



PRIO

Nicholas Marsh

Monitoring and visualizing the small arms trade; the case for public reporting on the arms trade

Human Target conference, 1 June 2013

Peace Research Institute Oslo

Independent • International • Interdisciplinary

Monitoring the small arms trade

Small arms project at PRIO set up in 1997

From 2001 developed a database of the small arms trade

- Just contains official data
- Database contains over a million records

Also undertake daily media searches and store documents on an online archive

- Contains some 40 000 articles

Analyzing the data

- Developed a global dataset based upon Comtrade in 2003
- Based upon a single source
- Useful – has a single global classification system
- But there are gaps in reporting
 - *Small Arms Survey 2009: found that using additional data sources increased the identified value of military firearms by 32%*
 - *Some major exporters are mostly absent – Ukraine.*

Updating the dataset

- Wanted to create a dataset which would include data from many different sources
- Diverse weapons classification systems and types of data:
 - *License authorizations or actual deliveries*
 - *Financial value or units*
 - *Different currencies*
- Used the NISAT database www.prio.no/nisat

Method for creating a single dataset

- Based upon Small Arms Survey 2009 (done by hand)
- Use mirroring – find out about exports by looking at imports
- Gave every weapon type our own classification
 - *eg pistols are '210'*
- Convert other currencies into USD, adjust for inflation
- Convert units into financial value
- Develop a hierarchy of sources
 - *Decide which sources are more reliable eg, prefer data from national reports to Comtrade*
- Adjust records to avoid double counting (unspecified)

Display of the MAD visualization

- Show what can be done with publicly reported data
- Highlight trends and the structure of the trade
- Make the trade more understandable
- Originally developed by Google Ideas, now run by PRIO and the Igarapé Institute
- Available at www.prio.no/data/mapping-arms-data/

The case for public reporting

- Build confidence among states
 - Show that all are acting in accordance with international commitments
- Encourage oversight by national legislatures and civil society
 - *Governments can present the whole picture*
- Prevent diversion
 - *Need to understand the licensed flows*

Information already collected

- **Export licensing**
 - Exporting companies already need to apply for licenses
- **Customs authorities collect data on imports and exports of small arms and their ammunition**
 - Often reported to the UN's commodity statistics database (Comtrade)
 - Between 2007 and 2012
 - 115 states reported on trade in pistols
 - 124 states reported on trade in ammunition

Don't need to provide commercially sensitive information

- Aggregate the types small arms together
 - Small arms in general (eg MLI)
 - Types of small arms (eg Pistols and Revolvers)
- Only provide number of units or price
 - UN Register just includes number of units
 - Many national reports just report total financial value

Level of reporting

- 124 states have reported on at least one small arms and light weapons category to Comtrade
- 35 states have published a national arms export report
- 56 states have reported background information on small arms and light weapon transfers to the UN Register

Asking for better public reporting

- **Easy issue to campaign on**
 - governments often have the data
 - media is interested if it appears that the government is being secretive
- **Low cost, easy for governments to implement**
- **Problems**
 - Sometimes data collection capacity is lacking
 - Entrenched cultures of secrecy

Thanks for your attention

- Visit the online database at www.prio.no/nisat
- Visit the Mapping Arms Data project at www.prio.no/data/mapping-arms-data/