‘a house is not safe without a firearm.’

**To what degree do you agree with the statement
‘A house is not safe without a firearm’?**



In contrast to the nationwide figures shown in the chart above, sixteen percent of respondents from northern Albania strongly agreed with this statement, while eighteen percent of respondents from northern Albania strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that possession of weapons for the protection of the household is more accepted and widespread in the north of the country. This perception was shared by interviewees from MOI, who explain it in terms of lower faith in the rule of law, higher insecurity among immigrant populations and a greater attachment to ‘gun culture’ in the north of the country.²⁹⁷ The lowest number of respondents who strongly agreed with this statement came from Tirana with only two percent. Tirana had the largest percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement, around 46.5 percent of respondents. Gender differences were also recorded in responses with five percent of females and nine percent of males overall strongly agreeing, and 19.5 percent of males and 25 percent of females strongly disagreeing with this statement.

²⁹⁷ Interviews, MOI official, 21 April 2005, MOI official, 15 April 2005.

SALW legislation and regulatory frameworks

4.1 Licensing of exports and imports

AT PRESENT, the Albanian legislative basis for import and export controls appears to be particularly weak. Albania does not have a law on export or import controls for military equipment and dual-use goods, relying instead on a number of governmental and ministerial orders, decisions and regulations.

According to an Albanian Government report submitted to the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) in 2004,²⁹⁸ the current export control regime for military equipment is based mainly on the following decisions of the Council of Ministers and regulations of the Albanian Government:

- Council of Ministers (COM) Decision No. 366, “On the foundation of the import-export enterprise [depending] on the Ministry of Defence”, 5 October 1991;
- COM Decision No. 135, “On the approval of the sale of weapons and ammunitions by the Ministry of Defence”, 1 May 1992;
- COM Decision No. 275, “On the administration and controls for weapons of individuals, legal persons and entities”, 25 June 1992;²⁹⁹
- COM Decision No. 365, “On the destruction or selling of ammunitions for which the period of use is coming to an end or has already expired and on the selling of surplus armaments and ammunitions”, and its amendments, 6 June 1994;³⁰⁰
- Regulation of the Albanian Government No. 366, “On selling armaments and ammunition”, 10 August 1996;
- COM Decision No. 05 “On the functioning of the army’s import-export company, MEICO, and its relations with other departments and units in the Ministry of Defence”, 08 January 2002;
- COM Decision No. 617, “On the removal of armaments, parts of weapons and military equipment from the Armed Forces for their destruction, dismantling and selling”, and related regulations, 4 December 2002.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004.

²⁹⁹ COM Decision No. 389, “On some supplements to the COM Decision No. 275”, 6 August 1993.

³⁰⁰ Council of Ministers (COM) Decision No. 822, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 9 December 1996; COM Decision No. 564, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 22 December 1997; COM Decision 829, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 30 December 1998; COM Decision No. 344, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 7 July 2000; COM Decision No. 113, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 8 March 2001; COM Decision No. 17, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 28 January 2002; COM Decision No. 1, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 10 January 2003.

³⁰¹ Regulation No. 485/1, “On the procedure for the auction of military equipment, which have been removed from use, as defined in the COM Decision No. 617”, 14 October 2003; Regulation No. 495/2, “On the procedure for the auction of military equipment, which have been removed from use, as defined in the COM Decision No. 617”, 21 October 2003.

Although Albania's 2004 submission to the UNDDA stated that Albanian authorities control brokering activities, there are no legal requirements for this to take place at present, just as there are no legal requirements for controlling transit and transshipment of arms and dual-use goods. However, retransfers of military equipment are covered under Law No. 8671 "On the Command and authority of the Armed Forces", 26 October 2000, and in 2003 a Government regulation was issued that required potential arms traders to provide end-user certificates for each transfer.³⁰² The research team was informed that Albania uses both the EU common list of military equipment and the Wassenaar Arrangement lists of dual-use goods, technologies and munitions for controlling arms, military equipment and dual-use goods that are subjected to export controls. Albanian officials also stated that every year in January, the MFA provides the state-owned arms trading company MEICO with an updated list of UN and EU embargoed states. The MFA also provides information on new embargoes as soon as they are announced.³⁰³

There is a legal distinction between the import of hunting weapons and that of other firearms and military equipment. According to article 11 of Law No. 7566 "On weapons", "an individual or legal person can bring a hunting weapon from abroad only when they have permission from the Ministry of Public Order to do so". In practice, this means that when an individual has fulfilled the criteria for possessing a hunting weapon, they can then apply for permission at their local police station to be able to import a hunting weapon.³⁰⁴

According to one MOD official charged with implementing the export control regime, penalties for transgressions involve the revocation of the licence, confiscation of the shipment and fines ranging from the value of the transfer to one hundred times such value. In the draft law on export controls, there is a proposal to increase the value of the fine to 150 times the value of the transfer.³⁰⁵

Albania's arms export controls would benefit from the adoption of a new Law that would establish a comprehensive legislative framework. A draft law was prepared in November 2004 by lawyers based within the Ministry of Defence – although assistance was also provided by international experts. Recommendations were sought from other relevant Government agencies such as MOI and the Ministry of Justice. The draft version of Albania's "Law for the control over import-export activity of military materials and dual-use goods and technology" reportedly drew heavily upon the Law of Ukraine "On State Control of International Transfers of Goods Designated for Military Purposes and Dual-Use Goods" (20 February 2003). Albanian interviewees informed the research team that they believed that the Ukrainian legislation was a good model for Albania. In their opinion, it is the most comprehensive and up-to-date export control legislation.³⁰⁶ Several interviewees also stated that the proposed legislation would enshrine in law the requirements of the EU Code of Conduct on arms exports and the Wassenaar Arrangement.³⁰⁷ The new law was also expected to include regulations for transit and transshipment controls, controls on brokering and associated activities and would require each transfer to be accompanied by an end-user certificate and pre-shipment verifications before a licence can be issued.

However, the draft law was not passed by parliament before it closed for the 2005 parliamentary elections. Although one could lament the fact that the parliamentary recess appears to have killed off much needed improvements to the legislative base for SALW transfers, it also provides another opportunity for an inter-ministerial commission to review Albania's needs thoroughly in this sphere, before preparing a new draft law to be presented to parliament for consideration in the near future.

³⁰² Regulation No. 9603, "For the Compilation and documentation of military equipment import-export activities", 18 September 2003.

³⁰³ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

³⁰⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³⁰⁵ Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005.

³⁰⁶ Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005.

³⁰⁷ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOD official, 27 April 2005; MOD official, 20 April 2005; international official, 19 April 2005.

4.2 Anti-trafficking framework

According to Edmond Bahiti, Head of the Sector for Illegal Trafficking within MOI, trafficking was not covered in the communist-era criminal penal code and in a sense, was therefore not a crime during these times.³⁰⁸ However, he argues that in the post-communist period Albanians have taken advantage of the relative freedom to travel abroad, and some Albanians have made connections with organised crime groups around Europe and the world. Since 1999, Albanians have become both the objects and the subjects of trafficking.

Although articles defining armed gangs and criminal organisations were contained in the 1995 Albanian Penal Code,³⁰⁹ it was not until 2001 that articles on “trafficking in weapons and munitions” (278/a) and “Production and illegal possession of small arms and light weapons” (279) were introduced into the Penal Code. Article 278/1 on “trafficking in weapons and munitions” includes sanctions of imprisonment for seven to fifteen years for those found guilty, while article 279 on “Production and illegal possession of small arms and light weapons” carries penalties ranging from a fine to five year’s imprisonment.³¹⁰ If a weapon that had been smuggled had caused a fatality, then the smuggler would receive a minimum of five years imprisonment for involvement in trafficking arms. If it could be proven that the trafficker had links with organised crime, then the penalty would be in the range of 15–25 years imprisonment. It is now possible for life sentences to be given for trafficking in arms.³¹¹ In reality, whether due to poor marking of weapons, or the challenges of effective intelligence-based policing and information-sharing, it would be difficult to envisage the availability of evidence which could attribute specific impacts to particular weapons or prove the links between particular groups. Thus the imposition of these harsher sentences is improbable.

Bahiti argued that the introduction of the articles on trafficking and illegal possession of arms into the Penal code were the result of international pressure.³¹² This is a view with which a number of Albanian analysts appear to concur, as they argue that Albanian authorities have drafted and attempted to implement a number of strategies to address trafficking in recent years, mainly due to international expectations.³¹³ For example, in 2001, the Albanian Government adopted a National Anti-trafficking Strategy, which contained a four year action plan and the establishment of an inter-ministerial steering committee. Yet the Strategy only explicitly referred to trafficking in persons and a number of weaknesses were identified by international donors, leading to a revised strategy being adopted in 2003.³¹⁴ International observers stress that Albania’s good anti-trafficking legislation with regard to human trafficking still needs to be implemented to internationally recognised standards.³¹⁵

According to the Albanian General Director of Police, Bajram Ibraj, a number of national initiatives directly and indirectly related to SALW trafficking have been established in Albania in recent years, including:

- Developing a ‘National Strategy against Illegal Trafficking and Organised Crime’;
- The establishment of a Task Force for enhancing co-operation between the police and customs services for combating trafficking;
- The ‘National Strategy for the Control of SALW’;

³⁰⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

³⁰⁹ Articles 28, 233 and 234 of the Law No. 7895, ‘The Penal Code of the Republic of Albania’, 27 January 1995, define armed gangs and criminal organisations based on the kind of co-operation undertaken, numbers of participants, levels of organisation, criminal offences to be considered and also allows for custodial sentences of between five years to life.

³¹⁰ Report of the Albanian government on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 on combating terrorism (undated).

³¹¹ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 26.

³¹⁴ Ibid, p. 27.

³¹⁵ ‘OSCE’s Konrad Criticizes Failure to Implement Trafficking Laws’, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 15–21 January 2005. Source: Shekulli, 21 January 2005.

- The creation in 2001 of special structures for anti-trafficking in the General Directorate of police and Albania's 12 Districts;
- The establishment of the Directorate against Organised Crime and for Witness Protection.³¹⁶

In addition, further provisions relating to anti-trafficking efforts were introduced in 2004. For example, amendments to Law No. 7905, 'Criminal Procedure Code' (21 March 1995) were adopted in May 2004. These enable the use of undercover agents, surveillance equipment, sting operations, and a number of other mechanisms for uncovering evidence that had previously been inadmissible.³¹⁷ Another significant legal change was the amendment of Article 12 of the Law No. 8553, 'On the State Police' (25 November 1999), which enabled a number of changes in fields relating to the institutional arrangements for combating organised crime and trafficking, witness protection, and integrated border management. Following this amendment, the then MOPO's 'Department for the Fight Against Organised Crime and Justice Collaboration', which was established as a sub-Directorate under the General Directorate of Criminal Police in 2001, was upgraded to a separate directorate – the Directorate of the Fight Against Organised Crime & Witness Protection – in October 2004.³¹⁸ Moreover, a Serious Crime Prosecution Office was established in 2004.

4.3 SALW and ammunition disposal

From the perspective of controlling the flow of SALW to undesirable end users, the optimal method for disposal of surplus stocks of SALW, particularly of older weapons which are usually not items of choice for legitimate end users, is destruction (rather than sale, gift or re-use). The legal bases for the disposal and destruction of SALW and ammunition are considered to rest upon the following governmental decisions and ministerial orders:

- Council of Ministers Decision No. 617, 'on Assigning the Ministry of Defence with the responsibility for destroying surplus weapons, ammunition, and military equipment', 4 December 2002;
- Order of the Minister of Defence No. 281, 'On the treatment of surplus and decommissioned equipment of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania', 17 June 2003;
- Order of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Albania No. 22, 'On the implementation of the demilitarisation process and the procedures for the destruction of surplus military equipment (tanks, artillery units, etc.)', 12 January 2004.³¹⁹

Taken together, they outline the conditions under which surplus armaments and ammunition are to be dealt with. In the main, they call for the salvaging of scrap metal from demilitarised equipment, which can then be sold. Collected SALW and ammunition are often included in the consignments of surplus equipment sent to destruction facilities.

³¹⁶ Bajram Ibraj, General Director of Police, 'Albanian Initiatives on the Fight against Illegal Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons', presentation at workshop Tackling Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) trafficking in South Eastern Europe (SEE), Tirana, Albania, 14–15 December 2004. Press Release on web-site of the Ministry of Public Order, 14 December 2004, <<http://www.mpo.gov.al/anglisht/mrp-ENGLISH.htm>>, 7 April 2005.

³¹⁷ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

³¹⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

³¹⁹ Report on Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Data submitted by Albania to the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs in 2004. <<http://disarmament.un.org:8080/cab/nationalreports/2003/Albania.pdf>> (hereafter 'Albania UN PoA Report 2004').

4.4 SALW amnesty and collection legislation and structures

The law covering amnesty on illegal possession and collection of weapons lapsed at the end of May 2005, thus bringing to a halt the ongoing collection of weapons from the public. The evolution of the legislative framework relating to amnesty and collection, and the status of current legislation is dealt with separately in section 6.

4.5 Legal basis for the control of PSCs

The main laws regulating the work of the security industry are:

- Law no. 8770, (19 April 2001) 'On the Guarding and Physical Security Service';
- Supplements to the Law, passed in September 2002 (Law No. 8936, 'On a supplement to Law no. 8770', State Gazette No. 23 May 2001) and February 2005 (Law No. 9343, 'For some amendments in the Law No. 8770').

In terms of the possession and use of SALW by PSCs, security guards are permitted to carry a Kalashnikov assault rifle and pistol, while technical directors and bodyguards are permitted to carry concealed weapons. All weapons used by PSCs should be supplied and registered to the employer and individual guards by the police, who also determine types and quantities of weapons and ammunition required by the PSCs. Technical directors and employees are not allowed to use their own firearms or purchase firearms from private dealers for security work. However, sprays and weapons that can cause temporary paralysis can be purchased directly from suppliers by PSCs, if they hold special permits issued by the police and then inform the police upon receipt of these items.

The law on PSCs does not cover storage methods, but PSCs must observe the same general laws and norms that regulate the use and storage of SALW held by the state police and military forces. Some of the regulations and norms are collected in a manual prepared for PSCs by the State Police, which states that "weapons are secured in armouries and safes".

The current legal framework requires PSCs to be licensed by the Ministry of Public Order in order to operate. Company licences are granted for a period of three years³²⁰ and the type of licence granted depends on the specific duties that applicant firms apply to carry out. Those firms that wish to provide protection for private and public buildings must seek and obtain a 'Category A' licence. 'Category B' licences permit firms to provide physical security to persons, while 'Category C' licences cover the guarding of money and valuable objects.³²¹ The Ministry is also responsible for determining whether applications to carry firearms are warranted, and for issuing firearms licenses to the firm.³²²

Permission to trade is itself conditional on the status of the firm's Technical Director and other employees, all of whom must be registered with the state police.³²³ Technical Directors and employees must be Albanian citizens with a permanent residence in Albania,³²⁴ and anyone holding a criminal record is barred from such employment.³²⁵ In addition, police officers cannot have a second job as security officers, while police officers dismissed from their posts for corruption are not permitted to work for PSCs.

³²⁰ Article 3, Paragraph 2, Law No. 9343.

³²¹ Articles 4 and 5 of Law no. 8770, 'On the Guarding and Physical Security Service', 19 April 2001, explain licensing requirements, including the geographical constraints imposed upon category A licence holders, as they can only operate within the district for which they hold a licence. PSC holding category A+B, B and C licences are authorised to operate nationwide.

³²² Article 2, Paragraph 3, Law no. 8770.

³²³ Article 7 of Law no. 8770 specifies that the PSC must be registered with the General Directorate of State Police; Article 14, Paragraph 2 states that the technical director of PSC must be registered with the General Directorate of Police; and article 15, Paragraph 2 specifies that PSC employees must be registered with the Directorate of Police at the District level.

³²⁴ Article 2, Paragraph 2, Law no. 8770.

³²⁵ Article 14, Paragraph 1c of Law no. 8770 covers the technical director and Article 15, Paragraph 1c covers employees of PSC.

In order to protect the local industry from foreign competition, the law stipulates that international PSCs may only enter the Albanian market in co-operation with an Albanian firm or Albanian individuals.³²⁶ A second restriction places strict limits on the number of staff each company may employ. This is unique to the South East European region and intended to protect the dominant position of the public security sector against private competition – PSCs may employ no more than five per cent of the total number of police in the district in which they are licensed to operate.³²⁷ Other legal requirements include a provision that private security guards receive a minimum of 15 days of training (which is to be provided by the Technical Director of the company) before passing an examination which the state police administer. Employees are also required to undertake five-day refresher courses every year.³²⁸

The above laws provide the following legal sanctions: companies may be fined between €800 and €1800 for legal breaches, and Technical Directors may themselves be fined anywhere between €150 and €400 for transgressions.

4.6 Civilian SALW possession legislation

Civilian weapons possession is regulated primarily by Law No. 7566, “On weapons” (25 May 1992). Law No. 7566, “On weapons”, states that civilians can only possess weapons classified as hunting weapons,³²⁹ with even sporting weapons remaining the property of the state. However, there are a number of exceptions to this rule. For example, the following have the right to carry a firearm, which can only be issued to them by the MOI:

- Members of Parliament
- Members of the Council of Ministers and other people equal to them
- Leaders of Political Parties
- The Head of the Constitutional Court
- The Head of the General Investigation Office and their deputies
- The heads of certain administrative units of local government administrative units
- Magistrates
- Judicial executors
- Prosecutors
- State investigators
- The drivers of MPs, political party leaders, the Heads of Constitutional Court and General Investigation Office.³³⁰

In addition, MOI can also grant permission and equip private security guards with firearms and train staff for passenger and cargo trains.³³¹ Two Council of Ministers Decisions, enacted in accordance with Law No. 8388 ‘On SALW collection’ (5 August 1998), extended the number of categories for legal possession to people living in border areas and businessmen with capital over 50 million Leke (about \$500,000).³³² The rationale behind permitting those living in border areas to possess firearms legally was reportedly that they were expected to act as ‘civilian border guards’ following the collapse of the state in 1997.³³³ Also, in contrast to the categories entitled to carry a

³²⁶ Article 2, Paragraph 1, Law no. 8770.

³²⁷ Article 11, Paragraph 2, Law no. 8770, ‘On the Guarding and Physical Security Service’, 19 April 2001.

³²⁸ Article 16 explains training requirements. The training provided by the technical director should describe legislation and regulations, PSC responsibilities and duties under the law, the use of weapons, the use of telecommunication equipment, basic first aid and how to extinguish a fire. Technical Directors are expected to have graduated from military or police academies, and have between five and ten years of police or military experience.

³²⁹ From Decree No. 195, “On the promulgation of the Law No. 7566 ‘On weapons’”, 25 September 1992.

³³⁰ Article 5 of Decree No. 195, “On the promulgation of the Law No. 7566 ‘On weapons’”, 25 September 1992.

³³¹ Article 7 of Decree No. 195, “On the promulgation of the Law No. 7566 ‘On weapons’”, 25 September 1992. Article 9 states that they must be over 22, neither insane nor physically impaired, and have no criminal record. Article 7 also states that MOI can also grant permission and equip with firearms the film studio “Albafilm”, the public broadcasting, the theatre troupes, the national and local museums, although Article 8 states that these firearms must be ‘ineffective’.

³³² COM Decision No. 53, “For the definition of border areas, types of weapons, number of ammunition, the criteria for granting licences for legal weapons and the respective tariffs”, 4 February 1999; COM Decision No. 56, “For the granting of licences for legal weapons for the heads and partners of commercial companies”, 4 February 1999.

³³³ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

firearm listed above, the two categories specified in the 1998 SALW collection law were permitted to register weapons that had not been ‘directly’ supplied to them by the then MOPO, but which had most probably been looted in 1997. This provision was not carried over into the 2003 Law on SALW collection, and we were therefore informed that businessmen can no longer register firearms for self-protection.³³⁴

However, a chief inspector from Fier stated that businessmen can still apply for a licence for a pistol. It is clear however, that those businessmen who registered weapons in 1998 have not been asked to return their weapons and licences. Although the applications of those seeking to register weapons in accordance with the 1998 SALW collection law were assessed, we were not told of any cases of denial. Therefore, one of the most interesting features of the fieldwork carried out in the regions of Albania is that there were a variety of opinions about who has the legal right to possess a weapon. For example, according to Director of Kukës regional police, Ylli Tafilli, two types of people have a right to register a weapon: businessmen and people living in border areas.³³⁵ Yet Shkelqim Pepkola, chief of the police commissariat in Kukës, stated that since 1997 it has only been possible to register hunting weapons.³³⁶ In Kukës, police stated that they were in the process of collecting weapons that had been registered between 2001 and 2003, as this has been ordered by the MOI.³³⁷ No other interviewees mentioned this order to us. Therefore, confusion no doubt stems from the uncertainty over whether the 1998 law on SALW collection still applies.

A new draft law would allow all businessmen with 50,000 Lek, or owners of more than fifty animals to apply for a weapon. This follows a recommendation from the police department, since it is believed that such individuals already have weapons.³³⁸

Police weapons are regulated under the ‘Law for State Policy’.³³⁹

The present system for issuing weapons licences to civilians is that the community, criminal and public order police chiefs from the area meet in a committee in the local police station to assess the application. Decisions on the granting of licences must be made within 30 days according to the law.³⁴⁰ Both the 1992 and 1998 laws require, among other things, that you obtain a declaration from your local police officer that you are not in conflict with your neighbours when you apply for a firearms licence.³⁴¹ The present registration process is not well publicised, though it was at one time on the internet.³⁴²

³³⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³³⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 27 April 2005.

³³⁶ Interview, MOPO official, 27 April 2005.

³³⁷ Interviews, MOPO official, 27 April 2005; MoPo official, 27 April 2005.

³³⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³³⁹ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³⁴⁰ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³⁴¹ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

³⁴² Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

SALW control capacity

5.1 National capacity

5.1.1 MOD

THE ALBANIAN MOD has a number of responsibilities relating to SALW controls. This section focuses upon four areas in which the MOD is considered to play the leading role:

- Production
- Surplus SALW and ammunition management
- SALW and ammunition destruction capacity
- The import and export control system

5.1.1.1 Production

Since 1962 Albania has produced a variety of ammunition, explosives and SALW (e.g. modified Chinese designed AK-47s) at the military production facilities of Gramsh, Mjekes and Poliçan.³⁴³ The Gramsh production facility began to produce a Chinese pattern of the 'Smirnov' 7.62 mm calibre rifle under licence in 1966 and AK-47 models in 1974. Mjekes consists of six factories located around the city of Elbasan, which have been producing explosives under licence from Bofors since 1982. Poliçan specialised in the production of ammunition, producing 7.62 x 39 mm calibre ammunition, 82 mm mortar round, grenades and antipersonnel mines, and between 1970–2 began to produce antitank mines and 180 mm rounds. New machinery arrived from Switzerland and Austria between 1977–1985, which enabled the production of 12.7 x 99 mm and 14.5 x 51 mm calibre ammunition and 60 mm, 107 mm and 120 mm mortar rounds. In addition, Poliçan was also equipped to produce 19 mm ammunition for Makarov and Parabellum pistols. It has been argued that Albanian military facilities had significant SALW production capacity. For example, MOD officials stated that Gramsh had the capacity to produce 26,000 automatic rifles per year, using four or five different patterns.³⁴⁴

However, by the mid-1990s, much of the production equipment was broken, had been stolen, or was largely redundant in terms of producing SALW capable of competing on the international arms market.³⁴⁵ For example, according to a newspaper article from March 2005, the military production facility in Poliçan, which apparently employed 4,000 people for SALW and ammunition production during its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was largely abandoned in 1999.³⁴⁶ According the head of the facility, in 1990 it employed 3,200 workers but in 1994 it employed just over half this number

³⁴³ This section is based upon information taken from the website of the Albanian MOD, <<http://www.MOD.gov.al/eng/industria/ndermarjet.asp>>, 12 June 2005.

³⁴⁴ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

³⁴⁵ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁴⁶ 'Albanian Defence Minister promises revival of arms manufacturing plant', BBC Monitoring Service. Source: Koha Jone, 22 March 2005.

(1,700).³⁴⁷ By 2004 this number had fallen to 900, and today there are reportedly only 264 employees including management. Those who were able to take early retirement now enjoy a monthly pension of 10,000 leke (about €80). There are reportedly 140 people engaged in carrying out reverse engineering and demilitarisation projects on surplus military equipment – mainly 85 mm and 100 mm rounds.³⁴⁸ Rather than producing SALW and ammunition for sale on the international arms market, these facilities help raise funds to boost the MOD's modernisation budget by transforming SALW and ammunition into products for sale on the international scrap metal market. It should also be noted that the Mjekes production facility reportedly carries out small-scale production of commercial explosives.³⁴⁹

According to a report submitted to UNDDA (the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs) in 2004, Albania does not have a law for governing the production of SALW because there is no current policy for the production of SALW in Albania, or actual manufacturing of SALW in Albania.³⁵⁰ The report states that SALW have not been manufactured in Albanian military factories since 1990, and the current head of the MOD import-export company MEICO informed the author that Albania has not produced any ammunition during the past five years.³⁵¹ He stated that there have been requests from companies in the USA for trophy weapon ammunition, and maybe even rifles, to be produced in Gramsh. These requests included offers for the installation of equipment and provision of raw materials to restart production. However, he doubted whether there are trained personnel capable of fulfilling these orders and whether they would be profitable. In his opinion, there would need to be significant capital investment for these factories to be able to compete internationally.³⁵² He also believes that it is extremely unlikely that there will be a large-scale state-run military production facility in Albania in the near future.

Nevertheless, the production and repair of SALW and ammunition has taken place at military production facilities in Albania since 1990.³⁵³ Databases on the NISAT website indicate that Albania was producing rifles and carbines in Gramsh in 2001,³⁵⁴ and a number of interviewees stated that there have been limited and occasional instances of ammunition production at the Poliçan facility for export to Turkey and the US.³⁵⁵ For example, the Director of Poliçan Military Factory, Memli Kasapi, informed the research team that they continue to produce 7.62 mm blanks for military use, 9 mm rounds for MOI and 85 mm rounds for ceremonial use.³⁵⁶

It also appears that Turkey is showing significant interest in exploring possibilities for manufacturing ammunition under licence in Albania. For example, during an event to commemorate the facility's 40th anniversary in March 2005, the then Albanian Defence Minister Pandeli Majko announced that the Albanian and Turkish Governments are working towards opening a new production line at the Poliçan military production facility.³⁵⁷ Also present at the ceremony were the Turkish military attaché, Colonel Ali Ozgun, and the head of the General staff, General Pellumb Qazimi. In interviews conducted in July 2005 it was confirmed that new machinery was being brought to Poliçan from Turkey, as only one production line was functioning in an underground tunnel at Poliçan.³⁵⁸ It was not clear if Poliçan will be operating under licence, although this seems likely as MOD officials have confirmed that the

³⁴⁷ Interview, MOD official, 29 July 2005.

³⁴⁸ Ibid; interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Albania UN PoA Report 2004. This report reiterates statements made a year earlier in a letter dated 8 July 2003 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Department of Disarmament Affairs on the Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/CRP.93 (hereafter 'Albania UN Letter 2003').

³⁵¹ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

³⁵² This opinion was also shared in interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁵³ Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

³⁵⁴ Source: NISAT databases website <www.nisat.org>.

³⁵⁵ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; international official, 29 April 2005. This was confirmed by MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

³⁵⁶ Interview, MOD official, 29 July 2005.

³⁵⁷ Op cit 'Albanian Defence Minister Promises Revival of Arms Manufacturing Plant'.

³⁵⁸ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

ammunition will be produced exclusively for the Turkish military.³⁵⁹ If this is to be the case, then it would seem appropriate for the Albanian Government to consider work on drafting appropriate legislation for governing military production in Albania, as well as the transfer of weapons and associated materiel produced under licensed production agreements with particular attention paid towards avoiding any grey areas concerning the production of military materials under licence in Albania.

5.1.1.2 Stockpile management

The MOD is responsible for managing SALW and munitions stockpiles.³⁶⁰ It decides upon the locations for stockpiles, based upon mission and task operations, and the distance of the stockpile depot from inhabited areas and the national road network. The Defence Design Directorate is supposed to design storage facilities, taking into account public safety and security issues. The MOD's armaments and ammunition regulation book clearly defines depot security measures, instructions on record-keeping, details of responsibilities for inspections and procedures for dealing with thefts and attempted thefts. This is at least what should happen regarding the management of Albania's surplus SALW and ammunition.

The MOD has received various forms of assistance in this area as it has sought to achieve membership of NATO. For example, in 1999 the UK-based firm EOD Solutions produced a report aimed at improving stockpile storage management procedures. This was provided to ensure that the MOD would increasingly comply with NATO norms. The report gave recommendations on how NATO guidelines on ammunition storage could be adapted to fit with the existing Albanian system during the transition to full NATO compatibility.³⁶¹ The MOD's import-export enterprise, MEICO, has also assisted in this process by drafting a munitions strategy in 2004. The strategy gives details of objectives, priorities and phases for stockpile storage and destruction.³⁶²

As part of its commitments to NATO's PfP process, the Albanian Armed Forces have embarked upon a restructuring plan that will downsize the Albanian military to an overall strength of 35,000 personnel, with only 6,000 professional soldiers, by 2010.³⁶³ This process will also have a variety of impacts upon stockpile levels and their management and security. Less depots and active personnel will also mean more surplus military materiel and less personnel for performing guard duties. This will have a potentially serious negative impact upon the already overstocked depots.

Although security, storage conditions and record-keeping are now considered to be much better than in 1997, there are still a number of causes for concern.

Storage conditions

The number of arms and ammunition depots in Albania is currently being reduced, with stocks increasingly centralised in terms of their location.³⁶⁴ For example, in 1998 Albania had 167 depots containing 917 stores for SALW, ammunition and explosives. In 2005, Albania has 57 depots, with 474 stores (195 of which are underground tunnels). The final number of depots is expected to be five or six. In 2002, these depots held 151,039 surplus SALW units.³⁶⁵ The rapid closure of large numbers of depots has led to severe overstocking at the remaining depots.³⁶⁶ For example, at the Mirak ammunition depot just outside Elbasan, six warehouses contain 3,600 tonnes of different types of

359 Ibid.

360 Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004.

361 Op cit South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005, pp. 30–1.

362 Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

363 Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005; Kusova, 19 February 2003, p. 64.

364 Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004.

365 According to a government Order on SALW Decommission, which provided a comprehensive list of surplus SALW, there were 151,039 surplus SALW units in Albanian stores in 2002. Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

366 Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

ammunition, which is double their 1990 levels.³⁶⁷ In addition, the depot also has six underground tunnels, which each contain 2,000 tonnes of ammunition. Members of the research team entered two of the warehouses and one of the tunnels, where wooden crates of ammunition were stacked from floor to ceiling. The warehouses no longer had room for a store manager's office, although they eventually hope to reach a stage where only the underground tunnels will be used for storing ammunition, thus ensuring that no ammunition will be stored above ground at this site. The lack of pallets or even space for forklift trucks within the warehouses means that all of the crates located within the above-ground warehouses will have to be moved by hand. The research team was informed that it is common practice to tip the stacks over to reach the crates at the top of the stacks.³⁶⁸

While the wooden crates that are used do not meet NATO standards, some Albanian and international observers are confident that the risks of explosion from the contents are low. The research team were informed that samples of Mirak's stocks are regularly checked to identify ammunition that has low stabiliser levels and should therefore be considered a priority for destruction.³⁶⁹ However, a lot of old ammunition, lacking stabilisers, has been moved around the country with the downsizing of the depots. This fact, coupled with the loose ammunition that has been handed in by civilians and the overstocking of depots, has led some Albanian MOD officials to state that around half of the current depots should be considered 'high risk' for detonation.³⁷⁰ To help control any explosions in Mirak, no two identical types of ammunition are contained in neighbouring stacks.

Yet neighbouring buildings provide a cause for concern in terms of public safety. A major road and a number of residential buildings are located less than a couple of hundred metres from the warehouses at the Mirak ammunition depot, with other depots reportedly in even closer proximity to residential areas. Although many of these residential construction projects have taken place without official permission, local authorities are reportedly unwilling to take action for fear of provoking negative reactions.³⁷¹ However, this is not always the case: the research team was informed that a school that had been located very close to the Mirak ammunition depot had been closed due to potential public safety concerns.

In the same depot, all of the ammunition was boxed and there were no SALW units kept in the stores. A number of interviewees were confident that most depots that were used for storing SALW units and ammunition provided separate storage facilities.³⁷² Yet, we were informed that the ammunition collected from civilians often arrives at the depots mixed with other explosive materials, often in the same bottles or plastic bags in which it was handed to weapons collectors. The National Demilitarisation Centre (NDC) has worked under contract on projects to repackage 900 tonnes of such 'loose' ammunition for destruction,³⁷³ but more repacking needs to be carried out. A former NAMSA official estimated that among the total of around 150,000 tonnes of ammunition in state stocks, there are 2,000 tonnes of loose ammunition.³⁷⁴

Security

Most depots rely on barbed wire, padlocks for wooden doors, barred windows and some exterior lighting as the main security measures against theft. There are no trained dogs, intruder alarm systems or video surveillance systems.³⁷⁵ However, given

³⁶⁷ The warehouses were stables in the interwar period. The roof had collapsed on one of the six depots at Mirak, but fortunately the crates of ammunition stacked within were holding the ceiling up. Data collected during visit to Mirak ammunition depot, 27 July 2005. One interviewee stated that some depots contain three times the quantity of ammunition that they were designed to hold. Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁶⁸ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁶⁹ Data collected during visit to Mirak ammunition depot, 27 July 2005; interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁷⁰ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

³⁷¹ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁷² Interviews, former MOD official, 18 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁷³ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

³⁷⁴ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁷⁵ Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004. Data collected during visit to Mirak ammunition depot, 27 July 2005.

the ongoing reduction in the number of depots, it is perhaps understandable that expensive high-tech security measures are not being put in place at depots that are designated for closure in the near future.³⁷⁶

The depots are usually guarded by poorly paid conscripts, of whom there are an inadequate number,³⁷⁷ and in some cases by civilian guards or PSCs. The warehouse manager is responsible for checking that the stores are locked, that there are no signs of forced entry and that SALW and ammunition have not been taken.³⁷⁸ One interviewee stated that he believed that there was little to stop the warehouse manager or conscript guards from being tempted to assist thefts from depots actively or passively.³⁷⁹ Although no interviewee stated a belief in systemic levels of corruption and misappropriation of SALW and ammunition from depots, it was not dismissed as a possibility. The depots located in border areas were identified as the most likely site of such abuses of power.

A number of interviewees stated that it would be unlikely that the military would reveal cases of actual or suspected thefts of SALW and ammunition to the media.³⁸⁰ However, the research team were informed that in 2003, three pistols – two sports pistols and one Chinese-made TT pistol – were reported stolen from MOD depots.³⁸¹ The most common response to questions relating to known cases of military personnel caught trying to sell stolen SALW or facilitate access to depots for others to steal SALW, was that it was considered easier and cheaper just to buy items of SALW or ammunition that were looted in 1997. It has also been remarked that as well as the physical guard on stocks, everyone in the area and at factories or sites is unlikely to risk getting each other in trouble through involvement in acts of theft.³⁸²

Yet, in July 2005 a news item appeared in *Shekulli* detailing how a conscript soldier had stolen ammunition, explosives and other military material from the “Arshi Lengo” tank unit on a number of occasions.³⁸³ The fact that this conscript was suspected of having smuggled military equipment out of the base on previous occasions without being apprehended suggests that security measures may need to be reviewed.

Recordkeeping

According to Albania’s 2004 report to the UN Programme of Action on SALW, records of holdings, use, expenditure and disposal are kept for ten years at the battalion level, and indefinitely at the Brigade, Division and General Staff levels.³⁸⁴ Verification exercises are carried out annually at the battalion levels, every two years at the Brigade level and every four years at national level, by experts from the MOD who conduct physical checks alongside checks of the record books.³⁸⁵ Concerns were raised to the research team about the accuracy of the MOD’s record books on SALW and ammunition holdings, as the number of officials in Tirana tasked with monitoring MOD holdings is considered to be small when compared to the size of the stocks that they are charged with overseeing.³⁸⁶ Inspections and inventories are hampered by poor communications between the centre and regional depots, poor transport, retirements of skilled personnel and Chinese and Russian markings on weapons which many cannot read.³⁸⁷ During its repackaging of loose ammunition under NAMSA contracts, the NDC saw

³⁷⁶ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

³⁷⁷ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

³⁸⁰ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; Anon, investigative journalist, 21 July 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁸¹ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

³⁸² Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁸³ “Soldier guarding unit accused of stealing ammunition”, Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 9–15 July 2005. Source: Shekulli, 13 July 2005.

³⁸⁴ Government of Albania, ‘Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects’, (2004), <http://disarmament2.un.org/cab/nationalreports/2003/Albania.pdf>, accessed 12 November 2005, p 10.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁸⁷ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

first-hand that store records do not tally with reality.³⁸⁸ By the estimate of one former NAMS official, inventories are around 90 percent accurate,³⁸⁹ and therefore provide opportunities for misappropriation by military personnel.³⁹⁰

At present Albania's Land Forces, Navy, Logistics Support Command and Air Force all use paper rather than computerised records to report on weapons holdings to the General Staff. This system is functional but slow and would benefit from electronic upgrading.³⁹¹ According to MOD officials, a system is sought with nodes in at least the centres for the land forces, navy, logistical support and air force along with a central hub at the General Staff HQ.³⁹² However, according to interviewees from international organisations and companies, the MOD has been provided with computerised accounting system packages for SALW and ammunition holdings, but they have not been used.³⁹³ The suggestion of one international official is that the database operating within the MOI (described below in section 5.1.2.1) could be adapted for use within the MOD.³⁹⁴ With donor support it is hoped that this system could be rolled out to each depot, with data collected on the quantity, types and marking of SALW and military equipment.

Some concerns appear to relate to SALW and ammunition deposited at military stores by weapons collection teams. One international observer has expressed concerns that records may not be accurate because those police officers charged with collecting and registering collected weapons and ammunition may not be able to identify exactly what has been collected.³⁹⁵ This scepticism stems from the fact that neither the police who have collected the weapons and ammunition, nor the managers of the police or military stores receiving them, count each individual round received. Furthermore, as stated above, the ammunition and grenades may arrive mixed together in bottles, bags or other containers, which some police officers or store managers are unwilling to sort through. Collected items of SALW also apparently hamper the organisation of some stores, as some MOD staff members dump such items in warehouses either because the technical officials are not present or out of frustration with the chore of dealing with collected weapons.³⁹⁶ Therefore, each depot's figures on paper may be different to their actual holdings. This is also linked to the fact that international experts do not feel that many of the warehouse managers have had sufficient training for the job.³⁹⁷

There are further problems with the speed of information exchange between remote bases and depots and central authorities, which could be affecting the accuracy of figures. For example, a store manager at a depot in Kukës might issue 1,000 rounds to be used in training, but this might not be found in a MOD register in the centre until much later because of the challenges that a paper-based record system and poor transport infrastructure pose for effective and timely communication between units. Such delays could also provide opportunities for small scale theft and false accounting.³⁹⁸

Model depot

One interviewee suggested that a model depot be established as a long-term solution for Albania's military surplus stockpile.³⁹⁹ The model depot would be fully NATO-compatible, establishing best practice in areas such as the repackaging of ammunition, the computerisation of record-keeping, the use of physical inventories, lighting, shelter for guards, reinforced doors and closed-circuit television. This would require

³⁸⁸ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

³⁸⁹ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁹⁰ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁹¹ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

³⁹² Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

³⁹³ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 12 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁹⁴ Correspondence with international official, 10 November 2005.

³⁹⁵ Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

³⁹⁶ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

³⁹⁷ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁹⁸ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

³⁹⁹ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

international assistance and MOD support and funds too. With plans to reduce the number of depots in Albania to five or six, the construction of at least one model depot in the short to medium term appears to be a good option for improving stockpile security in the longer term. However, for a seed initiative of this kind to succeed, experience in other contexts shows that there should also be a concerted strategy to ensure the best practices also filter through to other depots. This would require political backing and budgetary support from the national Government, as well as a clear implementation schedule.

Destruction capacity

In 1998, NATO assembled an Ammunition Storage and Disposal Implementation Team (ASDIT), working under PfP auspices, to identify the scale of the SALW and ammunition problem in Albania. One of ASDIT's recommendations was to improve the training of the armed forces in explosive ordnance destruction (EOD) procedures. Therefore, the EOD Ammunition Support Training Team (EODASTT, 1999–2002), the second NATO PfP team sent to Albania, was tasked with providing advice on safe ammunition storage and destruction and forming an EOD team within the Albanian Armed Forces, comprising the first 12 students to qualify from the NATO training course. A further 13 students were subsequently trained, although as a consequence of army reforms, many of those trained by NATO have since retired, with only two original trainees still thought to be employed on EOD duties in the armed forces.⁴⁰⁰ Key informant interviews suggest that some armed forces EOD units who have only received training in the destruction of single items are carrying out large scale demolitions without the necessary knowledge or equipment, and thereby posing a considerable threat to public safety.⁴⁰¹

We were informed that most of the personnel employed at the military facilities of Gramsh, Mjekes and Poliçan are now mainly carrying out reverse engineering and demilitarisation projects on surplus military equipment.⁴⁰² The research team also visited the Mengel military base near Elbasan, which has been used as the SALW destruction site for a number of internationally financed SALW destruction projects. A SALW cutting workshop was established there in 2000 by a German military team tasked with destroying 40,000 SALW, who donated cutting equipment and computer equipment for record-keeping.⁴⁰³ The site was then used by EOD Solutions to destroy a further 85,000 SALW. According to staff at the base, they have the capacity to destroy on average 600 SALW units per day. This site has subsequently been handed over to the Albanian Government for ongoing destruction projects, with hopes expressed that it could serve as a site for destroying surplus SALW stocks from neighbouring states.

By the autumn of 2005, an EU-compliant ammunition destruction facility was due to be open at ULP Mjekes.⁴⁰⁴ NATO has reportedly provided \$2.5 million for the installation of this unit, although a number of setbacks have delayed the incinerator's start date.⁴⁰⁵ According to NAMSA representatives, the incinerator will be used to destroy around 11,000 tonnes of SALW ammunition over the next 18 months, at an average rate of 22,500 7.62 mm rounds per hour. It is expected to operate around the clock, with the demilitarised cartridges being sent to smelting works in nearby Elbasan.⁴⁰⁶

The MOD's Munitions Strategy, which was developed by MEICO in 2004, outlines the AAF's plans for disposing of their ammunition surplus, specifying destruction priorities, methods and costs. Although the strategy is awaiting formal approval, and is not fully funded, it is already reportedly being used to guide work in this field.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁰ Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; former MOD official, 18 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

⁴⁰¹ Correspondence with private contractor, October 2005.

⁴⁰² Interviews international official, 19 April 2005; MOD official, 29 July 2005; MOD official, 27 July 2005.

⁴⁰³ Data collected during visit to Mengel military base, 27 July 2005.

⁴⁰⁴ Data collected during visit to ULP Mjekes, 27 July 2005.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

⁴⁰⁶ Interviews, international official, 27 July 2005; MOD official, 27 July 2005.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview, MOD officials, 17 March 2005.

In 2000, the AAF calculated that their stores contain an excess of 117,476 tonnes of ammunition.⁴⁰⁸ This figure was reduced to 85,424 by the end of 2004 as a result of destruction activities carried out by the AAF, EOD Solutions Ltd, NAMSA and the NDC. In the period 2001–2004, AAF destroyed 26,473 tonnes of ammunition, NAMSA destroyed 2,874 tonnes of anti-personnel mines and 1,475 tonnes of ammunition and EOD Solutions Ltd destroyed 1,229 tonnes of ammunition. It is estimated that the AAF will destroy a further 11,780 tonnes and EOD Solutions 1,000 tonnes during 2005.⁴⁰⁹ By 2006, NAMSA aims to destroy an additional 8,000 tonnes as part of a €6.4 million grant provided by the NATO PfP Fund.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, based on current levels, Albania will still have at least 60,000 tonnes of surplus ammunition to destroy after current projects end in 2006.

Table 25: Ammunition destroyed and used 2000–apr. 2004⁴¹¹

Location	2000	2001	2002	2003	Jan–Apr 2004	Total
Poliçan Military Facility	400 tonnes	2,300	2,085	4,600	853.8	10,238.8
Gramsh Military Facility				804	169.3	973.3
ULP-Mjekes Military Facility		2,186	688	35	307	3,216
EOD Albanian Group	63	468	671	2,837	2,436	6,475
EOD Solutions Ltd.			894	2	34	930
NDC				352		352
Spent Rounds	200	180	150	100		630
Total	663	5,134	4,488	8,730	3,800.1	22,815.1

Part of the Munitions Strategy is concerned with the repackaging of loose ammunition. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, much of the ammunition collected by MOI is delivered to MOD stores in the same condition as it arrives at police stations. This can mean that plastic bags and bottles of loose and mixed types of ammunition are held in MOD stores until they can be repackaged and sorted for safe destruction. There is therefore a need for technically competent staff to sort the collected ammunition into packages safe for destruction. The fact that a considerable percentage of the collected SALW, ammunition and explosives have been selected for destruction rather than for sales, should be recognised as a positive step by the international community. Further international support for destruction projects would send a positive message of encouragement to the Albanian authorities.

Although not necessarily an issue that concerns SALW and SALW ammunition destruction, a number of interviewees highlighted the problems that the MOD and international contractors face when trying to arrange for safe destruction of mines, large calibre munitions and other armaments.⁴¹² Albania is destroying around 300–400 tonnes of ammunition per month.

At the same time, environmental issues are gaining in importance as people become increasingly aware of them. Demolitions are now being slowed up by protests.⁴¹³ The MOD and international contractors have to acquire permission from local authorities to use sites that were formerly MOD property to destroy munitions and surplus military materials through detonation. It was reported that there are not many local councillors who are willing to sign agreements permitting the destruction of military materials in their areas because of protests and campaigns against destruction sites.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

⁴¹⁰ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

⁴¹¹ Government of Albania, 'Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects', (2004), <http://disarmament2.un.org/cab/nationalreports/2003/Albania.pdf>

⁴¹² Interviews, international official, 18 April 2005; international official and international official, 29 April 2005; MOD officials, 17 March 2005; international official, 19 April 2005; parliamentarian, 3 May 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

⁴¹³ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

Some of these campaigns and protests have highlighted the environmental damage caused by the destruction of munitions, but most are thought to be motivated by fears that the destruction projects will have an impact on the livelihoods of residents in the area. For example, some farmers have complained their water supplies have been contaminated following detonations in their area or reported other forms of damage to property or livestock. While the protests may slow down applications for licences to destroy weapons, they have not stopped the destruction process.

Officials at the US embassy in Tirana suggested that part of the problem is the approach taken by the MOD. They argue that the MOD is not particularly adept at public relations duties and can therefore create or exacerbate some of the problems that they encounter through a mixture of arrogance and ignorance towards the local population. A number of 'accidents' have also not helped. It was explained to the research team that to ensure that the process runs smoothly it is necessary to ensure that good personal relations have been established with local officials. For the MOD or international contractors to get permission to destroy military equipment on former MOD property, the local authorities usually need to be reassured and perhaps receive incentives to agree. The parliamentary Defence Committee has reportedly been involved in a number of cases, because local residents claim that their appeals fall upon deaf ears when they approach the MOD with complaints.⁴¹⁴

One of the main problems for destruction projects undertaken at Albanian military facilities is that ammunition destruction is gradually becoming more difficult since many of the easiest and most profitable items to demilitarise have already been converted into scrap metal and sold. The remainder, which includes mortar grenades, medium range artillery and other ammunition which is technically more difficult to destroy, will be more difficult to sell at a price that covers the cost of demilitarisation, let alone at a profit. A decline in donor interest as the cost per item for demilitarisation rises has also caused some problems. Therefore, it was feared that the demilitarisation units at Gramsh, Mjekes and Poliçan could cease working in the near future because they will have demilitarised all surplus stocks that can actually be sold as scrap.⁴¹⁵ At the same time, other surplus military hardware is considered a higher priority for destruction. For example, the USA focused its funding upon the destruction of MANPADS in 2004 and is now highlighting destruction programmes for chemical weapons, sea mines and torpedoes.⁴¹⁶

5.1.1.3 MEICO and the transfer control system

Only one Albanian enterprise is currently legally permitted to trade in arms, ammunition and military equipment. The state-owned Military Export Import Company (MEICO) was established in 1991 and is based within the MOD. It is responsible for the marketing and sales of surplus Albanian arms and military equipment and the import of military equipment and firearms for all Albanian state institutions. Its main task is to decrease the AAF's arms and ammunition surplus through international transfers, thus increasing revenue for the modernisation of the MOD. When MEICO was established, the MOD received permission from the government of the day to sell, destroy or disassemble and sell as scrap the state stocks of surplus arms and ammunition.⁴¹⁷ Its activities are governed primarily by the following documents:

- COM Decision No. 366, "On the foundation of the import-export enterprise [depending] on the Ministry of Defence", 5 October 1991;
- COM Decision No. 135, "On the approval of the sale of weapons and ammunitions by the Ministry of Defence", 1 May 1992;
- Law No. 7566, "On Weapons", 25 May 1992;

⁴¹⁴ Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005.

⁴¹⁵ Interview, international official, 18 April 2005.

⁴¹⁶ Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

- COM Decision No. 365, “On the destruction or selling of ammunitions for which the period of use is coming to an end or has already expired and on the selling of surplus armaments and ammunitions”, and its amendments, 6 June 1994;⁴¹⁸
- Regulation of the Albanian Government No. 366, “On selling armaments and ammunition”, 10 August 1996;
- COM Decision No. 05, “On the functioning of the army’s import-export company, MEICO, and its relations with other departments and units in the Ministry of Defence”, 08 January 2002;

According to this last decision, MEICO can import and export all types of military equipment, ammunition and industrial and military explosives,⁴¹⁹ and is regarded as the main contact point for foreign partners interested in concluding arms deals with Albanian parties.⁴²⁰ It also places the responsibility for coordinating relations between MEICO and other MOD departments with the Secretary General of the MOD.⁴²¹ When the MOI imports military items, it must act through MEICO.⁴²² Since the beginning of 2003, MEICO has also been required to send a detailed and confidential report of its activities to the President, Prime Minister, National Audit Office, and the MOD on the 15th of every month.⁴²³ It currently has a staff of just over twenty, working in finance, marketing, law and technical areas relating to military equipment and firearms.⁴²⁴ It is claimed by the head of the company that MEICO receives no special privileges when it comes to meeting the requirements of Government decisions, regulations and orders on transfers, and that in fact “customs puts private companies ahead of MEICO, causing it serious delays”.⁴²⁵

At present, only MEICO has the right to apply for a licence to import or export a shipment of military equipment, SALW and/or ammunition. They must make an application to the Secretary General of the MOD for each order, which is then assessed by the political integration department of the MOD in consultation with other ministries and sometimes the UK and US embassies based in Tirana. The licence is then issued according to a decree issued by the Minister of Defence, on the authority of the Government.⁴²⁶

In the case of exports of surplus military equipment, applications must also pass before a commission for the evaluation of information on the destruction of weapons, which approves the type, weight and quantity of munitions to be sold and the price for the sale.⁴²⁷ The commission is headed by the director of the Logistics Directory, and includes the following members:

- Head of the armament-ammunition sector;
- A specialist of the armaments sector;
- A representative of the sector for military enterprises;
- A representative of the planning and finance directory;
- A representative of the MoD’s design institute;
- A representative of MEICO.

⁴¹⁸ Council of Minister’s (COM) Decision No. 822, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 9 December 1996; COM Decision No. 564, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 22 December 1997; COM Decision 829, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 30 December 1998; COM Decision No. 344, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 7 July 2000; COM Decision No. 113, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 8 March 2001; COM Decision No. 17, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 28 January 2002; COM Decision No. 1, “On an amendment to COM Decision No. 365”, 10 January 2003.

⁴¹⁹ Article 3 of the COM Decision No. 05, “On the functioning of the army’s import-export Company, MEICO, and its relations with other departments and units in the Ministry of Defence”, 8 January 2002.

⁴²⁰ Article 5 of the COM Decision No. 05, “On the functioning of the army’s import-export Company, MEICO, and its relations with other departments and units in the Ministry of Defence”, 8 January 2002.

⁴²¹ Article 6 of the COM Decision No. 05, “On the functioning of the army’s import-export Company, MEICO, and its relations with other departments and units in the Ministry of Defence”, 8 January 2002.

⁴²² Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴²³ Order No. 27 “On information about the surplus of weapons and ammunition in the import-export activities of MEICO”, 23 January 2003.

⁴²⁴ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005.

⁴²⁷ Order No. 556, “On the establishment of a Committee for the evaluation of information received on the destruction of weapons, in accordance with COM Decision No. 617”, 10 December 2003.

According to the Governmental order that established this commission, decisions on orders should be taken within a month of requests for sales.

In 2003, a Regulation was introduced that required all applications for licences to import or export military equipment and weapons to include an end-user certificate (in English), details of the company and/or state of export or import and a copy of the contract.⁴²⁸ Certificates for verification of delivery are now also used in most cases, and although not yet a legal requirement,⁴²⁹ it is set to become one under the proposed law on export controls.⁴³⁰

These licences are issued on a case-by-case basis and tend to be limited for trade with a specified country for a specified period of time. According to the head of MEICO, failure to provide a satisfactory end-user certificate is the most common reason for recent licence denials.⁴³¹ The MOD checks each application with the MFA, who usually inform the MOD within ten days as to whether the recipient is under embargo or the transfer poses a high risk of diversion or threat to national or international security. There are, however, concerns that Albania does not have the required capacity to check compliance with end-user and delivery verification certificates because of its limited overseas representation. Therefore, Albanian authorities have requested assistance from UK or US diplomatic representations in destination countries.

According to the head of MEICO, checks are also made on intermediaries and other companies involved directly in the transfer.⁴³² If an intermediary is involved, they will have to present documentation that shows that they are registered in their home state as a trading entity and licensed to act as a third-party broker. If there are concerns with the application, then the transfer licence will be denied by the MOD. The head of MEICO informed the research team that they now try to avoid dealing with brokers and third party agents, preferring to deal where possible on a state-to-state basis.⁴³³ However, shipping companies, insurers, financiers and other parties involved in servicing the arms trade do not need to be registered or licensed to participate in transfers. There are no Albanian-registered companies recognised as military equipment transport and logistics facilitators.

At present, Albania does not have a registering system for brokers. With the entry into force of the proposed law on export controls, however, this will change. The new law will open up the possibility for privately owned Albanian-registered firms to operate in the arms market as importers, exporters or brokers, and allow for the transshipment of goods through the country.⁴³⁴ From observing developments across the border in Greece the head of MEICO has expressed that while he welcomes the entry of privately-owned companies operating in the arms market from Albania, he is concerned that brokers introduce greater opportunities for corrupt practices and illicit shipments.⁴³⁵ He would prefer brokering activities in Albania to be prohibited. This is no doubt related to the fact that it is recognized that implementing controls in this sphere could be very difficult for Albanian authorities. As one parliamentarian stated, good legislation is very often in place in Albania, but there are question marks over whether Albania has the capacity to implement it.⁴³⁶

⁴²⁸ Regulation No. 9603, "On the Compilation and documentation of import-export activities [with regard to] military equipment", 18 September 2003. Article 6 states that licences, import-export permissions and end-user certificates cannot be transferred to other parties. If violations of the regulation are deemed to have taken place, then licences, import-export permissions and end-user certificates can be revoked. Article 8 gives the right to appeal.

⁴²⁹ An exception to this rule is sometimes exports of trophy arms to the USA.

⁴³⁰ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴³¹ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴³² Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴³³ This could be due to the fact that several shipments of arms and ammunition purchased from MEICO by private companies have found their way to regions in conflict. For example, a 2003 export to the UK-based Imperial Defence Services is thought to have been sold to warring parties in Africa and we were also informed of a sale to an Israeli broker that was also diverted. Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴³⁴ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

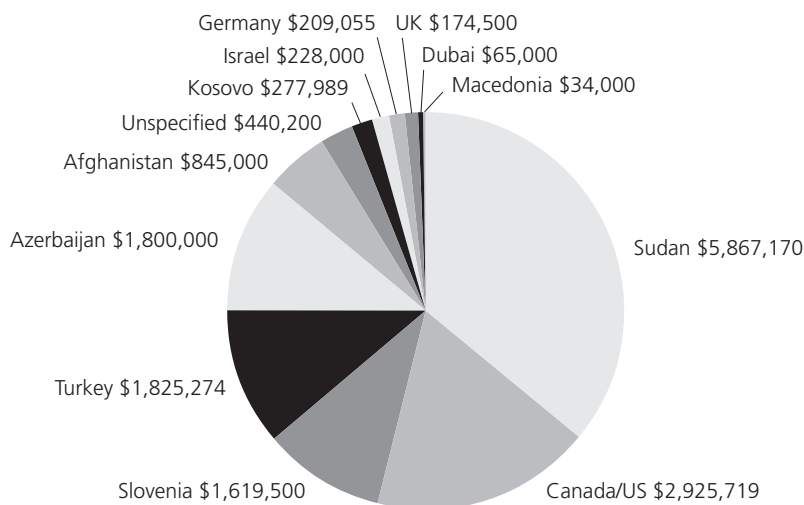
⁴³⁵ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴³⁶ Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005.

5.1.1.4 Transfers

The data on MEICO transactions which the research team was able to compile is very far from constituting a comprehensive account of the agency's activities in recent years. The data is included at Appendix A. The export transactions listed there for the period 1992–2004 have a combined value of \$16,312,407. No data is available covering the years 1996–1999. An interviewee from MEICO suggested that Germany and the USA have been the main destinations for Albanian surplus arms and ammunition, with most of these sales relating to trophy weapons or ammunition for trophy weapons.⁴³⁷ For example, between 2000 and the first half of 2005, around thirty million cartridges for hunting and trophy weapons were exported to the USA. According to officials at the US embassy, MEICO now contacts the embassy before authorising exports or imports that involve US companies or have the US as a destination.⁴³⁸ In 2004, 200 trophy weapons were exported to Germany.⁴³⁹ While the data from MEICO confirms the US/Canada as a major recipient of goods in recent years, it also highlights other recipients for Albanian materiel such as Sudan, Turkey and Azerbaijan, as shown in the chart below.

Recipients of Albanian exports 1992–2004 (Source: table at Appendix 1)



Reportedly, in 2002, Albania sent arms and ammunition to re-equip the Afghan military.⁴⁴⁰ According to one news report, transfers to Afghanistan included 10,000 rounds of ammunition, 600 Kalashnikovs and an undisclosed number of machine guns and mortars.⁴⁴¹ There are now also plans for Albanian military surplus to be sent to help re-equip the Iraqi security forces, with a contract arranged in 2004 to send a million cartridges in 2005, with several million more to be sent in subsequent years.⁴⁴²

Data from NISAT does not necessarily contradict the MEICO data as to the overall value of SALW exports in any particular year, as the following chart demonstrates. Even for 2001, where the value of exports recorded by NISAT exceeds the MEICO figures, only \$1,194 out of the \$449,931 of exports are known to have consisted completely of SALW.

⁴³⁷ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

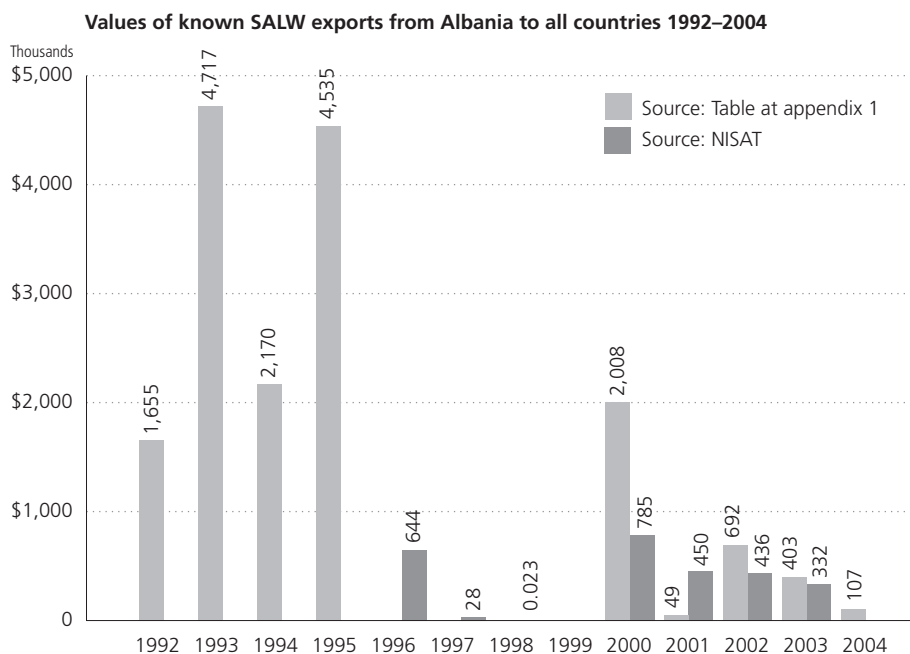
⁴³⁸ Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

⁴³⁹ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview, British government official, 21 April 2005.

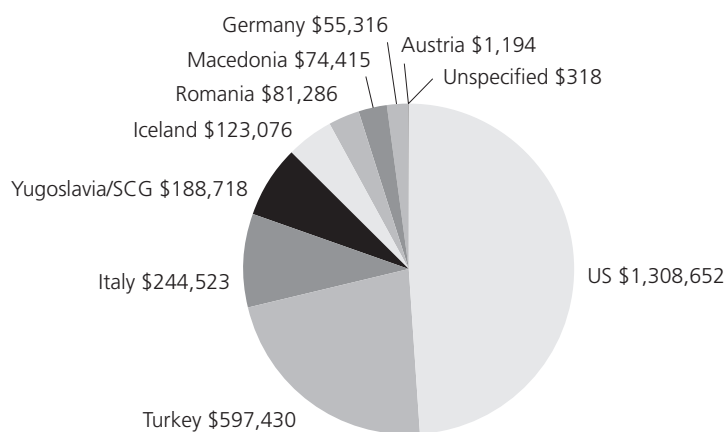
⁴⁴¹ 'Albanian Defense Ministry confirms donating assault rifles to Afghan army', AFP (Paris), 28 November 2002. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁴² Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.



One can observe from the NISAT data that four of the recipients listed (Italy, Iceland, Romania, Austria) were not mentioned as recipients in the data on MEICO compiled by the research team for this period. Clearly, with data for several years missing from both sources, and a number of questions raised about transfers of concern in recent years (discussed further below), there remain sizeable gaps in what is known about Albanian arms exports since the fall of communism.

Recipients of Albanian exports 1996–2003 (Source: www.nisat.org)



Note: NISAT figures may include some non-SALW items

Albania issues a very small number of import and/or export licences per year. For example, in 2004 three licences for export were issued and one denied, while two licences for import were granted.⁴⁴³ The denial was issued because a Bulgarian company wishing to purchase Albanian TNT did not present all of the requested documents and could not explain why the explosives being purchased, and destined for Montenegro, were to pass through Bulgaria. In 2005, up until 20 April only one permit had been granted, for the export of 4 million rounds of ammunition to Iraq.⁴⁴⁴ Known exports in recent years include the following:

- In 2004 10 million rounds of ammunition were exported to Iraq;
- In 2004 10 tonnes of TNT were exported to Bulgaria in return for industrial explosives;
- In 2004 200 trophy items were exported to Germany;

⁴⁴³ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

- In 2003 10 million rounds of ammunition were exported to the US.⁴⁴⁵

In terms of imports, a sizeable quantity of hunting and sporting weapons and ammunition appear to have been imported from a variety of states, of which the largest trading partners in this sphere between 1996 and 2002 appear to be: China, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia and Turkey (see table). According to the director of police at Rinas airport, the majority of legally imported weapons that enter Albania through Rinas airport are hunting rifles from Turkey.⁴⁴⁶ He reported that 1,683 hunting rifles have been legally imported to Albania in 2005, although he was unable to give data for previous years.

5.1.1.5 Transfers of concern

Between 1992 and 1997 MEICO oversaw exports to many 'blacklisted' destinations⁴⁴⁷ as prior to 1997 virtually any export could gain authorisation in a context where a single signature was required, and the necessary documents were available, "if the price was right" (either quote him saying this or rephrase).⁴⁴⁸ The most infamous case of an Albanian consignment of arms and ammunition being discovered in an UN-embargoed state relates to the story of the UK company Mil-Tec⁴⁴⁹ supplying military equipment from Albania to Government forces in Rwanda suspected of being involved in the massacre of Tutsis in 1994. In 1996, the Albanian MOD issued a statement that stressed: "Albania has never breached the UN embargo. It has always respected and will respect all the international bodies and their decisions. Albania has never been engaged in smuggling and illegal traffic".⁴⁵⁰ However, it has been suggested that six shipments of weapons that were exported from Albania to Zaire, in deals brokered by Mil-Tec in 1994, found their way into Rwanda.⁴⁵¹ At the time of these shipments, Zaire was not under a UN embargo, but "research by aid organisations, the UN, and journalists has not established that any firm other than Mil-Tec supplied arms from Albania to Rwanda in 1994".⁴⁵² The extent to which Albanian authorities were aware of these diversions at the time is unclear.

The situation has changed substantially since that time: it was felt by some interviewees that the international presence in the MOD and the genuine commitment of the Albanian Government to present a good international image in the sphere of transfer controls suggest that transfers to unscrupulous end-users are unlikely to take place with Government support.⁴⁵³ However, there is considerable concern that Albanian arms have continued to be diverted or covertly shipped to the Great Lakes region of Africa more recently. This concern is the greater given that public interest in the issue is small, and support and protection for investigative journalists is lacking, which suggests that the true extent of such transfers is unlikely to have been fully explored and reported upon.

In July 2005, the British press reported on diversions of military equipment from Albania to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) via Rwanda, which had taken place in 2002 and 2003. According to Jon Swain and Brian Johnson-Thomas, MEICO sold ammunition to an Israeli company, which arranged for more than 250 tons of arms and ammunition to be transported using African International Airways (AIA) from Tirana to the Rwandan capital of Kigali.⁴⁵⁴ According to the

⁴⁴⁵ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview, Sadria, 20 July 2005.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁹ Mil-Tec was incorporated in Douglas, the Isle of Man, which is a UK Crown dependency territory.

⁴⁵⁰ 'Ministry denies Tirana involved in sending arms to Rwanda', Tirana ATA, in English, 2047 GMT, 19 November 96, [FBIS Transcribed Text]. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁵¹ Taken from a letter sent to *The Guardian* by Kate Allen of Amnesty International UK and Stewart Wallis of Oxfam. See: *The Guardian*, 1 March 2000, p 23.

⁴⁵² Wells M, 'Arms firm linked to Rwandan army chief', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2000, p. 8.

⁴⁵³ Interview, international official 19 April 2005.

⁴⁵⁴ Swain J and B Johnson-Thomas, 'British-based airline fuelled Congo terror', *Sunday Times*, 3 July 2005, p. 27. See also: Amnesty International, *Shattered Lives: The Case for Tough International Arms Control* (2005), pp. 10 and 62.

report, AIA made six flights from Tirana to Kigali during late 2002 and early 2003, with the arms and ammunition then handed over to rebel groups fighting in eastern Congo. The planes were allegedly loaded under strict security in a military area at Tirana airport.⁴⁵⁵ Again, Albanian officials denied that they had knowledge that the shipments would be diverted, believing that the transfer was a government-to-government contract. A similar allegation appears in an Amnesty International report published in July 2005:

According to the latest study, by April 2004 the DRC conflict had cost the lives of nearly four million people. [...] In this context, Amnesty International is especially concerned about large-scale arms deliveries to the region. Rwanda imported millions of rounds of small arms ammunition, grenades and rocket launchers from surplus stocks in Albania[....] Following the signing of the DRC peace accords in the second half of 2002, a series of arms flights were carried out from Tirana, Albania to Kigali. The flights continued until at least June 2003. The Government of Rwanda has denied receiving arms supplies from these flights, but according to evidence seen by Amnesty International and to accounts by government officials in Europe, these inter-continental deliveries involved up to 400 tonnes of munitions, and involved companies from Albania, Israel, Rwanda, South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK).⁴⁵⁶

During 2005, Albania remained the target of accusations of illicit or undesirable arms transfers.

An Albanian investigative journalist also informed the research team of covert transfers of military equipment to Rwanda in 2002 and 2004.⁴⁵⁷ The interviewee was in possession of documents detailing the flight plans for two shipments of 'secret' cargoes bound for Rwanda, and alleged that the covert shipment was being facilitated by a former MEICO official that worked in the cargo section of Rinas airport. The investigation into this affair halted when no support or protection was offered to the journalist by their employer. In another investigation that was also not taken to its conclusion, the journalist alleged that high level officials in the Albanian navy had concluded an agreement in 2001 with a Greek arms broker for the sale of Albanian torpedoes. According to the interviewee, the Greek broker was a known associate of the former Peruvian Prime Minister, Vladimiro Montesinos, who stood trial in 2004 for his role in smuggling arms to Colombian guerrillas. It is interesting to note that the interviewee stated that when these allegations were published, the MOD did not immediately deny them outright, but announced that an internal investigation would be carried out. No results of investigations into these allegations have reportedly been announced.

There have also been newspaper allegations made against high level officials in Tirana and the AAF relating to covert arms deals. For example, there have been accusations that Albanian authorities sanctioned exports of military equipment to Lebanon. In a story published in Tirana Republika in April 2002, it was alleged that an enterprise other than MEICO had been used for several years to sell large numbers of pistols and Kalashnikovs to Lebanon.⁴⁵⁸ The article stated that the enterprise "is known for its connections with the top leaders of the Albanian state and with some equally high-ranking circles in Lebanon", and was used for shipping equipment that had been declared 'lost' or 'stolen' during the events of 1997. While it was not possible to corroborate all the information contained in this article, it resonates with concerns that were expressed by international observers based in Tirana.⁴⁵⁹

The former MOPO has also been the target of allegations of arms trafficking. According to one report, senior Government and/or MOPO officials used military

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

⁴⁵⁶ Amnesty International, 'Democratic Republic of Congo: arming the east', AFR 62/006/2005, available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf620062005>

⁴⁵⁷ Interview, investigative journalist, 21 July 2005.

⁴⁵⁸ Koka A, 'Scandal explodes: Albanian army weapons are sold in Middle East', Tirana Republika [Albania], 10 April 2002, p. 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁵⁹ Interviews, officials from international organisations, Tirana.

unit no. 100, a unit under MOPO supervision located just outside Tirana, for trafficking several million US dollars worth of pistols, Kalashnikovs, high-precision sniper rifles and other equipment out of Albania in the late 1990s.⁴⁶⁰ In 1999, border guards at the Han i Hotit border crossing point discovered pistols that were being trafficked out of Albania, but whose serial numbers stated that they belonged to unit no. 100. The head of the unit explained that these pistols had been ‘looted’ in 1997, an explanation that satisfied Albanian investigators. However, an investigation carried out by a US team concluded that around nine million US dollars worth of SALW and ammunition was missing from the unit’s stores. In July 2001, it was reported that fourteen colonels and majors of unit no. 100 were called to the military prosecutor’s office to answer charges relating to arms trafficking.⁴⁶¹

It should be noted that the above accusations are not always corroborated by substantiating evidence. The Albanian Government’s denials of these allegations are, in turn, characterised by generalities and lack of factual information.

5.1.1.6 Transparency and reporting

In addition to the detailed and confidential report of its activities that MEICO must send to the President, Prime Minister, National Audit Office, and the Minister of Defence on the 15th of every month, MEICO also has to send a report detailing import and export shipments each quarter to the President, Prime Minister, Intelligence Services, MFA, MOD, and the National Audit Office.⁴⁶² Although parliament’s security committee is not sent a copy of this quarterly report, the now defunct Defence committee used to receive bi-annual reports from MEICO on transfers that had taken place over the preceding six months.⁴⁶³ However, the parliamentary oversight committee can ask to see the records for imports and exports at any time and can call the Minister of Defence to present himself before the committee.⁴⁶⁴ However, a number of commentators have argued that Albania’s parliamentary committees are not noted for their scrutiny of Government policy.⁴⁶⁵ According to David Greenwood, they act as little more than ‘rubber stamps’ for Government policy.⁴⁶⁶

Several Albanian commentators have also stated that there is little civil society interest in defence issues in general. In the opinion of Aldo Bumçi and Blendi Kajsia, this is because the NGO scene in Albania is donor-reliant, and there are few donors promoting projects relating to defence issues. However, opinion poll data collected for this project in 2005 showed that the majority of respondents did not wish to see Albania’s surplus arms sold to states with repressive regimes, in conflict or poverty. However, eight percent of respondents were willing to see Albanian SALW exports sent to countries in conflict and just over seven percent saw no problem in selling arms to the world’s poorest countries (see annex). Yet, despite the high levels of disapproval for arms sales to repressive regimes and areas in conflict, there have not been popular protests or actions taken when Albania has been suspected of involvement in such arms deals. One investigative journalist informed us that it was not worth exploring suspected cases of diversion or covert shipments by the Albanian Government because there was not a great deal of public interest and a lack of support from the media for uncovering such stories.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁰ Feci Z and A Hoxhaj, ‘Scandal in public order ministry’, Tirana Republika, in Albanian, 20 July 2001, p. 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁶¹ Feci Z, ‘Scandal reaches military investigators’, Tirana Republika, in Albanian, 26 July 2001, p. 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁶² Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁶³ Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005. In January 2005, the Albanian parliament’s Defence Committee was merged with other Committees to form the Security Committee, which covers the activities of MOD, the then MOPO and State Intelligence Services. This was part of a downscaling of parliamentary Committees from fourteen to seven. The Security Committee meets twice a week.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Op cit Bumçi, p. 115–6; op cit Greenwood; op cit Kajsia, p. 108–17; Nazarko M, ‘Civilian and democratic control of the Armed Forces’ in Defence and Security Sector Governance in South East Europe: Insights and Perspectives – Albania, eds J Trapans and P H Fluri (DCAF, 2003) pp. 27–44; op cit Totzani, pp. 58–71.

⁴⁶⁶ Op cit Greenwood.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview, Anon, investigative journalist, 21 July 2005.

Albania does not produce an annual report on arms transfers and no interviewee spoke of plans to begin production. However, the head of MEICO stated that MEICO would be able and willing to produce a report along the lines of the UK's Annual report on arms transfers – if requested. At present, there are no legal requirements for Albanian arms transfers to be published for public scrutiny. Yet the Albanian Minister of Defence issued an Order for MEICO to compile and publish a report on all official Albanian arms transfers that took place between 1992 and 2004. The report contains full commercial contracts for imports and exports during this period, and was distributed in 2004 to the President, State Prosecutor's Office, the State Intelligence Service, several ministries, a number of parliamentarians, and several embassies based in Tirana.⁴⁶⁸ It was not intended for public dissemination, and should therefore not be considered a significant document for improving public oversight of SALW transfers. However, even with its limited distribution, one of the main concerns of the head of MEICO is that it could have broken the confidentiality clauses of a number of contracts. Yet, its publication and limited dissemination does demonstrate that Albanian authorities have the capacity to produce a report which details types and quantities of arms exports and their destinations.

Albania reports on SALW issues to the UNDDA on the implementation of the UNPoA on SALW, the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the OSCE's SALW information exchange.⁴⁶⁹ There is also a designated national contact point for SALW issues, which is based within the MOD.⁴⁷⁰ Albania has also applied to join the Wassenaar Arrangement, although some officials are unsure if Albania currently meets the criteria for membership.⁴⁷¹ Albania has aligned itself with the EU Code of Conduct on arms exports,⁴⁷² and with other EU positions on related issues, but has not yet been invited to attend any COARM meetings.

5.1.2 Ministry of Public Order/Ministry of Interior

The following section analyses the role of what was until very recently, the Ministry of Public Order (MOPO). Since this report was written and following the 2005 General Election, the Ministry of Public Order has been replaced by a new Ministry of Interior (MOI). In broad terms, the new MOI assumes all the previous functions of the MOPO as well other responsibilities including those of local government and census.

At the time of writing, planned changes to the structure of the MOI have not been fully implemented and as such the authors believed this section to be accurate. However it is possible that over time there will be changes to the scope of the work undertaken by some departments and divisions within the Ministry as well as likely changes in personnel. Despite this, it is anticipated that the core functions of the ministry with relation to weapons licensing, collection, anti trafficking and law enforcement will remain as has been detailed below.

As well as being responsible for managing its own stocks of weapons, the Ministry is responsible for monitoring and managing civilian possession of registered firearms in Albania, and combating organised crime and arms trafficking.

⁴⁶⁸ Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁶⁹ Albania is also a member of the Treaties on Chemical Weapons, Biological Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005. Albania is also preparing an application to the Australia Group, and has been invited to seminars in Bulgaria and Hungary in preparation for membership. Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁰ At the time of writing two individuals are listed as contacts within the MoD, Col. Niko Nosi and Mr MOD official Asllani. See <http://www.seesac.org/resources/nationalfp.htm>

⁴⁷¹ Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁴⁷² COM Decision No.604, "On the general approval of the EU Code of Conduct for Arms Exports", 28 August 2003.

5.1.2.1 Management of MOI stocks

Record keeping

The MOI has a special section dedicated to monitoring the holdings of SALW in the police force and other ministries.⁴⁷³ All details of police holdings are stored in a computer database and are also backed up with manual record keeping. The information entered into these two systems includes: the weapon's serial number, calibre and make, and details on the police officer to whom it has been registered, including their address and telephone number. However, the computerised system only functions at the central level, and therefore prefecture commissariats and local police stations do not have direct access to this system. This means that the central level's computerised database can be several months behind the information on the ground, due to the time lag between issuing new officers with firearms, disarming individuals leaving the force, and reporting these changes to the central authorities. This is obviously an area that could be rectified, to ensure accurate records and facilitate information exchanges between the central, regional and local levels.

Security

In the opinion of the head of the MOI armoury, the security of storage for SALW at the armoury and most police stations is good.⁴⁷⁴ Police from the audit directorate visit police stations at different levels to check on their security of storage, and ensure that the centrally held records correspond with local holdings. The head of the MOI armoury stated with confidence that he is not aware of any recent cases of weapons being stolen from police stores. This statement appeared to be backed up by research for this report: in Fier, we were informed that there have been no major thefts from the police stores in recent years, although 45 weapons were reported 'lost' between 1997 and 2003.⁴⁷⁵ The head of the MOI armoury informed us that there have been two reported incidents of lost police weapons in the past year. In Tirana, one police officer left his pistol within his commissariat building and another pistol was lost when a police officer was involved in a road accident in Shkodër. Measures have been taken to try to retrieve these pistols and authorities are currently investigating whether to punish the officers involved.

Although police officers can take their side-arms home, their assault rifles must be left in the store when off-duty. At the same time, it has been argued that since 1997, police officers have been made to feel more responsible for their weapons.⁴⁷⁶ They have guidelines on how they should look after their weapons and have had far more training on safe storage and use in comparison to the pre-1997 period.

5.1.2.2 The civilian firearms licensing process

With the exception of a few categories of civilians (e.g. including some businessmen, border inhabitants, MPs drivers) civilians are only permitted to own hunting weapons under the current legislation on weapons possession. To possess a gun legally in Albania, one must make an official request to the local police station, providing the following documentation:

- A certificate containing personal data;
- A medical report that states that you are in good health;
- A statement from a certified doctor declaring that you are not insane;
- A certificate declaring that you have no criminal record, issued by the Ministry of Justice through a local court;

⁴⁷³ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 16 May 2005.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

- A certificate declaring that you are not currently under investigation for a criminal offence, issued by the Ministry of Justice through a local court;
- A certificate declaring that you do not owe any money, which is issued by a bailiff
- For most civilians, a certificate from a local hunting organisation;
- A local police department declaration stating that you are a 'good citizen' and should be permitted to have a licence (this document is supposed to guarantee that you are not involved in blood feuds, squabbles with neighbours etc.).⁴⁷⁷

In addition, the following fees apply for licences for different types of weapons:

- For a pistol: 600 leke;
- For an automatic rifle: 6000 leke;
- For a hunting rifle: 1000 leke.⁴⁷⁸

The application is then assessed by a commission, which comprises the chief of the police commissariat, (who also serves as the commission's chair), the head of the law and order and the head of the crimes departments. Others relevant officials may also be invited to participate in the Commission depending on the type of licence requests that are being assessed. For example, in Fier, when businessmen request a licence for a pistol, the Director of Police for the region joins the assessment commission.⁴⁷⁹

The assessment process usually takes about 30 days. Licences are not issued for a specific period, although they can be annulled at any time at the discretion of the police. If the application is accepted, then authorisation is issued for the applicant to purchase a hunting rifle from a registered gun shop.⁴⁸⁰ A weapon can also be purchased from outside Albania, and in this case the weapon has to be registered at the border crossing point through which it enters the country. Whether the weapon has been purchased inside or outside Albania's borders, it must be registered at a local police station.

According to Illirjan Zaimi, Head of the Sector for Community Policing and Arms Collection, the police have the responsibility to ensure that registered hunting weapons are safely stored in the domestic environment, although they do not have the power to revoke licences or seize weapons if they are not safely stored.⁴⁸¹ A special team of inspectors carry out these checks, based upon lists of all registered weapons-holders. They are supposed to ensure that the barrels of all guns are blocked outside the hunting season (i.e. from 28 February–31 August). It is reported that 2005 is the first year that such checks will be carried out throughout Albania. If a weapon is 'unlocked' outside the hunting season, then it must be reported to the local police station and the reason for the unlocking explained.

According to the household survey undertaken by ISO for this report in 2005, 77.3 percent of respondents believed that gun licences were necessary, although more than half were unable to state whether they thought that gun licences were too expensive or difficult to obtain. There were however, significant regional differences in responses to a number of questions. For example, fourteen percent of respondents in the north stated strongly agreed with the statement that 'gun licenses are not necessary', while only one percent of respondents in the centre strongly agreed with this statement. The table below shows the degree to which total respondents from across the country agreed or disagreed with the various statements:

⁴⁷⁷ This comprehensive list is based upon a number of interviews with MOPO police officials, in which a series of different lists of documents were mentioned. Interviews, Caushaj, 16 May 2005; MoPo official, 14 June 2005; MOPO official, 14 May 2005; MoPo official, 25 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁹ Interviews, MOPO official, 16 May 2005; MoPo official, 14 May 2005.

⁴⁸⁰ There are two gun shops in Shkodër, and they only sell hunting rifles.

⁴⁸¹ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

Table 26: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Gun licences are not necessary	Gun licences are too expensive	Gun licences are too difficult to obtain
Strongly agree	7.6%	10.8%	16.2%
Somehow agree	3.8%	8.3%	8.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	1.7%	5.3%	5.5%
Somehow disagree	4.1%	6.0%	6.1%
Strongly disagree	77.3%	10.5%	9.2%
Don't know	5.2%	56.8%	51.9%
No answer	0.3%	2.3%	3.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

5.1.2.3 Directorate of the Fight against Organised Crime & Witness Protection⁴⁸²

According to the former MOPO's report for its activities in 2004 and prior to the re-organisation of the ministry that followed the 2005 election, the Directorate of the Fight against Organised Crime and Witness Protection was responsible for organising, directing and controlling all police activities in the fight against organised crime, including trafficking activities. The Directorate has six sectors: combating drug trafficking; combating other illegal trafficking, including of weapons, humans, art and cars; money laundering and financial crimes; witness protection; special operations – a support unit; analysis of criminal organisations.

Each of the police headquarters in the 12 Prefectures of Albania also has an Organised Crime division, although they do not necessarily have anyone responsible for all the sections listed above. It is, of course, still early days for a Directorate that has not yet been operating for a year. However, there certainly seem to be high expectations as it is expected to assist with the drafting of relevant legislation, conduct a comprehensive analysis of organised crime activities and groups in Albania, raise police knowledge and capabilities through training in special investigative methods and work on improving inter-agency and international co-operation and information exchanges.

In the opinion of the Director of the Fight against Organised Crime and Witness Protection, these aims pose a number of challenges⁴⁸³ including for example the that inter-agency collaboration within Albania still requires significant development. In particular it appears that there is room for further improvement in collaborative working relations between the Directorate and the National Intelligence Service, General Prosecutor's Office and Customs Directorate as well as with counterparts in other countries and in the provision of training in techniques for tackling organised crime.

The Directorate has only recently begun analysing data on organised crime groups in Albania. This analysis suggests that some groups seem to focus their trafficking activities on single types of 'commodity', mainly humans or drugs. There are also thought to be groups operating in northern Albania, particularly along the border with Montenegro, for whom arms trafficking is their main business. Others though, diversify with trafficking in arms and stolen vehicles depending on the opportunities that trafficking different commodities present at different times.

5.1.2.4 Sector for the Fight against Illegal Trafficking⁴⁸⁴

The Sector for the Fight against Illegal Trafficking is based within the Directorate of the Fight against Organised Crime and Witness Protection, and concentrates its activities on improving methods for tackling organised crime and trafficking in

⁴⁸² The information in this section is taken from: Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; op cit MOPO, pp. 62.

⁴⁸³ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

⁴⁸⁴ The information in this section is taken from: Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; op cit MOPO, pp. 68–71.

humans, drugs, SALW, stolen vehicles and art. As stated earlier, combating trafficking in humans and drugs has been regarded as a major concern in recent years. Therefore, the initial work of this sector has been directed towards drafting strategies and action plans to combat trafficking in these fields. At the same time, the sector is expected to meet the aims of the Directorate by providing training, improving the organisational and operational capabilities of the police in the anti-trafficking sphere and fostering co-operation with other agencies within Albania and neighbouring states. In particular, it is expected to strengthen co-operation with the Serious Crime Prosecution Office and the Task Force for carrying out joint activities regarding events under investigation. As with other units and departments, assistance with training and equipping those engaged in combating trafficking were highlighted as the main challenges and priorities.

5.1.2.5 Central Directorate of Border Police and Migration⁴⁸⁵

The stated purpose of the General Directorate for Border Police and Migration is to improve the efficiency of border management and to tackle illicit trafficking. To meet this aim, the Border Police are not only present at each border crossing point, but also undertake mobile patrols of the sections of Albania's borders without static control facilities. They are currently working with PAMECA officials to assess the implementation of Albania's Integrated Border Management strategy, sea border security and various training plans.

According to the Head of Sector for Border Services, each border crossing point has hard-copy books and manuals containing information on SALW, military equipment and dual-use goods that are subject to export and import controls. Although customs officers are primarily responsible for checking shipments at Albania's borders, Albania's border police also have the legal right to conduct checks of shipments of military equipment and dual-use goods.⁴⁸⁶ However, border service inspections are usually carried out in collaboration with customs officers. If customs officers check a shipment without the presence of a border police officer, it was stated that they would normally pass their information over to the border police.⁴⁸⁷ The practice of performing checks and working in co-operation with members of the customs service at each border crossing point is still relatively new, developing as part of Albania's Integrated Border Management Strategy.

According to one report, the border police currently have 1,682 personnel, with 80 percent reportedly trained by international experts from CAM-A, ICITAP, INTERFORZA, PAMECA and other international missions.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the reported density of the Albanian border police per kilometre of the border falls short of suggested EU levels. For example, good practice in integrated border management suggests an average of two to three border police per kilometre. The levels for Albania's borders are shown in the table below.⁴⁸⁹

Table 27: Number of border police per km

Border with	Montenegro	Kosovo	Macedonia	Greece
Border police per km	0.86	1.85	1.26	1.41

Despite the provision of vehicles and training by international bodies, and plans to develop a strategy for better controls of Albania's land borders, Albanian border police still face an uphill challenge in limiting the volume of unregistered traffic passing

⁴⁸⁵ The information in this section is taken from: Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005; op cit MOPO, pp.77–8.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

⁴⁸⁷ For example, at Rinas airport, there are only customs officers involved in shipment inspections, as the border guards are currently responsible primarily for guarding the airport perimeter and checking passports.

⁴⁸⁸ Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 30.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 29.

through mountain passes and ‘unmanned’ border areas.⁴⁹⁰ For example, while one report argues that it will “always be difficult to control the remote mountainous terrain” of northern Albania,⁴⁹¹ another notes that the southern border contains passes that are only known to locals who may supplement their income by indulging in trafficking or selling the information on these passes to traffickers.⁴⁹² In both reports, the use of various passages for arms trafficking is noted.

However, according to international advisers working on improving Albania’s border services, the sector of the border police that faces the greatest challenges is that which is dedicated to patrolling Albania’s maritime borders.⁴⁹³ In the opinion of these international advisers, there is a worrying lack of trained personnel and equipment deemed necessary for carrying out border service duties. For example, many patrol boats are reportedly not in good working order and there are concerns that the police are not able to pay the fuel costs associated with their use. Deficiencies in this sphere are currently being assessed through an EU-funded project ‘Definition of blue border management system of Albania’, with proposals for improvements expected shortly.⁴⁹⁴

There are also those within Albania’s border police who feel that while border management is an EU priority, it is not treated particularly seriously in Albania at present.⁴⁹⁵ It has been argued that while there is rhetoric on its importance from Albanian authorities, it is not being matched by serious political will. This is perhaps a partial explanation for the fact that the then MOPO had in 2004 only received a fraction of the funds required for implementing Albania’s integrated border management strategy.⁴⁹⁶ For example, while a number of targets for equipment purchases have been declared, it remains to be seen whether the Albanian Government will fund the estimated shortfall in required equipment that is outlined in the table below.⁴⁹⁷ In addition to the equipment included in this table, representatives of both the border and customs services believe that Albania needs more high-tech detection equipment such as mobile scanners for use in enhancing current border controls.⁴⁹⁸

Table 28: Technical resources available to Albanian border police versus desirable levels

Equipment	Vehicles	Vessels	Radar	Watch dogs	Binoculars	Night vision
Actual units in 2004	41	18	28	27	33	3
Desired units	113	32	79	81	182	84

The problem of corruption has been recognised by Albanian authorities and there have been a number of cases of border police being dismissed for corrupt practices in recent years. Yet despite this positive action, corruption continues to be regarded as a serious problem for the image of the border police.⁴⁹⁹ Of particular concern are border police working at the ports of Durrës and Vlorë and at Rinas airport. The main concerns at these ports appear to be that some border police have been willing to accept payments in return for allowing the use of falsified travel documents.

It has been argued that because police officers are frequently transferred to and from border police posts, corrupt practices are still considered to be a ‘perk of the job’ and as such are condoned, with officers being moved to other police sections rather than being dismissed and prosecuted if found guilty of corruption.⁵⁰⁰ Compounding the

⁴⁹⁰ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁴⁹¹ Op cit International Crisis Group, 2004, p. 13.

⁴⁹² ‘Report Details Increase in Circulation of Illegal Weapons in Greece’, FBIS-EEU-2001-0419, *Athens To Vima*, in Greek, 19 April 01 p A15 [FBIS Translated Text]. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

⁴⁹³ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁴⁹⁴ This project is being implemented by ICMPD (International Centre for Migration and Police Development), an NGO that is based in Austria.

⁴⁹⁵ Comment made during a workshop on Integrated Border Management. Interview 28 April 2005

⁴⁹⁶ Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 31.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 30.

⁴⁹⁸ Interviews, Customs official, 4 May 2005; MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

⁴⁹⁹ Op cit MOPO, p. 106.

⁵⁰⁰ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

problem, the fact that police officers are moved into and out of the border police from other police sections is considered detrimental to anti-trafficking efforts because it also means that police officers trained to undertake border police duties may be transferred to for instance, traffic police or community policing, thus effectively ‘wasting’ their training, a concern highlighted by a number of Albanian and international interviewees. As an illustration of this problem, it appears to be the case that as a consequence of the loss of skilled personnel, high-tech equipment stands idle in some cases because the officers trained to use the equipment have been transferred, and no other officer at the particular border crossing point has had the requisite training.⁵⁰¹ However, if officers were simply moved from one border crossing point to another, rather than to entirely different duties then training and skills would not be lost. It could also be argued that such transfers could be used as one means of counter-ing corruption and ensuring that traffickers are not able to establish a ‘relationship’ with particular border police officers.

5.1.3 The General Directorate of Customs⁵⁰²

The Government anticipates that by 2007 Albania’s customs legislation will be consistent with all EU standards. The operational structures and procedures of the General Directorate of Customs that are already in place are largely EU-compatible, thanks in a large part to the assistance rendered by the EC’s Customs Assistance Mission – Albania (CAM-A), which has been in Albania since 1997.⁵⁰³

The Customs Directorate has three divisions:

- Information division, with operative and risk analysis sections;
- Investigative division;
- Anti-smuggling division for land borders, sea borders and an anti-trafficking unit.

In addition, there is a separate sector for checking shipments in areas that are not classified as border areas.

Information on each SALW shipment is manually entered into hard-copy record books at the border crossing point, so that for example, shipments of arms and ammunition should be recorded with details of marking, types of arms and equipment and volume recorded in books that are kept in storage and archived. There are only five border crossing points where a computerised database is currently operational, although apparently all twenty-five border crossing points will eventually be online, when data on shipments will then entered directly into the computerised database and sent to a central server. The customs services have already implemented about 80 percent of Automated SYstem of CUstoms Data Management (ASYCUDA ++) to assist with carrying out risk assessments of declaration and communication between local and national levels. This system helps to identify shipments that merit further documentary reviews or physical inspections. They are now uploading data into the databases from their old hard-copy files and installing risk profiling software and their own profiles, which they hope will help them to reach better judgements on when to make physical checks. In 2004, around six percent of all cargo shipments (including in some cases, transit shipments) were subjected to physical checks, excluding controls that took place at border crossing points for passenger traffic. It is unclear if all legal shipments of arms and ammunition are amongst the shipments checked.

International observers have argued that there is relative stability, improving professionalism, and more institutionalisation within the customs directorate than previously.⁵⁰⁴ In fact, it has been argued that procedures within the customs directorate are probably more institutionalised than in other state agencies, where political

⁵⁰¹ Interviews, international official, 27 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁵⁰² The information in this section is taken from: Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

⁵⁰³ Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

allegiance and patronage are still considered to be problematic.⁵⁰⁵ One of the factors that has undoubtedly helped bring about these changes is the fact that customs officers are paid more than their counterparts in the police and other state sectors. International advisers, such as CAM-A (see below), have stated that they pushed hard for performance-related pay measures to be introduced as one of the main means of combating corruption. This has meant that customs officers can now receive a decent standard of living without resorting to taking bribes. It is for reasons such as these that the customs service appears now to be attracting better quality recruits, and corruption problems are decreasing significantly – when compared with other state agencies.

Another measure adopted to counter corruption in the customs service is the rotation of customs staff *between* the different border crossing points. This measure has been adopted to ensure that officers are not so susceptible to the opportunities for corruption on offer. This also has the advantage that the customs service is directly responsible to the central authorities in Tirana and not to regional directors often with differing approaches and attitudes towards corruption. As stated above, this is seen as a particular problem for the border police, where rotations mean moving police officers from the border police perhaps into a different police section where their skills and experience are often not as relevant.

One of the areas that was highlighted in interviews as of considerable importance for the Albanian customs services' fight against trafficking, is the provision of scanners for personal luggage and cargo shipments. At Rinas airport they use a scanner to assist with the detection of explosives, arms and military equipment. In Durrës port, they also use scanners for personal luggage, and hope to have two mobile scanners installed for inspecting cargo shipments, including containers, in 2005. This purchase will be funded by the Albanian Government, with the aim of improving shipment controls and checks, including the pace of checks. They have also identified two customs points with Montenegro in need of scanners, and also believe that all of the border crossing points in Kukës require scanners, along with selected sites on the border with Greece. It is envisaged that in the short to medium term at least, the mobile scanners could be utilized. At present, most shipment checks at border crossing points are carried out by endoscopes and mirrors.

5.1.4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

The Directorate of Integration within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is charged with channelling information to and from international and regional bodies (including the EU, UN and OSCE) and other states to those Ministries directly responsible for SALW issues within Albania. Therefore, for example, information for the OSCE SALW Document is forwarded from MEICO and the MOD to the MFA and is then passed on to the OSCE.⁵⁰⁶ The MFA also updates the MOD regarding lists of military equipment and dual-use goods from the EU and Wassenaar Arrangement, and states subject to embargos from the EU and UN.⁵⁰⁷ In effect, the MFA serves as a clearing house for SALW and military equipment information exchanges, with the compilation of information and the implementation of international obligations largely falling on the shoulders of MOD officials.

The MFA has responsibility for representing Albania in international decision making and discussion for a on SALW related issues. For instance, MFA representatives from Tirana and the UN Mission comprised the delegation at the 2005 UN Biennial Meeting of States to consider implementation of the UN SALW Programme of Action. However, at the operational level this is not necessarily the case, with for instance the Ministry of Interior acting as lead ministry for the SECI SALW Task Force.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

It is envisaged that the role played by the MFA in relation to arms transfers will change if the planned new legislation is agreed and comes into force. Should this happen then the MFA will become directly involved in the export licensing process in place of the Ministry of Defence, which currently plays the lead role on this issue.

5.1.5 Public awareness raising and the role of NGOs

Over recent years there has been significant involvement of local NGOs and civil society in SALW control projects in Albania. This involvement has occurred primarily through the UNDP's projects, beginning with the use of local NGOs and community representatives (as noted above) in the Gramsh Pilot Project (GPP) and continuing in the Weapons in Exchange for Development (WED), SALWC and SSSR projects.

During the GPP a network of NGOs was established. This network continued to work with the UNDP during the WED project, and some members continued similar activities with the SALWCP. The SALWCP employed several NGOs to assist in the delivery of the project's awareness-raising messages, providing an additional channel of information delivery. NGOs worked on a voluntary or contractual basis producing materials, organising events and implementing development projects.⁵⁰⁸

Despite this useful contribution to specific projects, civil society and specifically NGO groups have found it difficult to sustain their activities outside of the specific projects that they have been funded to participate in. This is in most part due to the fact that most NGOs that have been involved in SALW control activities rely completely on the funds they receive for their involvement. This leaves little room for generating local activities and ensures that to a large extent the NGO community is donor driven, with it being very difficult for NGOs to attract funding for their own separate activities. This has led in some cases to a possible distortion in the types of activities that have been organised by NGOs; according to one representative, most of the civil society activities undertaken in this sphere have been directed towards the donor community and other NGOs rather than towards those people who might be tempted to use SALW to resolve disputes or sell them.⁵⁰⁹

Although the UNDP no longer assists with public awareness raising on SALW collection, it remains an important sponsor and supporter of NGO activities connected with SALW controls. Thus, as part of UNDP Albania's current SSSR project, educational work on security and peace education is being carried out in schools. For example, from 15th May to 15th July 2003, the Movement for Disarmament and Safer-Albania ran a pilot project entitled 'Disarmament Education and Peaceful Culture' (DEPC), which gave classes covering topics including the dangers of trafficking in drugs, humans and SALW, prostitution and general SALW concerns at two schools in Shkodër and two schools in Tirana. Some of the classes on SALW were given by police officers, with innovative teaching methods, group discussions and electronic media also being employed in the dissemination of information to the 2,200 teachers and students involved in the pilot project.⁵¹⁰ It is believed that an effective model has now been developed for the expansion of this project.⁵¹¹

Other work is being undertaken in schools by the Albanian Peace and Disarmament Education Centre on small arms and disarmament issues within a broader framework of peace education. This work focuses on developing older students' awareness of problems through debates and 'shadow' public policy work and the capacity building of teachers to undertake longer-term peace education activities.⁵¹² In co-operation with the Institute for Pedagogical Studies (ISP), they have trained eight teachers in

⁵⁰⁸ SALWCP 2002–2003 page, <www.undp.org.al>, accessed 02 February 2005.

⁵⁰⁹ Interview, NGO representative, 21 July 2005.

⁵¹⁰ Movement for Disarmament and Safer-Albania, Final Report on the Implementation of the Project 'Disarmament Education and Peaceful Culture (DEPC)', (Tirana, United Nations Development Programme, Support to Security Sector Reform, July 2003).

⁵¹¹ Interview, NGO representative, 21 April 2005.

⁵¹² Interview, NGO representative, 8 February 2005.

Gramsh and Shkodër, who were certified as national trainers in peace education during 2004. These teachers have participated in several peace education workshops during the past two years and have formulated peace education activities for the teachers' manual 'Towards a culture of peace,' a chapter of which has been incorporated into the National Manual for Secondary School Teachers.

One Albanian NGO utilises the expertise of retired Albanian EOD personnel to provide a number of services relating to demilitarisation, including training and EOD. The National Demilitarisation Centre (NDC) was established as an NGO in January 2003, and has around 250 members nationwide. NDC's members are former military personnel, in particular former military engineers, and they are mainly based in Berat, Elbasan, Gjirokaster, Korçe, Kukës, Shkodër and Tirana.⁵¹³ In 2003, they detonated 352 tonnes of ammunition for a US-funded project at a cost of US\$157 per tonne. Since 2003, they have been contributing to the NAMSALW Ammunition Demilitarisation Project by providing verification services, training drivers to transport to demilitarisation sites, carrying out inspections of demilitarisation sites and re-packaging 900 tonnes of ammunition.

The media in Albania plays an important part in the nations' political life. The analysis of media coverage for this survey demonstrates that SALW related issues do receive significant coverage. In the majority of cases however this coverage focuses on scandal and human interest rather than investigating specific cases in a detailed and measured manner. There are clearly significant challenges relating to the way in which much of the media treats arms and security related issues and it would appear that engaging with senior editors and proprietors is as important as training for journalists for example, as there are numerous cases of media coverage being driven by political expediency rather than objective reporting.

5.1.6 Interagency co-operation

The previous Government took some steps towards improved coordination by working in co-operation with the Belgrade-based SEESAC to develop a national strategy on SALW control. This document, which contained sections on awareness-raising and collection and destruction as its priorities also envisaged the creation of a national SALW commission and a national action plan.⁵¹⁴ The draft strategy had not been approved by parliament prior to the July 2005 elections and does not appear to be a current priority for the Government. However, it is critical that such a document is prepared by all relevant ministries and interested others to act as a guide for addressing the SALW-related challenges that Albania faces. It is anticipated that this Survey will act as a valuable piece of management information in the development of such a national strategy, which the authors believe should be developed and implemented under the guidance of a national SALW commission.

Challenges relating to inter-ministerial and inter-agency co-operation are highlighted by the difference in many cases between the letter of the various relevant regulations and Council of Ministers Decisions and reality, which in practice often leaves a lot to be desired. In many cases, it appears that this lack of coordination is in part a consequence of the high turnover of personnel in many key departments responsible for security and small arms control. Many staff do not remain in post for long, presenting challenges for developing good working relationships with counterparts in other departments and ministries. It also causes problems regarding the development of institutional capacity, gaining historical knowledge and liaising effectively with national and international partners.⁵¹⁵ Three case studies of SALW-related areas of governance are presented below to demonstrate some of the differences between the letter of the regulations and their application with regard to interagency co-operation.

⁵¹³ Interview, NGO representative, 25 April 2005.

⁵¹⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

⁵¹⁵ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

The first case relates to a proposal to increase the interagency component of the import and export control system. The second case makes some general comments on Albanian implementation of integrated border management. The third case discusses the weapons collection procedures in Albania.

5.1.6.1 Transfer control system

At present, most of the decisions relating to Albania's imports and exports of SALW and military equipment are taken within the MOD. Only MEICO has the right to apply for a licence to import or export a shipment of military equipment, SALW and/or ammunition. Although the MOD reportedly consults with the MFA regarding a recipient's international embargo status or the risk of diversion or threat to national or international security, there would seem to be very little interagency co-operation involved in arms transfers. For the head of MEICO, one of the advantages of this system is that decisions on applications can be taken quickly, although he also complained that a lack of interagency co-operation means that MEICO transfers can suffer long delays at customs points.⁵¹⁶

This situation could change if proposals for an inter-ministerial import and export committee are implemented. It has been proposed that such a committee would be headed by the MFA and will become ultimately responsible for deciding upon licence applications.⁵¹⁷ The committee will consist of representatives from different state agencies, such as the MOD, MOI, the General Directorate of Customs and representatives of other relevant state agencies. There is also a desire for the inter-ministerial committee to meet regularly, although it is not clear whether there would be legal stipulations for regular meetings. However, it is believed by many that that it would be appropriate to remove controls from the MOD as this would bring Albania more into line with the mechanisms of other states and increase compliance with EU norms and standards.⁵¹⁸

A number of teething problems are envisaged with the proposed structural changes to the Albanian export control system. For example, MFA officials informed the research team that the MFA only has a small team that explores and advises on licence applications at present.⁵¹⁹ The transfer oversight body will therefore require training to become fully operational and secondments from MOD staff to the MFA may be necessary. International observers concur that the MFA could be understaffed for carrying out import and export overview tasks.⁵²⁰ International assistance for assisting with checking and monitoring end-users, pre- and post- shipment checks should therefore be expected to continue. However, one of the dangers is that the inter-ministerial committee will look impressive for international donors on paper, but will not necessarily be implemented to improve interagency co-operation on the ground and therefore will do little to prevent diversions of arms to illicit end-users.

5.1.6.2 Integrated Border Management⁵²¹

There have been a number of inter-ministerial and inter-agency MOUs signed in relation to co-operation on anti-trafficking and border management. For example, according to one interviewee, MOUs have been signed between the General Directorate of Customs the MOD, MOI, national intelligence service, agriculture, business agencies, and other organisations that need to deal with customs.⁵²² Yet perhaps the

⁵¹⁶ The head of MEICO also suggested that these delays occurred because MEICO could not bribe customs officials to speed up the process – something which he believes private firms are willing and able to do. Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

⁵¹⁷ According to one MFA official, this change was proposed by US officials. Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁵¹⁸ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOD official, 27 April 2005.

⁵¹⁹ Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁵²⁰ Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

⁵²¹ This section is based on interviews with: international official, 27 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁵²² Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

most prominent and far-reaching example is the Strategy on Border Control and its Integrated Management, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2003 and is to be implemented between 2003 and 2006. Its two main aims are:

- To improve co-operation between different agencies within Albania – e.g. customs, border police, intelligence services;
- To improve co-operation with neighbours and EU states.

To meet these aims, Albanian authorities have had to improve legislation, and reform organisational structures, personnel training and equipment purchases. Thus, in 2003 the border police and customs officers began to develop joint task forces for the fight against trafficking, and are now discussing the joint organisation of Albania's border crossing points with the border police. It is hoped that this will improve:

- Controls – by increasing the exploitation of each service's intelligence capacities;
- Checks – by ensuring they work more closely together;
- Efficiency – by ensuring they share resources at each border crossing point for equipment purchases, rather than making purchases for each service.

Since spring 2005, the border police and customs have been working with PAMECA and CAM-A on a review of their progress. There have been some fairly positive assessments of efforts in which customs and border police officers have been working together. For example, a recent experiment in Durrës port is regarded by CAM-A officials as a suitable model for rolling out to other border crossing points in Albania. In their opinion, inter-agency co-operation has improved greatly at this particular border crossing point, with initial resistance to changing working patterns eventually overcome. However, they point out that much remains to be done to achieve integrated border management, particularly in tackling corruption in the border and customs services.

Others do not share the positive experiences and optimism of CAM-A, arguing that inter-agency co-operation between the border police and customs is still a significant problem.⁵²³ One set of international advisers have argued that CAM-A's initiative on joint border and customs service organised crime units has a limited presence and relies too much upon personal rather than institutionalised relations.⁵²⁴ They go on to mention a number of barriers that need to be broken down for institutionalised relations to be established. These include trying to overcome the jealousy that the border police feel towards their counterparts in customs. The border police know that customs officers can earn bonuses, and thereby higher salaries than border police officers, although they may do many of the same tasks day-to-day. The introduction of performance-related pay for customs officers may be playing a beneficial role in combating corruption and improving professionalism within the customs service, but it appears to be an obstacle to closer border-customs service co-operation. In general it was reported that the border officers had feelings of inferiority, compounded by the high staff turnover.

It remains to be seen how progress towards integrated border management will be assessed in 2006, but while there appears to be positive pockets of progress, dividing lines between the personnel of different state agencies remain. These are not only due to pay levels, but are no doubt also linked to structural divisions that will require more than three years to overcome fully. Progress towards the goals of integrated border management will also require more than greater financial support, it will also require more reliable and steady political support.

⁵²³ Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 31; Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁵²⁴ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

5.1.6.3 SALW collection

Interagency co-operation in the field of weapons collection is discussed in section 6.

5.1.7 International co-operation

5.1.7.1 Bilateral co-operation

According to the former MOPO's annual report for 2004, international agreements on police co-operation and co-operation against organised crime were signed in 2004 with the Governments of Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia and the UK. In addition to these agreements, MOI has developed relations and cooperated on a number of projects with international partners.⁵²⁵ The General Directorate of Customs has signed fourteen bi-lateral agreements with customs agencies in other states in the SEE region and beyond.⁵²⁶

In general, bi-lateral information exchanges with central and local border and customs authorities in Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro are regarded as positive and functioning well.⁵²⁷ For example, in 2004, the Albanian customs service had 7,000 communications with its Italian counterparts and 5,000 with its Greek counterparts at the central level. Albanian customs authorities reportedly hold institutionalised meetings with their counterparts in neighbouring states and Kosovo every three months, with additional meetings held if requested. At the border points meetings take place each month, chaired by the heads of the customs point for each side of the border. These are treated as opportunities for exchanging information on the types of goods being trafficked, the profiles of traffickers and information on suspected traffickers.⁵²⁸

Similar arrangements are in place for the border services, with multi-level contact points established at all levels from the border point to the central levels with each of Albania's neighbours. Thus, for example, meetings between Albanian and Macedonian border staff take place every two weeks at the local level, with monthly meetings at the regional level and quarterly meetings at the central level. It was stated that there are almost daily communications by telephone and email between border police officers on the two sides of the border, which are logged and archived, with information then passed on to Albanian agencies if the information is likely to be of interest. Arben Hanelli, Head of the Sector for Border Services, also stressed that there are good personal relations between staff at different levels. In his opinion, this is an essential basis for co-operation and trust.⁵²⁹ In addition to this coordinated communication and information sharing there are also regular joint patrols of Albania's coastline with the Greek and Italian coast guards, although as with its 'green borders' there are also reported problems arising from cooperative border patrols.⁵³⁰

As stated above, the Albanian MOD also maintains informal bilateral co-operation with the UK and US Governments through their embassies in Tirana, as it reportedly consults with embassy staff when considering whether to grant export licence applications for military equipment and dual-use goods.

⁵²⁵ This is a list of international partners that actively cooperated with the then MOPO in 2004: AEPC (Association of European Police Colleges), DCAF (Democratic Control of the Armed Forces), DEA, Europol, FBI, French Police, General Secretariat of Interpol, Greek Police, ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Programme), INTERFORZE (Bilateral police mission Italy – Albania), ICMPD (International Centre for the Migration Policy Development), IOM (International Organisation for Migration), Italian Police, Macedonian Police, Montenegro Police, OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), PAMECA (Police Assistance Mission of the European community to Albania), UK Police, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Organised Crime), UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), US Department of Justice (Organised Crime Desk) – Department of Justice of the USA (Organised Crime Office). Source: Ibid, p. 161.

⁵²⁶ Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

⁵²⁷ Interviews, Customs official, 4 May 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; MOPO official, 25 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁵²⁸ Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

⁵²⁹ Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

⁵³⁰ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

5.1.7.2 Multilateral co-operation

Albania reports on SALW issues to:

- The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA),
- the UN Register of Conventional Arms
- the OSCE's SALW Programme information exchange.⁵³¹

As stated previously in this report in section 5.1.6.6 Albania has identified a national focal point as part of its commitment to the South Eastern Europe Stability pact Regional Implementation Plan which is currently based within the MOD.

The Albanian Government views multilateral co-operation on arms and security issues as a vital element of aligning itself with Euro-Atlantic institutions. This can be evidenced by its interest in joining the Wassenaar Arrangement and its desire to demonstrate its commitment to reform on issues relating to arms export control through support for the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. This public support for developing effective arms controls as a step towards Europe in particular is to be welcomed and is in some cases reflected by evidence of change at the operational level. This said, there is still much to be done by the Government to realise its commitment to multilateral co-operation on arms control issues. For example, without the agreement and implementation of new legislation relating to arms transfers, which includes regulation of brokering activity, transit and licensed production as well as the establishment of a criteria based licensing regime, it is very difficult to imagine how, even with the best of intentions that the Government could honour its commitment to implement the spirit of the EU Code of Conduct.

Aside from arms control-specific co-operation, Albania also participates in a number of regional anti-trafficking, border security and anti-organised-crime initiatives as well as international conventions relating to customs duties.⁵³² These include the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organisation (BESC),⁵³³ the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Ohrid Border Security and Management Common Platform and the SECI Regional Centre for Combating Transnational Crime, where an Albanian official heads the task force dealing with SALW. As part of this latter the official has developed and managed 'Operation Ploughshares' (2002–3) and 'Operation Safe Place' (2004–5), two information exchange exercises on SALW seizures in SEE.⁵³⁴

However, despite these positive demonstrations of progress there are examples, particularly within Albania's borders, where multilateral co-operation in the field of anti-trafficking has been less successful, including the (now closed) anti trafficking centre in Vlorë. The centre was established with the support of German, Greek and Italian Governments, but has since struggled to measure up to expectations. Its alleged problems include: claims from each participant that others have not always fully engaged in information exchanges; claims that the centre is constrained by a large bureaucratic burden; complaints that the centre suffers from a lack of important equipment including communication and detection equipment; and possibly most serious and most legitimate, the fact that Vlorë is no longer regarded as a significant

⁵³¹ Albania is also a member of the Treaties on Chemical Weapons, Biological Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005. Albania is also preparing an application to the Australia Group, and has been invited to seminars in Bulgaria and Hungary in preparation for membership. Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

⁵³² Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

⁵³³ Albania has signed the 'Additional Protocol on the Fight against Terrorism of the Agreement among the Governments of the Member States of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation in the fight against crime, particularly its organised forms'. Source: Op cit MOPO, pp. 24, 48 and 50.

⁵³⁴ This planning workshop for 'Operation Safe Place' was held in Tirana in December 2004, and preceded the launch of this information exchange exercise. Source: 'Task Force – combating Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives: Project I, Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives, Operation Ploughshares', Project document, SECI Regional Centre and Ministry of Public Order, Tirana, 2002.

site for trafficking, as there has been a significant decline in the number of speedboats using this part of the coastline for trafficking people across the Adriatic.⁵³⁵

5.2 International assistance

Since 1991, Albania has received significant levels of international financial and technical assistance in a number of fields relating to SALW control. Although levels of assistance have decreased, substantial sums continue to be spent by international donors in Albania. This section of the report focuses on three of the areas in which international assistance has been provided:

1. Surplus SALW and ammunition destruction and stockpile management⁵³⁶
2. Border management and anti-trafficking
3. Weapons collection

5.2.1 International assistance: surplus SALW and ammunition destruction and stockpile management

Since 2000, the Albanian Government and international donors have funded the destruction of around 141,000 SALW in Albania. In September 2000, the Albanian MOD signed a Memorandum with the Governments of Germany, Norway and the USA, agreeing to the destruction of 100,000 SALW. This was seen as an example of Albania reaffirming its commitment to destroy the SALW looted during the 1997 crisis, committing itself to promoting the destruction of surplus weapon stocks and contributing towards the security pillar of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.⁵³⁷ Based upon this memorandum, the Albanian Armed Forces provided 100,000 surplus SALW units for internationally-funded destruction projects in 2001. The German Government funded a German military team to destroy 40,000 SALW between January and March 2001, with a joint US-Norwegian funded project destroying a further 60,000 SALW. This latter project was run by a private contractor, EOD Solutions Ltd, and commenced in May 2001.

Table 29: Summary of SALW and ammunition destruction in Albania 1997–2004

Destruction activity	SALW	Ammunition (tonnes)	Remarks
UNDP WED Project (2000/2002)	16,000	N/A	Destroyed by Albanian agency
Germany Project (2001/2002)	40,000	N/A	Destroyed by German Military Team
Norway/USA Project (2001/2002)	60,000	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited
UK funded-destruction (2003/2004)	12,500	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited
US funded-destruction (2003/2004)	12,500	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited – ongoing
Albanian Armed Forces (2001–2004)		26,473	
NATO PFP APM Destruction Project (2001/2002)		2,874	NAMSA
NATO SEE Initiative Project (2003–2004)		1,475	NAMSA
US and UK funded destruction (2002–2004)		1,229	EOD Solutions Limited.
Total (not including ongoing projects)	141,000	32,052	

⁵³⁵ Interviews, International official, 21 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official, 22 April 2005. See also: 'Italian Ambassador Criticizes Vlore Anti-trafficking Center', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 5–11 March 2005. Source: Shekulli, 9 March 2005.

⁵³⁶ International assistance with regard to ammunition destruction is discussed in section 6.1.3.

⁵³⁷ 'Small Arms/Light Weapons Destruction in Albania memorandum', Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State, <www.state.gov>. See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

EOD Solutions Ltd were required to destroy a wide variety of SALW, ranging from pistols and assault rifles to recoilless rifles, heavy calibre machine guns and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launchers.⁵³⁸ In addition to the two EOD Solutions Ltd British technical experts, nine Albanians were employed and trained to demilitarise the surplus SALW to meet the contract's local capacity-building component. The preferred method for demilitarising the SALW was to cut the weapons through the barrel, the working parts and/or the trigger mechanism. If a bayonet was fitted to the SALW, this was also cut. This contract also included the further development of the demilitarisation site at Mengel military base near Elbasan.

In 2004 the AAF and EOD Solutions undertook a further project to destroy first 12,500 SALW, with funds from the UK Government via its embassy in Tirana, and then 12,500 more with funding from the US Government.⁵³⁹ The same methods and personnel employed in the 2001 projects were again utilised, although refresher training was also included in this package. Again the types of SALW destroyed varied from pistols to heavy machine guns. However, a number of weapons that were supposed to be destroyed were actually saved from the cutting process due to their significant historical value. According to EOD Solutions Ltd, due to the discovery of a number of historically significant weapons amongst those destined for destruction, a special commission was established to assess the preserved weapons for displaying in the Albanian military museum.⁵⁴⁰

However, officials from the US Embassy also informed the research team of outstanding concerns relating to Albanian SALW destruction. In early 2005, the Albanian Government approached the OSCE for funds to destroy 10,000 surplus SALW.⁵⁴¹ The OSCE approached a number of its members for funding in this area, including the USA. The USA could not understand where the figure of 10,000 SALW had come from however, as previous documents submitted to the OSCE and other international organisations did not reveal their existence. Furthermore, earlier requests to the Albanian MOD for SALW to be destroyed had been met with a response that surplus stocks had been exhausted. There still appears to be a degree of confusion on this point at the time of writing.

Surplus ammunition also poses a significant problem. In 2000 the Albanian armed forces calculated that their stores contained an excess of 117,476 tonnes of ammunition. This figure was reduced to 85,424 by the end of 2004 as a result of destruction activities carried out by the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF), EOD Solutions Ltd, NAMSA and the National Demilitarisation Centre (NDC).⁵⁴² In 2004 NDC repackaged 900 tonnes of loose ammunition for incineration by NAMSA.⁵⁴³ The organisation has also provided verification and auditing services for NAMSA during destruction of MoD ammunition stocks. Work has also been undertaken to improve the MoD's capacity to deal with surplus ammunition. In 2003 the US funded EOD Solutions to provide technical assistance to ammunition experts within the Albanian MOD. NATO has also provided \$2.5 million to install an incinerator at the weapons destruction facility in Elbasan, which after initial delays, is to start operating in late 2005.⁵⁴⁴

In 2004 the MOD developed a strategy for disposing of ammunition surpluses that specifies destruction priorities, methods and costs, and identifies particular stores for destruction. Although the strategy is awaiting formal approval and is not fully funded, it is already being used to guide work in this field.⁵⁴⁵ Ammunition destruction is,

⁵³⁸ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005; See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

⁵³⁹ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOD officials, 17 March 2005; international official, 19 April 2005.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005; See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

⁵⁴² According to statistics provided by the Albanian MoD, in the period 2001–2004, AAF destroyed 26,473 tonnes of ammunition (11,404 in 2004), NAMSA destroyed 2874 tonnes of anti-personnel mines and 1,475 tonnes of ammunition (1,440 in 2004) and EOD Solutions Ltd destroyed 1,229 tonnes of ammunition (330 in 2004).

⁵⁴³ Interview, international official, 18 March 2005.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid; interview with MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

however, gradually becoming more difficult since many of the easiest and cheapest items have already been dealt with, leaving increasing stocks of more technically challenging rounds (e.g. medium artillery and mortar rounds). With cost per item rising, donor interest in SALW destruction is also dropping off.⁵⁴⁶ At the same time, other surplus military hardware is considered a higher priority for destruction. For example, the US is now highlighting destruction programmes for chemical weapons, sea mines and torpedoes.

The challenges faced by the Albanian military regarding the safe stockpiling of its active and surplus SALW and ammunition are documented elsewhere in this report (see section 5.1.1.2). Over recent years there had been some international assistance to support stockpile management and safety programmes in Albania. However this support has not been commensurate with either the size or scale of the problem, due to historically poor stockpile management compounded by additional storage needs driven by recent and ongoing military downsizing. The Albanian military has received assistance from the international community in adapting its storage system to achieve NATO-compatibility. The UK contractor EOD Solutions advised the MoD in the process of moving the old system closer to the NATO-based structure of ammunition management planning. This was achieved using NATO guidelines on ammunition storage, combined with the current Albanian system, as a stepping-stone to full integration with NATO systems. The company also 'licensed' six storage sites in accordance with NATO and UK guidelines in order to assist the Albanian MOD in planning the future storage of ammunition. These sites will not, however, conform fully to NATO/UK standards until the backlog of surplus ammunition is reduced and additional space becomes available. The Albanian armed forces have also received bilateral support in this area. During 2004 the US funded a project to increase security of MANPAD stockpiles, and three fences now surround the storage site in question with five keys needed to enter the facility.⁵⁴⁷ While a great deal of goodwill and commitment to improving practices exists, it seems clear that much additional support from the international community is still required

Table 30: International assistance for enhancing SALW and ammunition stockpile management and security

Project	Implementer	Donor
Albania		
Safe storage (explosives, SA ammunition) May 2002	NATO HQ	NATO
Safe storage (explosives, SA ammunition) ongoing	EOD Solutions Ltd	US

5.2.2 International assistance: border management and anti-trafficking

In early 2002, an initiative was launched to improve the coordination of international donor assistance to Albania in fields relating to border management and trafficking. An 'International Consortium' of the main international donors and Albanian partner agencies was established, which apparently meets regularly to inform each other of current and planned projects, explore opportunities to combine funds and avoid duplication of projects and provision of training.⁵⁴⁸ In 2004, a large number of donations, programmes and training projects were undertaken by international partners with the then MOPO which involved €4,117,921 in international assistance.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview, international official, 18 March 2005.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview, MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

⁵⁴⁸ The partners in the international consortium include: Albanian General Directorate of Customs, Albanian Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation, Albanian Ministry of Public Order, Albanian State Police, CAM-A, Council of Europe, Embassy of France, Embassy of Germany, Embassy of Greece, Embassy of Italy, Embassy of Turkey, Embassy of the UK, Embassy of the USA, ICITAP, ICMPD, Interforze, IOM, OPDAT, OSCE Presence in Albania, PAMECA, Save the Children, UNDP, UNHCR, UNODC.

Table 31: Value of international assistance to MOPO in 2004⁵⁴⁹

Donor	Value (€)
ICITAP mission	1,300,000 (US\$1,620,000)
EU PHARE project	1,455,764
EU CARDS program	550,000
OSCE	120,000
Italian Government	570,000
French Interpol	72,157
German Government	50,000
Total	4,117,921

The following activities were undertaken in 2004 with the co-operation of the Directorate for Border Police and Migration. They give an indication of the variety of interested parties and the range of their activities.⁵⁵⁰

- The IOM and Albanian police academy trained 175 personnel of middle rank from Border and Migration Police on anti-trafficking issues;
- Two training courses were carried out with Interforce on the use of radar;
- The EU Delegation to Albania provided a number of border crossing points with inspection equipment;
- The OSCE Presence in Albania donated a radio communication network and supplementary equipment for the Border Police (est. value €120,000).

5.2.2.1 ICITAP

ICITAP started work in Albania in 1998 and in 2000 the programme began to operate from a base within Albania. It has used around US\$8 million for various projects focusing upon anti-trafficking measures and border security.⁵⁵¹ The main projects thus far are:

- The ‘Three Port Strategy’ (see below)
- TIMS (Total Information Management System)
- Technical assistance on the anti-trafficking and organised crime strategies

The ‘Three Port Strategy’ is being implemented in collaboration with other members of the international consortium. ICITAP is advising on ways to improve security and anti-trafficking measures at Rinas airport and the Durrës and Vlorë sea ports. The main emphasis has been on providing equipment and training to personnel, including training dogs for detecting drugs and explosives. With the privatisation of Rinas airport and the World Bank’s assistance programme for enabling container traffic to pass through the port of Durrës, the security needs of Albania’s ports are changing and each security at each port will need to be enhanced to meet new demands in this sphere. Apparent delays in the delivery of some of the projects that comprise this Strategy appear to be in part at least due to a lack of priority afforded to implementation by Government officials.

TIMS is a computerised data system that consists of four elements:

- Border control information system – i.e. keeping records of border crossings
- Case management
- Criminal intelligence
- Criminal databases

TIMS is being installed at all Albania’s border crossing points and a number of police stations – in total in 64 sites across Albania. The project is being co-funded by the EU

⁵⁴⁹ Op cit MOPO, p. 93.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 77–8.

⁵⁵¹ Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 32.

CARDS programme and ICITAP has so far provided US\$1,500,000 towards the installation of the necessary equipment. It is hoped that once it is fully operational, TIMS will significantly reduce opportunities for corruption and enable central authorities to analyse trafficking and organised crime data far more quickly and efficiently than at present.

In addition ICITAP has one adviser in the office of the Prime Minister, tasked with assisting Albania implement its anti-trafficking strategy and one adviser placed with the organised crime unit. The former has been tasked with improving the co-ordination of efforts to tackle trafficking, organised crime, corruption and other issues in this sphere. The latter adviser has been working with the Task Force on organised crime to improve anti-organised crime and trafficking measures in the priority areas of Durrës, Fier, Shkodër, Tirana and Vlorë.

5.2.2.2 The EU

In the recent past, the EU appears to have prioritised funding on issues relating to Justice and Home Affairs in Albania, with missions on improving customs (CAM-A) and police (PAMECA) capabilities providing various training programmes and equipment for Albania's border security and law enforcement agencies accounting for a large proportion of EU funding in Albania.⁵⁵² The EU's CARDS programme for Albania for the period 2001–6 has focused on the following:

- CARDS 2001: €1.5 million spent on projects designed to improve the equipment, training and inspection equipment of border police through various twinning projects; in addition, a project for defining Albania's blue border requirements was called for;
- CARDS 2002: €400,000 for vehicle inspection equipment for border crossing points;
- CARDS 2003: €1 million for border police document examination equipment, for all border crossing points that required such equipment, surveillance equipment, patrol vehicles, mobile border crossing point equipment; €4 million for the construction and provisioning of a joint border crossing point between Albania and Montenegro (equipment to be delivered in the autumn of 2005).⁵⁵³

In 2005, the implementation phase of the CARDS 2002 program will begin and focus on:⁵⁵⁴

- The establishment of a data transmission network (project initiated by TIMS);
- The partial refurbishment of 47 commissariats and border crossing points;
- The refurbishment of Arbana hotel for use as the new State Police General Directorate Headquarters;
- The implementation of the National Border Strategy.

There are currently two European Commission missions in Albania that focus upon improving the organisational and operational capabilities of Albania's border security and law enforcement agencies. These missions are:

- CAM-A (Customs Assistance Mission – Albania)
- PAMECA (Police Assistance Mission of the European Commission to Albania)

CAM-A

CAM-A was established in 1997 following a request made by the Albanian Government to the EC to assist Albania in the reorganisation of its customs directorate. Since then, CAM-A has worked on a number of projects with Albania's nascent customs service, including:

⁵⁵² Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 13.

⁵⁵³ Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

⁵⁵⁴ Op cit MOPO, p. 49.

- Improving customs legislation and its implementation, with a view to meeting EU and WTO standards;
- The establishment of anti-smuggling teams;
- The installation and training on the use of the ASYCUDA++ customs programme;
- Deploying CAM-A staff alongside Albanian staff at customs posts;
- The Organised Crime Initiative (OCI).⁵⁵⁵

It has also recently helped with the installation and training for EU-funded passport detection equipment, and with ICITAP, EXPAS (US), the UK embassy and Swedish customs agents on improving the exchange of information and border security.

CAM-A acts as a clearing house for international agencies and donors in relation to supporting Albania's requirements in enhancing its customs service in order to try to avoid duplication of donations and training programmes.

Members of the CAM-A OCI team work with Albanian colleagues at border crossing points throughout Albania. The fact that CAM-A border and customs staff work 'in the field' with Albanian colleagues, carrying out physical checks in all weathers with the Albanians, has helped to gain the respect and trust of many Albanian border and customs personnel. The CAM-A OCI teams have worked on the borders with Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, the ports of Durrës and Vlorë, and also at Rinas airport. These teams have spent the past two years demonstrating best practice in vehicle inspections, people crossing, checking shipments, and facilitating inter-agency co-operation through joint training and everyday working practices with border and customs guards.

According to one senior member of the CAM-A team, one of their main aims is to help customs and border guards to work together at different levels. Therefore, CAM-A has taken the initiative of establishing a mechanism for CBC meetings to take place at border crossing points at least once a month and at certain border crossing points each week. In these instances, meeting places have been alternated between the two sides, with the respective border and customs guards on each side exchanging information and intelligence on organised crime and trafficking issues.

PAMECA

PAMECA started operating in Albania in December 2002, under the 2001 CARDS programme. Its initial brief was scheduled for 2002–4, but has been extended for the period 2005–7.⁵⁵⁶ For the 2005–2007 work programme, €10.8 million have been allocated to fund training, workshops, seminars, the preparation of studies and strategies, computerisation of MOI and police, and provision of other equipment ranging from telecommunications to detection devices.⁵⁵⁷

PAMECA's objectives include:

- Assisting MOI to develop a 'comprehensive long-term Governmental strategy';
- Improving the 'response and investigative capacities' of the Albanian state police on public order and security, border management, organised crime and terrorism;
- Increasing levels of professionalism, effectiveness, organisational capability;
- Strengthening co-operation with other elements in the criminal justice system;
- Developing information exchange capabilities;
- Increasing the efficient use of donor funds;

⁵⁵⁵ Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

⁵⁵⁶ PAMECA continues some of the duties established by Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE), which was led by the Western European Union (WEU), and was based in Albania from May 1997 until June 2001. In September 2001, the EC launched a bridging PHARE-funded EC Police Assistance Mission (ECPA), which ran until PAMECA was established. Interview, International official, 21 April 2005. See also: PAMECA, Work Programme Proposal 2005, p. 8.

⁵⁵⁷ Op cit PAMECA, pp. 28–44.

■ Restoring public confidence in the police.⁵⁵⁸

Although PAMECA is based in Tirana, PAMECA officials stressed that they undertake outreach activities throughout Albania, with training programmes provided in a number of fields in different areas of the country, including: supporting the border police in implementing Albania's Integrated Border Management Strategy and improving legislation and operational methods for combating organised crime.⁵⁵⁹ As with ICITAP, PAMECA has advisors in the offices of the Minister of Public Order and the head of the State police.⁵⁶⁰

One example of the work being undertaken by PAMECA officials is a twelve month twinning project focusing upon leadership and management training with the directors of all commissariats, which is currently running under Greek direction.⁵⁶¹ There are planned joint training sessions for the border police and customs on integrated border management issues, and the project also includes a training of trainer's component to support roll-out to others. It is envisioned that this latter element of the project will help train around two-thirds of Albania's border police officers in basic integrated border management. It is expected that this project will assist with detection methods on altered documents, training for equipment at the eight main border crossing points, the production of a senior border police officer's handbook, a handbook for basic level staff, and provide materials for the police academy's training curriculum, which currently lacks dedicated training programmes for border police officers.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview, International official, 21 April 2005.

⁵⁶⁰ Interview, International official, 21 April 2005.

⁵⁶¹ This project is being funded by CARDS 2001.

6

SALW amnesties and weapons collections

6.1 SALW amnesty and collection legislation and structures

THIS SECTION AIMS TO REVIEW and draw lessons from the SALW amnesty and collection activities that have taken place since 1997 as a contribution to developing programmes to remove the remaining illicit weapons from hands of civilians in Albania. It begins by outlining the legal basis for the different amnesty and collection periods; introduces the operational methodologies that were used; reviews the UNDP contribution (as the main international actor involved in weapons collection); details the key results of the major collection programmes; and concludes by identifying lessons for the future.

Due to the variety and novelty of the approaches employed in Albania over recent years to remove illicit weapons from the hands of the civilian population there have been a number of studies conducted into their relative successes and failures.⁵⁶²

This Survey does not aim to rehearse the findings of these studies but rather to indicate from the operational and policy perspective the different elements that might be useful in any future intervention.

6.2 The legal basis for SALW amnesty and weapons collection

In August 1997, the Albanian Government established an amnesty for those who voluntarily surrendered unregistered weapons to the authorities, which was continually renewed until it lapsed on 4 August 2002. On 5 August 1998, the Government enacted Law No. 8388 'For SALW Collection'. This established the principles for voluntary surrender of weapons that had not been used in crimes, the methods to be employed for weapons collection and the registration of weapons and military ammunition.⁵⁶³ According to Article 21 of this law, the sanctions to be imposed against those failing to co-operate with the disarmament process, would be a fine of between 10,000 leke and 100,000 leke or a custodial sentence of six months, at the court's discretion.

This law also established a series of administrative and operative inter-agency structures that were to be responsible for implementing the law on SALW collection at

⁵⁶² Faltas S and Paes W-C, 'You Have Removed the Devil from our Door': An Assessment of the UNDP Small Arms and Light Weapons Control (SALWC) Project in Albania, (SEESAC, 2003); South Eastern Europe SALW Monitors 2004 and 2005 (Saferworld and SEESAC); Muggah R, *Listening for Change: Participatory Evaluations of DDR and Arms Reduction in Mali, Cambodia and Albania*, (UNIDIR, 2005); Centre for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, 'Socio-economic Analysis and Impact Assessment of UNDP Albania SALWC Project' (Sept 2002).

⁵⁶³ These principles continued to be applied in subsequent weapons collection legislation. The processes of storage, documentation and administration for collected weapons were also outlined in Trial Agreement No. 1214, 'For Collection, Storage, Secure, Administration of Armament-Ammunition and Other Fighting Materials', 29 March 2000.

national, prefecture and local levels, including a special weapons collection unit within the police, which by May 2000 had recruited 250 members specially tasked and trained for weapons collection duties. The army was given the responsibility for storing the collected weapons in their depots.⁵⁶⁴ This law also stated that the prefecture level weapons collection committees would be responsible for public awareness raising on the issue, and were expected to devise awareness raising plans.⁵⁶⁵ Albania is the only country in the Balkans region to have explicitly included awareness raising on SALW in national legislation.⁵⁶⁶

By the middle of 2002 it seemed likely that the amnesty for the voluntary surrender of weapons would not be renewed and the special commissions and teams tasked with weapons collection would cease to exist.⁵⁶⁷ Thus, after 4 August 2002, the weapons amnesty ceased and the weapons collection structures were dismantled and members of the weapons collection team either reassigned to other police duties or made redundant.⁵⁶⁸ The UNDP office in Tirana had initially supported the end of the amnesty, provided it was accompanied by a serious effort to arrest and prosecute those found in possession of unregistered firearms or military equipment, and by a law that enabled weapons collections and amnesties to be carried out for limited periods in limited areas.⁵⁶⁹ Neither of these subsequently took place.

A draft law for limited amnesties was prepared, with the assistance of the UNDP, but was not passed by parliament. In a review of the various UNDP supported weapons collection processes Faltas and Paes noted that there “were no noticeable increases in the number of arrests and prosecutions for the illegal possession of arms” after the amnesty expired as it seemed that “the Government had lost interest in both collecting and controlling SALW”.⁵⁷⁰ The UNDP and NGOs began to lobby for another general amnesty,⁵⁷¹ and Government officials approached the UNDP to draft a new amnesty and weapons collection law, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in December 2002.⁵⁷² On 6 March 2003, Law No. 9018 “For the collection of weapons, ammunition and other military materials” entered onto the statute books of Albania.⁵⁷³

The 2003 law was comparable to the 1998 Law on SALW Collection for a number of reasons. It contained similar aims, principles, duties for the police and military, and the same pyramid structure of weapons collection commissions in Albania (see figure one below) – although the central weapons collection commission had been upgraded to an inter-ministerial commission for weapons collection chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister.⁵⁷⁴ Designed to remain in force for two years, the 2003 law expired on 31 May 2005 without a new law being put in place. Officials from the UNDP SSSR office in Tirana apparently requested a further two-year extension of the law,⁵⁷⁵ and this appeared likely as the then deputy prime minister and chair of the inter-ministerial commission, Namik Dokle, informed Saferworld that the Government planned to

⁵⁶⁴ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

⁵⁶⁵ Article 8, Law No. 8388 on ‘SALW Collection’, 5 August 1998.

⁵⁶⁶ South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005 (Saferworld and SEESAC), p. 31.

⁵⁶⁷ This position was officially stated by the chair of the central weapons collection commission, deputy prime minister Skënder Gjinushi, in an action plan drafted on 14 June 2002 and reiterated at a special meeting of the weapons collection commission on 24 June 2002. The same opinion was stated in a letter sent to Gjinushi by a working group on weapons collection, which consisted of senior officials from the ministries of Defence, Local Government and Public Order. Faltas S and Paes W-C, ‘You Have Removed the Devil from our Door’: An Assessment of the UNDP Small Arms and Light Weapons Control (SALWC) Project in Albania, (SEESAC, 2003), p. 6.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 22 April 2005.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

⁵⁷⁰ Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 5.

⁵⁷¹ The lobbying of the UNDP for a new amnesty law in 2002 was criticised by Faltas and Paes, although they acknowledged that this route was taken due to the failure of the government to seriously address the issue of illegally held SALW. Ibid, p. 7.

⁵⁷² Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

⁵⁷³ In the opinion of one NGO representative, who had been involved in the lobbying and drafting for this law, the difficulties persuading the government to accept another amnesty and weapons collection programme could have been linked to the Albanian government’s belief that this would damage its EU membership aspirations. Interview, NGO representative, 30 April 2005.

⁵⁷⁴ Law No. 9018, ‘For Collection of Weapons, Ammunition and Other Military Materials’, 6 March 2003.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

enact another two-year law.⁵⁷⁶ However following the change in Government following the General Election in 2005, there is still currently no legal basis permitting weapons surrender or voluntary collection and no specific commitment on the part of the Government to develop new plans to put before parliament on this issue.

6.3 Undertaking weapons collection

6.3.1 The government approach

With differing degrees of success, ongoing weapons collection programmes were undertaken across Albania by the police, supported by local governance structures and civil society. A key player in the collection process throughout most of the period covered by the different amnesty/collection legislation was the UNDP, which at different times organised incentive based collections in specific parts of the country (see section 6.3.2 below).

In May 2000, the special teams specifically tasked with weapons collection duties were finally operationalised. Their duties included:

- Public awareness raising activities;
- The collection and recording of surrendered weapons;
- Ensuring the safe storage of collected weapons until they were transferred to the MOD;
- Collecting declarations from Albanian citizens, which stated that the household did not possess any unregistered weapons

The 250 members of the weapons collection teams were mainly police officers and former military personnel, who were recruited for their technical abilities and experience in handling weapons and ammunition.⁵⁷⁷ Additional training was provided by the then Ministry of Public Order Weapons Collection Section (MOPOWCS), and included specific modules for the head of the prefecture's collection teams and the storehouse manager.⁵⁷⁸ However, best practice methods were not always followed. For example, there were a number of instances where magazines had not been removed from collected weapons before being placed in police storage.⁵⁷⁹ The UNDP's technical experts' general assessment was that both the police and military were lackadaisical in their approach to safety of collected weapons. Nevertheless, there were noticeable improvements in communication regarding safety as the weapons collection programme progressed. The situation had certainly improved when compared to 1997, when "people were throwing boxes of ammunition out of third floor windows into the streets of Gramsh and sending children with guns and unexploded ordnance to the collection site".⁵⁸⁰

The process for weapons collection and the subsequent treatment of the collected weapons is shown in Fig 1.

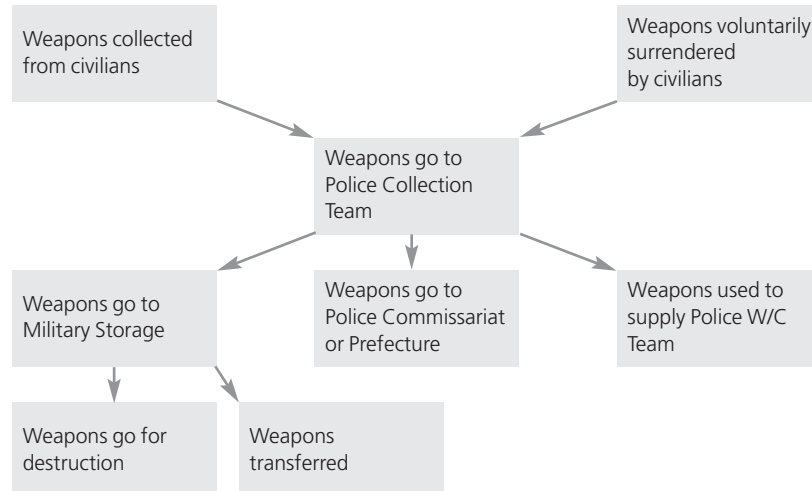
⁵⁷⁶ Interview, Office of the Prime Minister, 31 March 2005.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

⁵⁷⁸ The UNDP also provided technical experts, who produced Albanian language safety cards.

⁵⁷⁹ One known example of this practice was discovered at the Peshkopi police Commissariat according to UNDP, Weapons in Exchange for Development (Final report, Tirana, Albania, 1 June 2002), pp. 35–7.

⁵⁸⁰ Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 6.

Fig 1: Chain for weapons collected or voluntarily surrendered⁵⁸¹

The weapons collection process, according to one interviewee, could take place in a village square or hall, or a person could voluntarily surrender their weapon(s) at a police station.⁵⁸² In these cases, when the weapon was handed in, at least two police officers would be present. A receipt was then issued to the person who voluntarily surrendered the weapon and a copy of the receipt was sent with the weapon to the police stores. The storeperson then wrote another receipt, indicating that the weapon had been received. The receipts issued during the day were then added together to give a daily total for all weapons received and stored. At the end of the month, the weapons, ammunition and explosives that had been collected were counted and sent to the MOD with documents detailing the consignment. The collected weapons were then transported to the nearest military bases, where the military storehouse manager would compare the receipt for weapons and ammunition received with his own physical check.⁵⁸³

While it is relatively easy to count the number of SALW collected, exact figures for ammunition, explosives and other military materiel should be approached more sceptically. Neither the police collecting military materiel nor the warehouse manager counted each round. Furthermore, they may not have been able to accurately identify the different types of rounds and explosives. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the ammunition and explosives may have been delivered in bottles or unorthodox containers, which the police were unwilling to open for fear that the contents were unstable. Therefore, the officially recorded volume of recovered ammunition and explosives may differ from the actual contents of the cola bottles and plastic bags that have been surrendered to the police. However, it was also stated that those responsible for maintaining the police and military collection figures met each month to discuss discrepancies in their respective figures for SALW, ammunition and explosives sent by the police and received by the military.⁵⁸⁴

During the first weapons collection and amnesty period (1997–2002), it has been estimated that Albanian police officers visited more than one million homes, asking people to voluntarily hand over guns or sign a declaration that they did not possess any unregistered weapons.⁵⁸⁵ According to Fier's weapons collection specialist, the heads of communes would sometimes accompany police officers on their rounds collecting declarations and weapons from households in the locality during this period.⁵⁸⁶ In addition, members of the public could, in theory, surrender their

⁵⁸¹ Taken from: United Nations Development Programme, *Weapons in Exchange for Development*, Final report, 1 June 2002, Tirana, Albania, p. 31.

⁵⁸² Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

⁵⁸³ The Albanian military bases used for storing collected weapons are located in: Berat, Burrel, Elbasan, Fier, Gjirokaster, Korce, Kukes, Lac, Rreshen, Shijak, Shkodër and Tirana.

⁵⁸⁴ Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

⁵⁸⁵ Quin D, et al, 'Disarming civilians in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia means making them see guns are a threat to security, not a guarantee', IWPRBCR 470, 27 November 2003, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 07 April 2005.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview, MOPO official, 13 May 2005.

unregistered weapons to local police stations. During the second amnesty and weapons collection period (2003–5), other methods were used. A number of interviewees mentioned initiatives that carried slogans such as ‘one less weapon, one less crime’ or ‘one police officer, one gun’, which had the same methods and aims – for each police officer to collect one SALW during a fixed period, such as a month. According to Bajram Ibraj, the General Director of the State Police, an order was issued that called for each police officer to collect three SALW, with penalties for those who did not fulfil this task and incentives for those who excelled at it.⁵⁸⁷ The cash incentive that was recently introduced for police who collect at least 10 weapons was an attempt to overcome lethargy on behalf of all Government structures, but also of course police.⁵⁸⁸

Other police collection campaigns have been carried out in co-operation with private security companies, with one report stating that this approach led to the collection of 200 firearms.⁵⁸⁹ In what appears to be an isolated incident, there have also been reports of a Catholic priest in Skhoder who went door-to-door in his parish asking people to hand their weapons over to him ‘for God’. It is believed that he collected around 50 guns using this approach, although we were unable to discover when this took place and the time period.⁵⁹⁰

6.3.2 The UNDP contribution

In February 1998 the Albanian Government requested assistance from the UN for the disarmament of the civilian population. They initially requested assistance with the establishment of a buy-back scheme, in which individuals would be financially rewarded for returning looted SALW, ammunition, explosives and other military equipment. Several months later, the United Nations Under-Secretary General on Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, led a mission to Albania (11–14 June 1998), which – unsurprisingly – rejected the request for a buy-back scheme. They argued that it would be too expensive, inflate the prices of arms and potentially encourage trafficking in the region.⁵⁹¹ Instead, the mission recommended the establishment of a pilot project in the District of Gramsh,^{592 593} where in exchange for the voluntary surrender of weapons communities would benefit from UN-funded small-scale development projects.

The Gramsh Pilot Project (GPP) officially started in December 1998, became fully operational by the end of January 1999 at which point activities were suspended due to the Kosovo crisis. The project resumed weapons collection activities in June 1999, running until August 1999. The GPP was not only a pilot project for weapons collection programmes in Albania. To some extent, it was also piloting the idea of organising a weapons collection programme that did not reward individuals for voluntarily surrendering weapons, but rather provided an incentive only through the funding of small-scale community-based development projects.⁵⁹⁴ The idea of collective incentives has been promoted as an innovative and positive factor, but it has been argued that the idea of involving ‘communities’ is a problematic one in Albania because of the atomisation of society in the post-communist period.⁵⁹⁵ These views could arguably be supported by the results of a survey carried out in spring 2005, in which 34 percent of respondents believed that lotteries offering rewards to individuals would act as an incentive for people to surrender SALW compared to only 17.8 percent of respondents who stated that community rewards would act as an incentive.

⁵⁸⁷ Interview, MOI official, 25 July 2005.

⁵⁸⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview, MOPO official, 23 April 2005; Quin, 2003.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

⁵⁹¹ Op cit UNDP, p. 1.

⁵⁹² Gramsh is a district of around 100 villages in central Albania, with a population of 50,000.

⁵⁹³ Two other potential candidates for the pilot project – Vlore and Shkodër – were also suspected of having large number of citizens with looted weapons, but the problem was that Vlore was too closely associated with the SP and Shkodër with the DP. To choose one of these regions would have offended the other party and potentially led to the UNDP becoming embroiled in the political crisis. Interview, NGO representative, 30 April 2005.

⁵⁹⁴ Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁵ Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

Due to a range of positive factors including some impressive collection results as well as a perception that the rewards scheme was becoming more widely understood and requested by the wider population, the Albanian Government reacted to the trial in Gramsh by requesting projects based on similar principles to be carried out in the districts of Elbasan and Diber.

The 'Weapons in Exchange for Development (WED)' project ran from 1 June 2000 until February 2002 in the regions Diber and Elbasan.⁵⁹⁶ It had a larger budget than the GPP,⁵⁹⁷ but the WED also used the same three main approaches for attempting to reduce the number of weapons in the targeted communities:

- Public awareness raising through the print media, TV, local town hall meetings, the establishment of NGO networks and other events;
- The actual collection of weapons, ammunition and explosive materials, and the symbolic public destruction of some of the recovered items;
- Small-scale community-based development in the targeted communities in Diber and Elbasan districts.⁵⁹⁸

However, the regions of Diber and Elbasan presented a number of different problems compared to GPP. For example, it has been argued that Diber traditions, such as the rule of the Kanun, had been preserved in this area and strictly followed, even during communist times. Thus for example, one of the main challenges was that the possession of weapons was considered to be the 'right' of every man aged over 18 years old. Further, there were no useful estimates of the number of weapons in the area and it had served as a trafficking route for arms into Kosovo and Macedonia. Elbasan had presented a different set of problems, due to the fact that it provided shelter to many of the refugees that had entered Albania from Kosovo during the crisis of 1999, swelling the population of 239,631 further. In addition, the public destruction of weapons "was considered the most sensitive aspect of the weapons surrender and collection".⁵⁹⁹ This was because it required not only public safety standards to be fulfilled, but required the Government's permission to destroy recovered state property – property that the Government may have considered of value for the military or for export sales.

The third UNDP weapons collection programme in Albania, entitled Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Project (SALWCP), ran from April 2002 until December 2003. It was based upon the same principles, and used the same methods, as the GPP and WED projects. However, Faltas and Paes argue that it differed from previous weapons in exchange for development projects on three counts:

- It covered far more territory than the other projects: the five prefectures of Kukës, Lezhe, Shkodër, Tirana, Vlorë and three communities in the Tepelena district;
- All of the weapons collection and destruction was carried out by Albanian authorities;
- Not all of the communities that collected weapons and took part in the project received development projects. There would be a competition for the limited pool of financial resources available for development projects.⁶⁰⁰

It is this final point that is perhaps the most innovative and perhaps most controversial. The fact that a community that collected weapons might not receive a development project could have posed problems such as lower interest because there would be no guaranteed 'reward' or resentment at the 'winners' from those who did not feel that they benefited. According to Lawrence Doczy, head of the UNDP Support to Security Sector Reform (SSSR) Programme, this was not the case.⁶⁰¹ In his opinion, the

⁵⁹⁶ Faltas and Paes argue that the name of the project was inappropriate, as it suggested that weapons were being traded in for development. They preferred the nomenclature 'Disarmament for Development'. See: Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁷ The WED project for Elbasan and Diber had an initial budget of \$2,035,855, with donors including Sweden, Norway, USAID and Denmark. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) joined the list of project donors at a later stage, helping to increase the project budget by \$1,000,000. Op cit UNDP, p. 17.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 17–18.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 21–22.

⁶⁰⁰ Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 3.

⁶⁰¹ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

communities that collected weapons but did not receive a development project seemed willing to accept the rules of the 'competition'.⁶⁰² The rationale of weapons in competition for development resulted from the fact that the size of the territory to be covered was large compared to the total project budget. This meant that if each community that collected weapons received a development project, then it would have been so small as to be considered almost worthless. Therefore, larger projects were deemed to have more of an impact, with the competitive option the best way to encourage greater participation at a lower cost.

Another of the challenges for the project leaders was the assumption that the weapons amnesty would end on 4 August 2002. Therefore, it was expected that the weapons collection phase of the project would only last for four months (April 2002–4 August 2002). However following the introduction of the new amnesty law in March 2003, another round of collections took place, firstly between June and August 2003 (which were implemented by local authorities and SSSR staff in the absence of Government weapons collection teams), and then finally between 1 September and 30 November 2003.

6.3.2.1 Understanding the UNDP contribution

As stated previously, there are already studies that examine the success or otherwise of the UNDP contribution. It is clear that in the most basic sense it was a success in that there were fewer weapons in the hands of civilians at the end of the intervention than at the beginning. It is also clear that the UNDP injected much needed momentum and commitment to an issue that at times was not a priority for the Albanian Government or the international community. The approaches developed and tested by the UNDP team have also influenced the design and implementation of similar schemes in a number of countries in the South East European region as well as further afield and the support awarded through development projects has certainly been important for many in the beneficiary communities.

Some of the elements that have attracted questions from those who have conducted assessments (but are not necessarily held by the authors of this Survey) include:

- The perception that there was more interest in the quantity rather than quality of SALW collected. For example, one official working in Shkodër stated that only about ten percent of the weapons collected for the SALWCP were in working order.⁶⁰³ Therefore, although collecting gun barrels, rusted bolt-action rifles and other SALW looted in 1997 is desirable, it is questionable if they should have been counted as weapons that posed a threat to public safety and security and used to bolster collection figures. The wide range of aims and objectives for the UNDP projects certainly gave the impression that they were not necessarily targeting reductions specifically in the types of weapons which were of greatest concern in terms of trafficking, use in accidents, crime, or tensions between communities.
- Whether the interventions and development projects offered by the UNDP in their targeted areas had a more significant impact than the general amnesty/collection in the rest of the country. For example, were the collection levels in the targeted areas significantly higher than in those areas without interventions? Did the interventions result in more SALW being voluntarily surrendered than if there had not been an intervention? Could similar levels of collection have been achieved without development project incentives? Would individual incentives and lotteries have yielded greater returns? It is not possible to answer the last three hypothetical questions, but weapons collection figures show that three of the regions with the lowest percentage of weapons collected in comparison to weapons looted had all been sites for UNDP interventions (Tirana, Kukës and Lezha).

⁶⁰² Ibid; see also: Op cit Faltas and Paes, p. 12.

⁶⁰³ Interview, international organisation official, 13 June 2005.

- As shown in the table ‘Statistics on weapons collected from 1997–June 2005’ (in section 6.4 below), the three regions with the highest percentage of weapons collected in comparison to weapons looted had not had UNDP interventions (Korça, Berat and Gjirokaster). The three regions with the lowest total of weapons collected were also sites of UNDP interventions (Kukës, Diber and Shkodër), while two of the three highest total numbers of weapons collected had been party to UNDP-funded weapons collection and development programmes (Elbasan and Tirana; Korça was not). Of course, this data does not conclusively prove that UNDP interventions did not have a positive and valuable impact upon weapons collection. Nevertheless, if the UNDP programmes aimed to do more than collect weapons – as their advocates suggest – then it would have seemed appropriate to conduct surveys and interviews throughout the process in areas of intervention and areas without intervention to assess and compare the UNDP’s impact and value-added contribution to Albanian state weapons collection endeavours.

However, other studies have clearly identified positive perceptions of the UNDP interventions. For example, the only public opinion assessment surveys of UNDP interventions were carried out by the Centre for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development for the SALWCP, and then only in areas of UNDP interventions. Their 2004 survey found that on average 90 percent of respondents from communes that were awarded community development projects were satisfied.⁶⁰⁴ Yet the actual success of these programmes in removing unregistered SALW from the hands of the Albanian population was also questioned in focus groups, where on a number of separate occasions participants felt that even if someone had voluntarily surrendered a firearm, they would probably have “another ten at home”. Thus, when asked to assess the success of the UNDP WED project, one respondent stated:

Think about UNDP, it has made many things in different underdeveloped villages, but people in these areas own more than a gun, so they have given up one, and kept two let’s say. I don’t think we could call this a success. Because the poor villager cannot feel secure, but he needs development, he needs the street, and he also needs the gun. What can he do?

Focus Group, Shkodër, Male, August 2005.

Nevertheless, according to one interviewee from the Shkodër area, more and more communities were becoming interested in the idea of participating in the UNDP project as it was drawing to a close and international donor interest was waning.⁶⁰⁵ In his opinion, the project sent out a positive message, attracted more attention and interest in the area than it could cope with, and should therefore be considered a success. He also reported having been told that some communities had informed him that they were ready and willing to buy guns in order to win a development project, thus demonstrating that even the community development approach could potentially fuel trafficking.

Yet, one could argue that the yields from these projects can be compared favourably with weapons collection in neighbouring regions and states. For example, the UNDP projects in Albania certainly appear to be more successful than the pilot WED project carried out in Kosovo in September 2003.⁶⁰⁶ A three month weapons collection programme carried out in Montenegro between March and May of the same year, with assistance from USAID/ORT, collected 1,770 guns, 48,200 units of ammunition and 145kg of explosives.⁶⁰⁷ The total number of SALW in civilian hands in Montenegro has been estimated between 126,000 and 175,000.⁶⁰⁸ Therefore, one could argue that the UNDP intervention in Albania appears to have been comparatively successful.

⁶⁰⁴ The main exceptions to this satisfactory assessment were to be found in Kukës and Tirana. See: op cit Center for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, pp. 36–7.

⁶⁰⁵ Interview, hospital official, 14 June 2005.

⁶⁰⁶ Mustafa A and Jeta X, ‘Kosovo gun amnesty setback: Highly-publicised campaign fails to persuade Albanians and Serbs to hand over their firearms’, IWPRBCR 464, 16 October 2003, <<http://www.iwpr.net/>>, 18 May 2005. After three months of public awareness raising activities, this project collected only 155 guns in a region thought to be home to somewhere between 330,000 and 460,000 guns in civilian hands. Op cit Khakee and Florquin, p. 17.

⁶⁰⁷ Op cit Florquin and O’Neill Stoneman, pp. 32–3.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

6.4 Results of the amnesty/ weapons collection processes

In general, state officials are more positive about the results of the amnesties and weapons collection programmes, than NGO representatives and focus group participants, who were sceptical of official statements. The latter still felt that although SALW may not be their most pressing concern, there remain too many unregistered SALW in Albania. Official statistics certainly support their fears that a large number of looted SALW remain at large in Albania and also beyond its borders.

Between March 1997 and May 2005, 201,365 weapons had been collected by weapons collectors and police and 13,383 units had been collected by the MOD (the MOD has apparently retained some 60,000 of all collected weapons for its own use).⁶⁰⁹ In addition, 8,178 weapons that were collected are now held by the police or were registered to border inhabitants and businessmen between 1997 and 2002. Therefore, weapons collection officials claim that of the 549,775 SALW looted from the MOD, the then MOPO and SHISH depots, they can account for 222,918 SALW. In addition, 118,134,222 various pieces of ammunition and 1,539,828 pieces of generic ammunition have been collected.⁶¹⁰ One issue with these figures is that parts of weapons, such as barrels, or weapons that appear to have been out of commission for a long time, have been counted as whole SALW units for collection purposes.

Table 32: Weapons and ammunition collected March 1997–June 2005

Years	Ammunition	Explosives	Weapons UNDP	
1997	44,273,651	187,618	72,548	
1998	13,481,537	19,660	10,547	
1999	11,740,789	5,490	6,909	GPP 5,981
2000	30,229,425	829,974	68,101	
2001	10,451,148	183,955	25,680	WED 8,795
Jan–07 Aug 2002	4,956,793	146,426	17,078	
08 Aug 2002–Oct 2003	213,689	1,086	2,631	SALWCP 9,718
Nov–Dec 2003	230,332	734	1,982	
Total 2000–2003			122,381	24,494
Jan–Dec 2004	1,941,493	157,096	13,306	
Jan–Mar 2005	315,394	2,490	2,658	
Mar 1997–Jun 2005	118,134,222	1,539,828	222,918	
Looted in 1997	839,310,038	16,000,000	549,775	

The weapons collection committee counts all of the collected weapons against the number of looted weapons to calculate a percentage of recovered weapons. Thus, as the above table shows, their statistics state that 201,365 of the 524,226 weapons looted from military bases have been returned, giving a percentage of 40.5 percent.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview, MoD official, 14 April 2005.

⁶¹⁰ Source: MOI weapons collection unit.

Table 33: Statistics on weapons collected from 1997–June 2005

Districts or institutions where weapons are looted	Number of weapons looted	Number of weapons collected	% of weapons collected
Weapons looted in Ministry of Public Order: Total = 23,929			
Weapons looted in National Intelligence Agency (SHISH): Total = 1,620			
Weapons looted in Ministry of Defence			
General District Directory in Berat	27,379	19,776	72
General District Directory in Diber	21,875	10,564	47.6
General District Directory in Durres	27,956	14,025	50
General District Directory in Elbasan	69,473	37,766	54.3
General District Directory in Fier	26,009	15,411	59.6
General District Directory in Gjirokaster	22,855	15,643	68.1
General District Directory in Korca	29,030	24,712	85
General District Directory in Kukës	26,930	4,730	17.6
General District Directory in Lezha	53,348	10,162	19
General District Directory in Shkoder	27,816	10,291	37
General District Directory in Vlore	24,733	15,028	60.6
General District Directory in Tirana	166,822	23,355	14
Total – Ministry of Defence	524,226		
Total – district weapons collections		201,463	
Weapons collected by MoD		13,383	
Distributed to police commissariats, or registered by inhabitants of the border areas and businessmen 1997–2002		8,176 ⁶¹¹	
Total	549,775	223,022 ⁶¹²	40.57%

However, in certain areas the proportion of weapons which remain uncollected is greater. For example, while some of the weapons collected in Fier may have come from military depots in Fier, they may also have come into Fier from other regions of Albania, not to mention the possibility that they entered Albania from elsewhere, or were already illicitly held prior to 1997 (see sections 3.4 and 3.5.2 above on trafficking and illicit possession of weapons).⁶¹³ The proportion of weapons recovered from the 1997 looting could be more accurately ascertained if the serial numbers of collected weapons had been checked against the 1997 records from the military depots. This did not happen, and there was no clear distinction between the likely source of the weapons collected, their vintage, or whether they could still function as a weapon.

It is also worth noting that collection totals varied widely across the country. Berat, Korca and Elbasan were the locations where most weapons were collected. Kukës and Tirana were areas where it was most difficult to collect.⁶¹⁴ The North of Albania generally presented more of a challenge given its greater problems with insecurity, isolation and cultural attachment to weapons maintaining the higher levels of SALW possession that are noted by this Survey.⁶¹⁵

Although weapons collection figures are reportedly broken down by type of weapon collected, the authors did not receive such a breakdown. Therefore, we are not able to list the number of weapons collected according to their type, or calculate the quantity of each type which is still missing. Experts from the MOD and MOI informed the research team that, in general, very few pistols had been handed in, which would suggest that demand for these weapons is still high, either for personal protection or

⁶¹¹ 8,178 according to centralised statistical records.

⁶¹² The apparent discrepancy between the sum of yearly collection figures and the sum of region collection figures has not been fully explained to the research team, but may well be due to the problem of information exchange between central and regional collection teams as described elsewhere in the report. The centralised figure supplied by the Tirana authorities has been used as the official number of weapons collected throughout this report.

⁶¹³ Interview, local government official, 14 May 2005.

⁶¹⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

⁶¹⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

criminal purposes.⁶¹⁶ Pistols can be easily hidden, and the incentives have not been strong enough to persuade people to part with these types of weapons.⁶¹⁷ MOD and MOI officials stated with some confidence, however, that the overwhelming majority of the collected weapons are rifles, sub-machine guns and automatic rifles, which were mostly made in Albania, China or the Soviet Union.

6.5 Lessons learnt from the Albanian experience

Albania has in many ways been an extremely important test-bed for developing approaches to weapons collection and the lessons that can be learnt from Albania's experience have a utility beyond its borders. They are also absolutely critical to informing the development of policy and programming to address the remaining problems of illicit civilian possession. The following recommended elements of a successful voluntary weapons collection programme have been drawn from an analysis of project design and implementation in Albania over recent years.

6.5.1 Establishing a clear and coordinated regulatory basis for weapons collection

In the opinion of a national security officer at the OSCE in Albania, the fact that the Albanian Government had a law on weapons collection and an amnesty for voluntary surrender at the same time as criminalising illegal weapons possession created problems for the implementation of the law.⁶¹⁸ Although a weapons collection programme, an amnesty and the criminalisation of illegal weapons possession could theoretically operate at the same time, it was argued that it was extremely unlikely that those found in possession of an unregistered firearm during the amnesty period would be punished with a custodial sentence. This opinion was also expressed in a number of interviews conducted with senior politicians, chiefs of police, judges, prosecutors and civil society representatives in various regions of Albania. This issue was also raised in a focus group conducted in Shkodër in the following manner:

Do you think that these amnesties are effective?

– Yes.

– *Come on. A person that has not given up his gun before now will not give it up if the amnesty deadline is extended.*

...

– *It is nonsense that the state tells you to give up your gun, and you will not be punished – in other words the state makes it legal for you to do something illegal and if you don't surrender the gun you're late – what does this deadline mean? Also, if you extend the deadline constantly people will never give up their weapons. But I don't think that it is the deadline that stops people giving up their guns.*

Focus Group, Tirana, Female, August 2005.

6.5.2 Ensuring rigorous, fair and transparent enforcement of the law

One respondent stated that when people who had signed declarations stating that they did not have any unregistered weapons were subsequently found to be in possession of illegal SALW, they were not harshly punished for this.⁶¹⁹ Another interviewee from Shkodër suggested that when weapons were seized by the police, the person who had been caught would claim that they were on their way to surrender the weapon to the police, and would normally escape arrest and would certainly not be severely punished if the case reached court.⁶²⁰ One interviewee even went as far as to suggest that there is

⁶¹⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 26 April 2005; MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

⁶¹⁷ For example, when the research team attended a 'weapons collection' ceremony at Tirana Police Commissariat No. 1 on 26 April 2005, there was not a single working pistol within the haul of 80 collected SALW that were sent to the MOD.

⁶¹⁸ Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

⁶¹⁹ Interview, hospital official, 14 June 2005.

⁶²⁰ Interview, MOPO official, 15 June 2005.

no real will to punish people who illegally possess weapons, arguing that it provides an opportunity for people in law enforcement and the courts to make money from accepting bribes in exchange for recording a 'seized' weapon as a 'voluntarily surrendered' weapon.⁶²¹ Even when cases of illegal possession did reach the courts, a great deal of discretion was given to judges so that one could receive anything from a warning, a small fine or a few days in prison up to a fine of a hundred thousand leke or seven years in prison.⁶²² For example a senior police officer in the Gjirokaster police directorate stated that of thirty known cases of arrests for illegal SALW possession, the courts had set all of the accused free.⁶²³

However, several interviewees in the regions also stated that they were aware of a few cases where penalties for illegal possession had been taken into account when sentencing those who had been found guilty of other crimes – i.e. the penalty for illegal firearms possession was added to sentences for other criminal offences. In the majority of cases that reached court, people were simply fined or given a prison sentence of no more than three months. In Shkodër, an individual who was caught in illegal possession of weapons for the fourth time and had previously been sentenced for murder was only sentenced to two and a half years in prison. According to one interviewee, his sentence should have been at least five years imprisonment, up to a maximum of fifteen years.⁶²⁴ The majority of police officers interviewed cited the leniency – or corruption – of the courts as one of the major problems when trying to send a tough message on illegal SALW possession during the amnesty periods.

Although a member of the community policing and weapons collection directorate stated that there was no problem implementing the weapons collection, amnesty and upholding the law on illegal weapons possession, he stated that the priority was simply to collect SALW and that the law could be applied 'flexibly' when it came to collecting unregistered weapons – i.e. it was better not to criminalise someone found in possession of an unregistered firearm if they had not committed another crime.⁶²⁵ Several other police officers stated that Albania did not have the prison capacity for a rigorous application of the law on illegal weapon possession, as prisons were already overcrowded.⁶²⁶

According to a weapons collection official based in the police force, a review of Article 278 of the penal code will be carried out by the Ministry of Justice in the near future.⁶²⁷ He believed that they will introduce custodial sentences of between three and seven years for this offence. Whether this is the right route to take remains to be seen. A more suitable option might be to explore non-custodial punishments for illegal weapons possession, such as community service, or rather a lowering of the custodial sentences. Indeed, the impression has been given in recent years that it is politically easier to grant an amnesty rather than attempt to arrest, prosecute and imprison those suspected of holding unregistered weapons in Albania. Therefore, the decision to increase the sentence for illegal possession of weapons could merely be an empty gesture that was discussed in an effort to talk tough on dealing with unregistered weapons, rather than actually attempting to find a suitable response to the issue.

6.5.3 Maintaining capacity and motivation

One of the key challenges mentioned by all of the weapons collection staff at various sites interviewed for this Survey is the fact that since the amnesty and weapons collection teams were disbanded in 2002, the job of collecting weapons became much

⁶²¹ Interview, international organisation official, 13 June 2005.

⁶²² Interviews, MOJ official, 16 May 2005.

⁶²³ MOI official, 6 August 2005.

⁶²⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 16 June 2005.

⁶²⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

⁶²⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 22 April 2005; MOPO official, 25 April 2005; Lluka, 14 June 2005; MOPO official, 14 June 2005. In a subsequent interview on 14 July 2005, MOPO official also stated that it would be impossible to arrest and imprison everyone who holds an unregistered firearm in Albania.

⁶²⁷ Interview, MOPO official, 18 April 2005.

more difficult. Since 2003, there has only been a handful of staff specifically tasked with weapons collection. It came to be regarded as part of the general duties of rank-and-file officers.⁶²⁸ It has been argued that this has been one of the main contributing factors to the decline in the number of weapons collected during the 2003–5 amnesty and weapons collection period although this is not a view that is necessarily universally held.

Yet there are a number of other concerns and challenges that those interested in collecting weapons face – whether they are specially tasked weapons collectors or police. These include:

- Safety of weapons collectors and police operating alone where their authority is not respected or they are potential targets for attack;
- A lack of weapons for personal protection and other equipment, such as vehicles and metal detectors;⁶²⁹
- The hazard of unstable ammunition and explosives;
- The difficulty of finding hidden weapons amidst increasingly sophisticated methods of concealment;⁶³⁰
- Apathy and the normalisation of weapons ownership.⁶³¹

While some police are optimistic that if another amnesty is put in place, some of the people hiding weapons will eventually voluntarily surrender them,⁶³² many of those tasked with coordinating police weapons collections report that there is a good deal of ‘collection fatigue’ among police officers.⁶³³ If the amnesty were to continue, there are also those who argue that society itself is suffering from collection fatigue and is now largely indifferent to the awareness campaigns and calls for the voluntary surrender of weapons.⁶³⁴ According to interviewees in police structures in Gjirokaster, there was no noticeable increase in the number of SALW surrendered on the eve of the 31 May 2005 deadline for voluntary surrender under amnesty (as there had been with the 2002 deadline).⁶³⁵ This was taken to mean that the public already knew that they would be able to keep their weapons without too many problems, knowing that they would not be seriously punished even if authorities found them in possession of an unregistered weapon.

6.5.4 Building trust in collection and collectors

Weapons collection was traditionally unsuccessful in urban areas with the partial exception of Shkodër.⁶³⁶ In areas where public safety is high and levels of personal insecurity are low, it has been argued that weapons are not handed in because of the ‘mentality’ of Albanian citizens. In particular, it was mentioned on a number of occasions that while there continues to be a lack of trust in state officials and authorities, weapons will not be surrendered.⁶³⁷ The low level of trust given to state bodies in opinion polls, in particular law enforcement and justice organs, suggests that there is a long way to go.⁶³⁸ It is therefore perhaps worth questioning the wisdom of

⁶²⁸ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005. For example, Shkodër had ten weapons collectors before 2002, and only one during the 2003–5 amnesty (Interview, MOPO official, 14 June 2005). In Fier, there were twelve weapons collectors divided between the city of Fier, Lushnja and Mallakaster, which was subsequently reduced to one for the whole Fier district (Interview, MOPO official, 13 May 2005).

⁶²⁹ Op cit UNDP, pp. 33–4.

⁶³⁰ Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

⁶³¹ A finding of the UNDP's second baseline study on SALW collection conducted in February 2004: Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

⁶³² Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

⁶³³ Op cit South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005, p. 26.

⁶³⁴ Interview, local government official, 14 May 2005.

⁶³⁵ Interviews, Alimema, 6 August 2005; MoPo official, 6 August 2005.

⁶³⁶ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

⁶³⁷ Interviews, Domi, 28 April 2005; MOPO official, 14 May 2005.

⁶³⁸ For example, according to an opinion poll conducted in May 2005, 43 percent of respondents expressed trust in the police, while the lowest ranking state institutions were the public prosecution office and the courts with 29 percent and 25.7 percent of respondents expressing trust in these institutions respectively. Source: op cit Elections 2005 Public Opinion Polls, 1 June 2005, p. 20. See also: Kenney D J, Public Perceptions of the Police in Albania: Nationwide Surveys of Residents and Police (City University of New York and UNDP SSSR, 2004).

using former police and military officers to collect weapons from the general public in the immediate aftermath of the 1997 events. The situation may be improving, but interviewees still expressed scepticism regarding the efficiency of state agencies.

Focus group participants tended to stress that while the law is not seen to be enforced and deterrents do not appear to be used, the state will be seen as not functioning and ordinary citizens more likely to “go out on streets with guns to terrorize people, like that, just for no reason. This is the result of state weakness and an absence of law and order”. The exchange continued with another interviewee stating that:

You can say that people are armed in US, they all have permission to get a gun, but the state authorities are powerful and the law is applied there. What I mean is, that the fact that people have guns here, it is not the only problem. The state is the problem. So, possessing a gun without permission is just the result of a state that doesn't function properly.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Female, August 2005.

Yet according to opinion poll data collected for this report, 67.9 percent of respondents stated that they believed that state agencies were best placed to encourage people to voluntarily surrender illegally held arms. Only 12.8 percent of respondents selected community leaders with 9.1 percent selecting international organisations. The low ranking for international organisations could be regarded as surprising given the high trust rating given to international organisations in opinion polls and the actions that the UNDP has taken on the SALW collection issue.⁶³⁹

6.5.5 A differentiated approach

Of course, not all parts of Albanian society, or even certain regions of Albania, enjoy the same socio-economic and public safety levels. Thus, interviewees in Kukës and Shkodër mentioned that although the number of shootings and deaths resulting from blood feuds and violent conflicts relating to land disputes have decreased in recent years, people in the rural areas of these regions fear that the number of conflicts could rise again, and keep a weapon for personal and family protection.⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, it would be wrong to treat all of Albania as a single entity when referring to weapons collection, attitudes to the state and attitudes to weapons possession. Therefore, another challenge for weapons collection programmes in Albania has been how to overcome the regional differences.

6.5.6 Incentive based or coercive approaches

Most interviewees stressed that an amnesty and the voluntary surrender and collection of weapons were simply not enough to get people to hand their unregistered weapons to the police or local authorities. Either sticks, carrots or a combination of the two would result in the return of most of the remaining SALW, they argued. Thus, a number of police officials stated that people need to be pressurised into returning the weapons and be made aware that to retain an unregistered firearm would lead to severe punishment. Some believed that arrests and the imprisonment of those who had not voluntarily surrendered weapons should have been made during the amnesty period.⁶⁴¹ Of course, as we have seen above, this requires political will and the rigid application of clearly defined laws – a combination that has not always been present in the state's approach to unregistered weapons. Yet, the strict application of the law was an issue called for by many respondents, with a number of police officials raising pragmatic concerns with the approach taken hitherto.

Of course the threat of prison or fines would not be enough for some Albanians.

⁶³⁹ International organisations scored the highest trust ratings in the May 2005 opinion polls carried out by Gallup International and Mjaft. The EU was ranked as trustworthy by 65 percent of respondents, NATO by 64.5 percent and the OSCE by 57.1 percent. The UN was not listed. Source: op cit Elections 2005 Public Opinion Polls, 1 June 2005, p. 20.

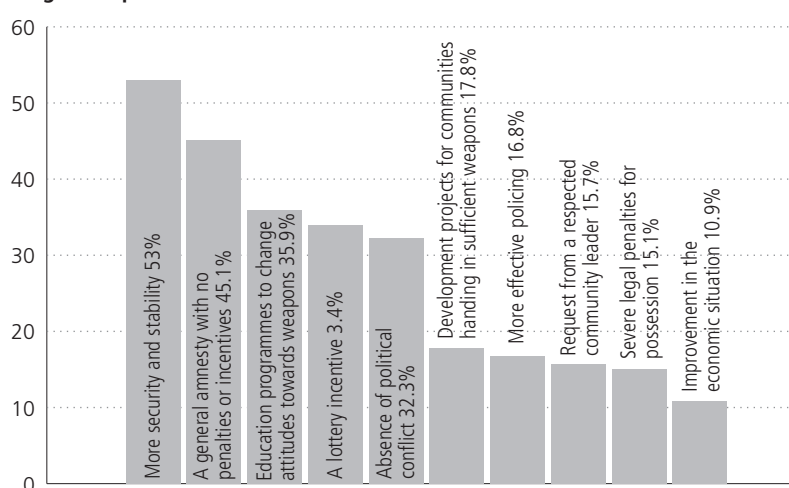
⁶⁴⁰ Interviews, local government official, 28 April 2005; NGO representative, 27 April 2005; MoPo official, 27 April 2005; MOPO official, 14 June 2005; MoJ official, 15 May 2005.

⁶⁴¹ Interviews, MOPO official, 14 May 2005; MOPO official, 13 May 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005.

Therefore, it was argued that weapons would only normally be surrendered in return for some form of reward or incentive.⁶⁴² The looted weapons may not have cost the looters in financial terms, but they knew that the weapons had a value and certainly did not seem to regard them as 'state property'. As will be discussed in more detail below, the lack of individual incentives did not deter thousands of Albanians from voluntarily surrendering their unregistered weapons. Yet, in many cases, these weapons were surrendered because a collective reward would be received by the community as part of one of the UNDP's projects. As one interviewee stated, the amnesty and weapons collection programme will only really deliver if Albanians are offered something in return for their weapons.⁶⁴³

In the opinion poll carried out in spring 2005 by ISO for this report, respondents were asked to choose the three main factors that they believed would make people in their community more willing to hand in their illegal weapons. The results can be found in the table below:

What three things would make people more likely to hand in their illegal weapons?



The fact that more than half of those asked believe that levels of security and stability need to be increased before people will be willing to surrender their illegally held weapons voluntarily lends weight to suggestions that the success of weapons collection efforts depends on more than the structure put in place and the incentives and penalties for surrendering or keeping unregistered weapons. It is also worth highlighting that despite appearing in the table above as the second most popular choice, the level of support for this option differed greatly between the different regions of Albania. For example, while 79 percent of respondents in central Albania believed that a general amnesty was a significant factor for encouraging the voluntary surrender of SALW, only 49 percent of respondents in the south, 29 percent in the north and 19 percent in Tirana agreed. While 55 percent of respondents from Tirana stated that education programmes would help to encourage the voluntary surrender of illegally held weapons, 45 percent of respondents in the south, 22 percent in the north and 19 percent in the centre thought that this option would have a significant impact. Only 29 percent of those aged between 18 and 30 years old selected this option, in comparison to a high of 46 percent for those aged between 31 and 40. There were no large regional differences for those who supported the idea that community development projects would act as an incentive to surrender weapons.

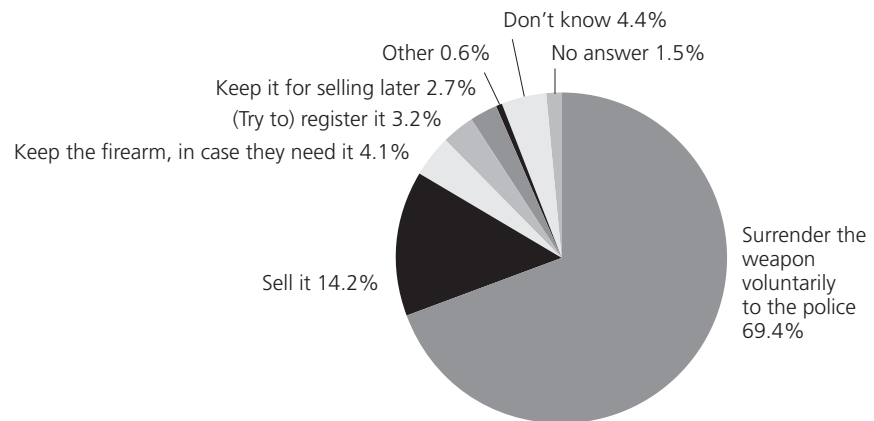
Yet despite the fact that the expert opinions outlined above suggest that people would be unwilling to voluntarily surrender their illegally held weapons without an incentive, 69.4 percent of respondents in the ISO survey stated that this is what they would tell a

⁶⁴² Interviews, local government official, 12 May 2005; MOPO official, 27 April 2005; MOD official, 13 June 2005; local government official, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁴³ Interview, international organisation official, 13 June 2005.

friend to do with their unregistered firearms. The percentage of respondents who selected this option dropped from 80.5 percent in Tirana to 61 percent in the north, with 73 percent in the centre and 69 percent in the south. However, as the table below shows, more than twenty percent of respondents would urge their friend to keep the weapon or sell it for a personal profit, with six percent of respondents in the north urging their friends to keep the weapon in case they needed it. It is tempting to assume that the numbers of those urging friends to keep or sell unregistered SALW would be higher if the individuals were actually put into such a situation rather than asked hypothetically.

What would you advise a friend to do with an unregistered SALW?



Of course, there are also those who will not be convinced to part with their unregistered guns, whether by greater stability, lotteries, educational and awareness raising programmes, development projects or police visits. While all interviewees put criminals into this group, ordinary citizens were also included. For example, here one would include those for whom a gun was regarded as necessary for providing personal and family security or tradition. These people would go to considerable lengths to ensure that their weapons were not discovered, with weapons collectors noting that people were no longer simply hiding guns under their beds, but in more ingenious or awkward-to-reach places.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁴ Interview, MOPO official, 14 July 2005.

Options for the future

*The EU welcomes the conclusion of the election process in Albania, which has resulted in the first peaceful transfer of power since the fall of Communism. The Union congratulates the Government of Prime Minister Berisha on its appointment by the new Parliament. It calls on the new Parliament and the new Government to advance Albania's progress towards EU integration by beginning work without delay and with genuine commitment on a clear and strong reform agenda.*⁶⁴⁵

This Survey report is an important element of a longer and more complex process which aims to assist the Government of Albania in identifying problems related to small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse and exploring their relationship with broader areas of concern including community safety, sustainable development and increasing access to decision making and justice for the civilian population. It is anticipated that this report will act as an important guide for the development of strategies and actions to be implemented by the Government of Albania – with its civil society and international partners – to address these problems. It does not however seek to outline specific recommendations for change. These are contained in a separate but associated document which outlines areas in which it is recommended that the Government takes action and suggests a series of specific steps that could act as an initial framework for change. Although it does not represent official Albanian Government Policy this second document has been developed in consultation with key ministries in Albania including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to the very specific recommendations contained in this associated document there are a series of priority areas for change that can be drawn from the experiences of other states that have embarked on similar processes. These priority areas provide the fundamentals of an effective approach to tackling the negative impacts of SALW proliferation and misuse in Albania.

Establishing the rule of law. It is essential that whatever the Government decides to do on this issue that changes are clearly codified in legislation and accompanying regulations. Decisions on a range of important issues including reducing the numbers of illicit SALW in circulation, regulation of private security provision, regulation of arms exports and institutionalising inter-ministerial co-operation to name just four areas must be grounded in the rule of law. It would seem that failure to provide a strong legal footing for future action will lead to confusion and contest over its legitimacy and scope

⁶⁴⁵ "Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union regarding the formation of a new government of Albania", 12060/2/05 REV 2 (Presse 227), Brussels, 15 September 2005, < <http://europa.eu.int> >

Enhancing coordination and co-operation between and within the different government departments. Effective SALW control is a multifaceted and very complicated exercise, which requires collaboration and coordinated input from many different stakeholders. In the past attempts to address specific problems in Albania have suffered not from a lack of effort or commitment but from poor coordination and co-operation. The establishment of a national coordination body to guide the development and implementation of strategies to address SALW challenges is an essential step in the efforts of any state. Coordination and co-operation does not mean that all stakeholders should be involved at all levels in every activity. Leadership is essential for effective coordinated action, as is the willingness of some to step aside for others to take the lead when their function indicates that they are best suited to the job.

Developing a national strategy for SALW control in its entirety. SALW control requires action on many issues and at a range of different levels. Dealing with one aspect of the problem may in fact exacerbate the negative impact of others. Addressing all elements of the SALW control puzzle together and in a comprehensive manner is essential to successful implementation of specific, targeted projects and programmes. During the development of a national SALW control strategy, all those with a stake in the issue should be involved. In countries with a developed approach to SALW control the following are amongst those most often included: representatives from police, customs, military, foreign affairs, civilian licensing, transfer licensing, health, education, local government, tourism, economy, emergency planning, the office of the prime minister, civil society and the civilian population.

Tackling SALW as part of a broader reform programme. The SALW situation will never be stabilised effectively without tackling corruption, addressing outstanding social issues including solving long running property disputes and resolving tensions linked to poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, poor pay for Government employees and a lack of trust in the police and other state institutions. As well as the development of specific plans for addressing SALW, it is also important that SALW control be incorporated into broader reform, poverty alleviation and development strategies.

Encouraging more effective donor coordination. Addressing Albania's SALW challenges is a collaborative process that should of course be led by the Government. However, for this process to work, it is important that the Government receives appropriate support from its international partners. The development of a co-ordinated SALW control strategy that is owned by the Government and implemented with rigour and purpose will demonstrate intent to potential supporters and assist them in providing coordinated and effective support.

Demonstrating the political will to tackle SALW and security problems. A policy of denying the existence of the problems or de-prioritising action to address them will not make them go away. It will also not persuade the EU and other potential partners that there is no longer a problem. The experiences of other states that have both recently acceded to the EU or that are due to accede in the near future is clear – publicly identifying and tackling arms control challenges are hallmarks of a positive and confident Government that can act as a serious and committed member of the European family.

APPENDIX 1: Table of SALW transfers compiled from documentation on MEICO transfers⁶⁴⁶

Date	Transaction type	Stated destination	Stated end-use	Stated end-use(r)	SALW type	Cost (US\$)	Quantity
05 Sep 1992	Export	Slovenia	–	–	Grenades 120 mm Grenades 82 mm Ammunition 7.62 mm	800,000 60,000 450,000	10,000 units 1,000 units 5 millions
02 Dec 1992	Export	Slovenia	–	–	T.N.T K.A – 47 Ammunition 7.62 mm	298,000 5,200 6,300	400 T 40 T 70,000 T
16 Dec 1992	Export	Macedonia	–	–	N/A	35,000	US\$ 7,000,000
25 May 1993	Export	Canada/US	–	–	Weapons & ammunitions – N/A	360,000	–
25 May 1993	Export	Canada/US	–	–	Weapons & ammunitions – N/A	643,356.78	–
22 Sep 1993	Export	Digna, Swakin (Indonesian buyer)	–	–	Cartridge Belts 12.7 mm RBJ7 40 mm Cartridge Belts 7.72 mm	800,000 110,000 2,790,170	1,000,000 units 1,000 units 37,000,000 units
22 Sep 1993	Export	US	–	–	Russian guns SKS	13,200	600 units
12 Oct 1994	Export	Sudan	–	–	Submachine-gun AK-47 Ammunition 7.62x39 Basis RBG-7 Cartridges-cases RBG-7 40mm Defensive grenades Offensive grenades TNT	425,000 1,100,000 210,000 300,000 60,000 60,000 12,000	5,000 units 20,000,000 units 300 units 5,000 units 20,000 units 20,000 units 10 T
04 Nov 1994	Export	N/A (US buyer)	–	–	Russian guns SKS Russian guns Chinese guns	*1728 *1587 30	24 units 23 units 1 unit
04 Jan 1995	Export	Turkey	–	–	Ammunition 7.62mm	136,000	2,000,000 units
02 Feb 1995	Export	Dubai	–	–	Ammunition 7.62x39	65,000	1,000,000 units
15 Feb 1995	Export	Azerbaijan	–	–	Ammunition 7.62x39	1,800,000	40,000,000 units
30 Jun 1995	Export	Turkey	–	–	Ammunition 7.62x39 Ammunition 7.92x54 Ammunition 7.92 Hand-grenades	630,000 204,000 120,000 360,000	10,000,000 units 3,000,000 units 2,000,000 units 80,000 units
30 Jun 1995	Export	Turkey	–	–	Gunpowder Ammunition Ammunition 7.92mm Hexogen Hexanol Cartridges 7.62mm Cartridges 12.7mm	85,400 140,000 140,000 5,200 4,200 74 400	7 T 2,000,000 units 2,000,000 units 1 T 1 T 10,000 units 20,000 units
26 Jul 1995	Export	Afghanistan	–	–	Ammunition 6.72x39mm Cartridge-cases for mortars 120mm Ammunition 14.5mm Ammunition RPG-7	325,000 350,000 150,000 20,000	5,000,000 units 5,000 units 150,000 units 500 units
15 Apr 2000	Export	Tirana, Albania	–	–	German machine-guns 9mm MP 40 Machine-guns 7.622 mm MG 34 Austrian machine-guns 8 mm	5,600 17,500 255	80 units 100 units 1 unit
16 Aug 2000	Export	Kosovo	–	–	Fuse wire Cartridges KD8 Detonating cord Electrical caps Ammonite fl 60mm Plastic explosive materials D3	48 29 28,336 432 45,144 204,000	120 units 96 units 30,800 units 850 units 6.5 T 12 T
18 Aug 2000	Export	USA or Canada	–	–	Specified in Annex A N/A	1,707,100	–

⁶⁴⁶ Summary of information contained in MEICO's report on all official Albanian arms transfers between 1992 and 2004. This report is a compilation of commercial contracts processed by MEICO during this period. In most cases no independent corroboration on specifics such as stated destinations or end-use is readily available.

Date	Transaction type	Stated destination	Stated end-use	Stated end-use(r)	SALW type	Cost (US\$)	Quantity
18 Feb 2001	Export	Germany	–	Military Import-Export Company Sauer	German weapons, various Russian weapons Swords for ceremonial use Austrian automatic weapons Sub-machine guns and Machine guns	48,505	–
15 Jul 2002	Export	Germany	To be de-activated	Military Import-Export Company Sauer	Machine guns, various Austrian submachine guns 8mm German submachine guns 9mm	53,300	
10 Aug 2002	Export	USA	–	–	Italian ammunition 6.5mm English ammunition 7.7mm German ammunition 7.92mm Albanian ammunition 7.62x54mm	3,630 11,060 33,380 150,000	242,000 units 550,000 units 1,669,000 units 5,000,000 units
11 Oct 2002	Export	–	–	–	Specified in Annex 1 N/A	440,200	–
03 Apr 2003	Import	Albania	–	–	Ammunition 7.62x54Rmm	420,000	2,000,000 units
03 Apr 2003	Export	Israel	–	Verona Commodities Ltd Israel	Ammunition 7.62x39mm Ammunition 9x19mm Mortar rounds 82mm	168,000 60,000 –	3,000,000 units 1,000,000 units 8 units
Jun 2003	Export	Knoxville, USA	–	–	Sportive semi-automatic gun	647.6	1 unit
20 Aug 2003	Export	UK	–	“Imperial Defense Services” Ltd	Cartridge belts 7.62x54mm (Albanian production of ‘70–‘80) Cartridge belts 7.62x54mm (Russian production 1950–60) Cartridge belts 7.71x56mm (USA-British production) Machine-guns 7.62x54mm (with all the other parts) Anti-tank guns 14.5mm (one cartridge) Anti-tank guns 14.5mm (with 5 cartridge belts) Cartridge belts 14.5x54mm (German & Czech production)	75,000 60,000 14,000 14,000 5,000 500 6,000	3,000,000 units 3,000,000 units 553,000 units 200 units 100 units 10 units 300,000 units
17 May 2004	Export	Germany	–	Sauer Military, Germany	German guns 7.92mm (different types in bad condition) Machine guns (different types in bad condition) Submachine guns 7.92x57mm Model MG 34 (in bad condition) Submachine guns 8mm Shvarsloser (in bad condition) Submachine guns 7.62mm MAXIM 34 (in normal condition) Machine guns 7.62mm PPSH-41 (in normal condition) Submachine guns Bren (in bad condition)	2,000 56,000 6,000 5,000 7,000 6,750 24,500	100 units 70 units 120 units 100 units 100 units 150 units 350 units

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List of key interviewees

1. Doug Adams, Deputy Head of PAMECA
2. Flori Ademaj, National Security Officer, OSCE
3. Illir Aliaj, former IWPR contributor
4. John Anderson, NAMSA
5. Anon, investigative journalist

6. Edmond Bahiti, Head of Sector for Illegal Trafficking
7. Artan Bajraktari, Head of Central Interpol Office
8. Ramazan Beka, Movement for Disarmament
9. Kostaq Beluri, Director of the Fight against Organised Crime and Witness Protection
10. Sali Berisha, head of Democratic Party
11. Roland Bimo, Secretary General of Albanian MFA
12. Richard Bone, Organised Crime Officer, PAMECA
13. Rodrigue Boulay, Technical Adviser, NAMSA
14. Phil Cox, Defence Attache at the British Embassy
15. James Deeney, Organised Crime Initiative Team Coordinator, CAM-A
16. Artan Didi, Director of Directorate for Order and Public Security
17. Fatmir Disha, head of operational division of Directorate of Customs
18. Lawrence Doczy, UNDP Security Sector Reform Programme
19. Namik Dokle, Deputy Prime Minister
20. Borut Erzen, International Advisers Border Management, PAMECA
21. Eglatina Gjermeni, Gender Alliance for Development Centre
22. Rasim Gjoka, Executive Director, Albanian Foundation “Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes”
23. Todi Grazhdani, Directorate for Community Policing and Weapons Collection
24. Spartak Gumaj, Head of Anti-trafficking Sector, Directorate of Fight Against Organised Crime
25. Arben Hanelli, Head of Sector for Border Services
26. Nikos Hatzis International Advisers Border Management, PAMECA
27. Bruce Hintz, ICITAP at US Embassy
28. Shaun Hollenbaugh, Naval Attache US Embassy
29. Bajram Ibraj, General Director of the State Police
30. Rebani Jaupi, Director of Directorate against Terrorist Acts
31. Lek Kashnjeti, MOI armoury
32. Petro Koçi, former Minister of Public Order (Oct. 97–Mar. 98) and Socialist Party Member of Parliament for Fier
33. Genci Kojdhelli, Advisor to the Minister of Public Order
34. Arben Kotobelli, Project Supervisor, NAMSA
35. Rima Koyler, Political Officer, US Embassy
36. MOD officials
37. Fami Neziri, Arms Control Sector, MOD
38. Ahmet Osmani, National Demilitarisation Centre
39. Adlej Pici, ISO
40. Ylli Pinari, General Director of MEICO
41. Joe Preston, British Embassy
42. Albert Rakipi, Albanian Institute for International Affairs
43. Bujar Ramaj, Albania Centre for the Study of Organised Crime and Mafia
44. Ardjan Robja, General Director, Republic of Albanian Ministry of Defence Explosives Plant, ULP Mjebes, Elbasan
45. Giovanni Santoro, Head of Italian Interforce Police Liaison Office
46. Dashamir Shehu, former head of the parliamentary Defence committee
47. Armand Skapi, Head of UN Department, Albanian MFA
48. Elton Skendaj, Director of Peace and Disarmament Education Centre
49. Kenn Underwood, EOD Solutions Ltd
50. Adrian Wilkinson, Team Leader, SEESAC
51. Erion Velliaj, director of Mjaft
52. Illirjan Zaimi, Head of Sector, Sector for Community Policing and Arms Collection

Regional Case Study Interviewees

Berat

1. Aleksander Baci, member of Berat Chamber of Commerce
2. Koco Dafa, Head of Berat Anti-trafficking unit
3. Alfred Kanani, Head of Public Order, Berat Police Commissariat

4. Memli Kasapi, Director of Polican Military Factory
5. Ymer Kordha, Director of External Affairs for Berat Regional Council
6. Arben Konomi, Doctor at Berat Emergency Department, Hospital
7. Lorenc Panganica, Director of Police, Berat
8. Anastas Pjetri, Director of Secondary School

Fier

9. Sali Caushaj, Armament Specialist for the Fier Police Directorate
10. Erjon Cela, Deputy General Prosecutor, General Prosecutor's Office, Fier District Court
11. Ilir Dano, Head of the Fier Regional Council
12. Bajram Gashi, Director of the Education Department, Fier Prefecture
13. Ali Hajdini, Chief Inspector, Fier Police Directorate
14. Agim Hysenaj, Weapons Collection Specialist, Fier Police Directorate
15. Fredi Jorgagji, Deputy Director of the Private High School "Flatrat e Dijes" and Helsinki Committee Correspondent for Fier
16. Iqmet Kononeci, Inspector, Administration of the Fier Prefecture
17. Qydret Kadija, Prosecutor, Fier District Court
18. Robert Metaj, Head of the Surgery Department, Fier Hospital
19. Rajmonda Stefa, Prefect of Fier
20. Marsida Xhafellari, Judge in Fier District Court
21. Hamza Xhafferaj, Head of the Law and Order Department, Fier Police Directorate
22. Baftjar Zeqo, Mayor of Fier

Gjirokastra

23. Besnik Alimema, Head of Weapons Collection Section, Gjirokastra Regional Police Directorate
24. Aristotel Gushi, Surgeon, Gjirokastra Hospital
25. Alfred Kondi, Head of Anti-Trafficking Unit, Gjirokastra Regional Police Directorate
26. Skender Muca, Deputy Chairperson, Gjirokastra Chamber of Commerce
27. Sokol Saho, Director of Gjirokastra Regional Police Directorate
28. Foto Soko, Director of Civil Emergency Office, Gjirokastra Prefecture
29. Thoma Voda, Director of "Koto Hoxhi" High School, Gjirokastra

Kukes

30. Avdulla Domi, Deputy Chairperson, Kukes Chamber of Commerce
31. Besnik Hallaci, Secretary General of the Kukes Prefecture
32. Jonuz Kola, Director of a victims association, Kukes
33. Dritan Musa, Head of Anti-trafficking unit, Kukes Regional Police Directorate
34. Bashkim Ngjeci, Secretary General of the Kukes Regional Council
35. Mark Nufi, Director of Kukes Hospital
36. Shkelqim Pepkola, Head of Kukes Police Commissariat
37. Violeta Sinani, Director of Secondary School, Kukes
38. Ylli Tafili, Director of Kukes Regional Police Directorate

Shkodra

39. Erzen Cera, Head of the Crime Department, Shkodra Police Directorate
40. Pellumb Dani, Head of the Emergency Department, Shkodra Prefecture
41. Gani Dega, Head of Disarmament, Shkodra Police Directorate
42. Gjergj Gjoni, Head of the Armament Department, Shkodra Police Directorate
43. Artan Haxhi, Mayor of Shkodra
44. Qamil Lluka, Deputy Director of the Shkodra Police Directorate
45. Simon Prendi, UNDP
46. Kol Shiroka, Human Resources Director, Education Directorate, Shkodra Prefecture
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Tirana

48. Asllan Domi, Tirana Police Directorate
49. Ilir Sula, Deputy Director, Tirana Police Directorate
50. Luan Hajce, Weapons Collection Chief, Tirana Police Directorate
51. Edlira Haxhiymeri, Prefect, Prefecture of Tirana

52. Agron Kamza, Law and Order Department, Head of Police Commissariat
53. Haxhi Sulaj, Office for Civil Emergencies, Weapons and Security Inspector, Prefecture of Tirana
54. Jorgo Lako, General Secretary, Hunters' Association 'Kujtim Pano'
55. Hajredin Kurti, Emergency, Order and Defence Head, Tirana Prefecture
56. Muhaedin Basha, Armament Department Chief, Tirana Police Directorate
57. Hazir Sadria, Director of Police, Rinas Airport
58. Perlat Rexhepi, Anti Trafficking Department Chief, Tirana Police Directorate
59. Fatmir Bezati, Ministry of Education
60. Alban Nelaj, Head, Albanian Student Government
61. Artan Broci, Judge, Tirana District Court

Other Field Trips

Weapons Collection Ceremony, Tirana Police Commissariat No. 1, 26 April 2005

Field trip to Elbasan – Mengel military base; Mirak ammunition depot; ULP Mjebes destruction facility, 27 July 2005

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COVER PHOTO: Weapons collected by the Albanian Ministry of Public Order being transferred for storage. April 2005. © SAFERWORLD



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