

12 revised and updated

Small Arms in Kyrgyzstan

Post-revolutionary Proliferation

By S. Neil MacFarlane and Stina Torjesen



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Acronyms and abbreviations

BOMCA	Border Management Programme in Central Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DCA	Drug Control Agency
EU	European Union
EUR	euro
EXBS	Export Control and Related Border Security (programme)
FTI	Foundation for Tolerance International
GDP	gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICG	International Crisis Group
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMT	Islamic Movement of Turkestan
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPAP	Interim Police Assistance Programme
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
MP	member of parliament
MVD	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NADR	Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related (programmes)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OVD	Provincial Internal Administration
PAP	Police Assistance Programme
Programme	UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
SNB	National Security Service
SVD	Dragunov sniper rifle

UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNODCCP	UN Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention
USD	US dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

Summary

The ousting of President Askar Akaev from power in March 2005 has resulted in a deteriorating security situation and an increase in the demand for and use of small arms in Kyrgyzstan.

The Small Arms Survey study published in 2004 (MacFarlane and Torjesen, 2004) found that small arms were less of a problem in Kyrgyzstan than commonly assumed: few families owned arms; demand was limited; and trafficking was modest. While the proliferation of small arms may pose a serious threat in countries such as Afghanistan, the research found that this assertion could not be applied to Central Asia as a whole.

A new assessment carried out in 2006 found some important changes, which are presented in an epilogue to this report (see Section VIII, below). While overall possession is still likely to be low, the rates for new persons acquiring firearms are growing fast. The law enforcement system has less control and oversight than previously over the population, and organized crime has gained a stronger foothold in Kyrgyzstan in recent years. The country has recently also witnessed several shoot-outs between the government and armed radical religious groups. The 2004 report detailed the weapons possession and use of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), but found little evidence of firearm possession among other groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. Recent (2005–06) incidents point to increased weapons possession among radical religious groups aside from the IMU.

Kyrgyzstan, which has a population of about five million, still has relatively low overall firearm crime and firearm injury rates—although there have been steep increases in the period 2004–06. From 2001 to 2003 there were 33 officially recorded murders by firearms and 325 firearm-related incidents. The rates of murder by firearms rose to 35 in the year 2004 and 41 in 2005.¹

Government weapons stockpiles continue to be vulnerable to theft. The 2004 study documented several attacks on police weapons stores, and the epilogue highlights an attack on and theft of weapons at a Kyrgyz–Tajik border post on 12 May 2006.

Arms trafficking through Kyrgyzstan is still likely to be modest. The 2004 study found no evidence of major weapons smuggling occurring in conjunction with drugs and human trafficking—both of which are large-scale problems in Central Asia. Three types of arms flows were identified in Central Asia. The first involved the retreat of Soviet forces with their equipment from Afghanistan in 1989, mainly through Uzbekistan. The second type related to the arming of different factions in the Tajik civil war from 1992 to 1997. Most of these weapons originated in the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Thirdly, the Russian Federation and other countries supplied Afghan allies with weapons in the 1990s, and the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh was at times used as a transit point for these weapons. The support to Afghanistan continues to this day, with countries such as the Russian Federation and the United States supplying arms and spare parts, some of which may be shipped though Central Asia. Law enforcement officers note the possibility that there are weapons at present flowing in to radical religious groups and armed criminal groups from outside the country, but these claims have so far not been backed up by hard evidence.

The 2004 study was based on extensive primary research. The researchers undertook more than 80 interviews, commissioned a thorough newspaper review, and organized a household survey in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan. To ascertain public perceptions of small arms in the country, the 2004 study implemented a household survey in the two southern provinces of Osh and Batken, where political tension has been high. Half of the respondents claimed that ‘almost no households’ had firearms, while 24 per cent noted that ‘a few households’ had firearms. In describing perceptions of security, almost all respondents (98.7 per cent) said that no one in their household had been threatened or made fearful by the use of firearms in the previous three months. The majority of respondents (49.2 per cent) listed ‘theft’ when asked to identify common types of crime in their area. Most of the respondents thought their safety was the same (51.7 per cent) or better (33.1 per cent) than in other parts of the country. 🗨️

There has been a major increase in demand for weapons, people's perception of their personal security has in many cases plummeted, and a number of high-profile killings of politicians, as well as dramatic shoot-outs between law enforcement forces and radical religious groups, have put firearms violence at the forefront in security assessments of Kyrgyzstan.

I. Introduction

This is a reissue of the Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper No. 12, *Kyrgyzstan: A Small Arms Anomaly in Central Asia?* (MacFarlane and Torjesen, 2004), which was published in February 2004. Kyrgyzstan has since been the scene of major political change. The ousting of President Askar Akaev in March 2005 changed the political configurations in the country—and also brought about substantial alterations in the security situation, including enhanced demand for and use of small arms. In light of these increasing concerns over the small arms situation, a reissue of the 2004 report is timely. It is complemented by a new epilogue detailing key developments regarding small arms and light weapons since 2004, as well as a revised introduction. Sections II–VII of the present report therefore reflect the situation as it stood in 2004, while section VIII, the epilogue, reflects changes that took place in the period 2004–06.



Protesters pursue riot police as they storm the government headquarters in Bishkek on 24 March 2005.

© Gleb Shchelkunov/Izvestia/AP Photo

Findings from the fieldwork undertaken in summer 2003 indicated that the generally expressed expectations regarding the degree and seriousness of small arms possession, use, and proliferation in Kyrgyzstan were exaggerated by analysts.² Possession (legal and illegal) appeared to be relatively low. Researchers found no firm evidence of a link between the trafficking in small arms and that in drugs and people (both of which were and continue to be serious problems). Small arms violence was limited, and related casualty rates were low. In short, the study contested the conventional wisdom that Central Asia as a whole was awash with arms, and highlighted the necessity of disaggregating regional generalizations.³

The 2006 reassessment identified important continuities: Kyrgyzstan is still not a society awash with weapons. Acquiring a legal weapon is a cumbersome and expensive process, and this bars many ordinary citizens from obtaining one. The official statistics for murders by firearms continue to be low: 35 persons killed in 2004 and 41 in 2005. At the same time, however, there has been a major increase in demand for weapons, people's perceptions of their personal security has in many cases plummeted, and a number of high-profile killings of politicians, as well as dramatic shoot-outs between law enforcement forces and radical religious groups, have put firearms violence at the forefront in security assessments of Kyrgyzstan.

The 2004 report suggested several components of an explanation for why Kyrgyzstan was not awash with weapons. The stockpile of arms in Kyrgyzstan at the time of independence was smaller than that in neighbouring republics (e.g. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). The absence of a history of civil war and collapse meant that the authorities did not lose control of the small arms issue to the extent that they did in states such as Georgia or Tajikistan. For criminals engaged in drugs and people trafficking, the disincentives to supplementing their trade with small arms were significant. And there was no obvious incentive to smuggle arms through Kyrgyzstan to nearby demand centres. The Russian Federation has plentiful supplies of its own, as do Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It was also noted that the general level of security in the country remained sufficiently strong so as not to provide a significant incentive for individuals to arm themselves for their own protection. Most of these factors still held sway in Kyrgyzstan in 2006. One factor stands out nevertheless as

significantly altered: what was in 2004 termed the 'general security situation'. The ousting of President Askar Akaev brought insecurities and temporary spells of chaos, while the law enforcement forces also seem to have been in a state of disarray since March 2005. These two factors have led to a worsening of the security situation and an increase in the proliferation of small arms in Kyrgyzstan.

A transformation of law and order is currently unfolding in Kyrgyzstan. The country is moving from Soviet totalitarian methods of rule to more liberal modes. The former were characterized by comprehensive oversight and control over the population by law enforcement forces coupled with harsh and repressive measures for offenders and an ingrained fear of the law enforcement apparatus. Strict controls and limits on arms possession by civilians were a central piece of the domestic security architecture of the Soviet Union—and this resulted in exceptionally low firearm violence rates in the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kyrgyzstan's independence in 1991, this security architecture, while experiencing significant strain, continued operating. This ensured that the relatively low demand and possession rates for small arms in Kyrgyzstan also continued. Over the last two years, however, it has become increasingly clear that the past security architecture is in the process of collapsing. It has primarily been hollowed out by long-term financial strain. A decade-long shortage of funds for the law enforcement forces has created a symbiotic relationship between the criminal world and law enforcement agencies. Criminal elements, due to their financial power, are reportedly increasingly able to influence the way the police and secret service (the National Security Service or SNB) operate (ICG, 2005, pp. 16–17). At the same time, the liberal pressure for a more humane and law-governed police structure has ensured that the element of fear, on which the law enforcement forces capitalized in Soviet times in order to maintain control, has largely disappeared.

The result is a police and SNB that, when faced with the challenge of large-scale political upheaval in 2005, were unable to uphold public order during the 'revolution' or to play a constructive role in helping Kyrgyzstan restore stability.

Response from the international community

The grave challenges facing Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement agencies call for a serious response and support from the international community. Two initiatives are already leading the way. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Police Assistance Programme (PAP) for Kyrgyzstan was launched in 2003. Its main aim was to 'assist Kyrgyzstan in preparing the ground for a comprehensive transformation of the Kyrgyz police force into a modern organization serving the needs and protecting the rights of the Kyrgyz people' (OSCE, 2006, p. 1). A second phase of the initiative began in June 2005 with the Interim Police Assistance Programme (IPAP), which addresses public security needs and continues to develop the legal and institutional framework for substantive police reform (OSCE, 2006). The European Union (EU)-sponsored Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) aims to ensure a gradual adoption of 'modern border management methods in Central Asia', in order to facilitate enhanced border security and legal trade and transit (EC CADAP, n.d.). In Kyrgyzstan the project has included training for border staff and the creation of mobile patrolling units in pilot zones.

If successful, these projects could indirectly benefit the small arms situation in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE PAP and IPAP projects may result in a more efficient and also more public-service-oriented police force. BOMCA may result in enhanced border controls. The former would help restore public confidence, improve security, and reduce demand for small arms on the part of ordinary citizens; the latter may help stem the potential inflow of small arms to Kyrgyzstan. Neither of these above-mentioned programmes, however, targets directly the challenge of increased small arms proliferation in Kyrgyzstan, and the problems facing Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement system may prove to run far deeper than the issues the two programmes are addressing.

The international community needs to acknowledge the seriousness of the challenges facing Kyrgyzstan and consider extending the support offered. There are a number of positive developments that can be built on, such as the innovation spearheaded by the OSCE of involving civil society actively in order to ensure a responsive police force and targeted and effective police assistance. This is a constructive way of capitalizing on the mobilized and invigorated civil society—and might help avoid a scenario where political participation by ordinary citizens mutates into chaos and anarchy.

New or enhanced security support programmes could also usefully integrate the issue of small arms into project activities. Stockpile security is a key area where upgrades are needed. The law enforcement agencies need to review their inventory and record-keeping procedures. In light of attacks on weapons storerooms, most recently at the Kyrgyz–Tajik border on 12 May 2006 (see epilogue), locks and other safety measures need to be improved. Kazakhstan recently undertook a weapons collection campaign; Kyrgyzstan could usefully study the lessons learned from this initiative and consider undertaking similar measures in order to reduce illegal possession in society. Law enforcement agencies in Kyrgyzstan claim that armed radical religious groups and criminal groups receive weapons from abroad (see epilogue), but there is as yet little concrete evidence on these possible inflows (*Transitions Online*, 2006c). The Border Guard Service as well as the police and SNB could usefully undertake a publicly available assessment of the potential challenge weapons inflows may represent for Kyrgyz society.

Kyrgyzstan is now at a crossroads: there is a nascent drive towards creating an effective public-service-oriented police force that respects human rights, guarantees public security, and in turn is able to uphold an effective firearms control regime. At the same time, the police force is severely challenged by financial and organizational issues (see epilogue). A further reduction in the capacity of law enforcement agencies is not an unlikely scenario—in which case the situation with regard to small arms and light weapons will worsen further. The Small Arms Survey is reissuing this report with the view to generating more attention, from outside the country and from within Kyrgyzstan, regarding the grave security challenges the country is facing, while also highlighting some of the positive features of the small arms situation in Kyrgyzstan—such as the historically low firearm violence rates. This nuanced message will hopefully spur the development of timely outside support that is tailor-made for the Kyrgyz context.

Outline of the present study

The present study discusses the increase in small arms proliferation in the epilogue (Section VIII). As indicated above, except for the introduction, the

content of the other sections remains as it was in the first (2004) version of the paper: after a description of the political, socio-economic and social, and regional context, the paper assesses general patterns and trends of arms availability, possession, use, demand, and impact as they appeared in early 2004. When available, statistics from the 2004 study have been supplemented by more recent figures. The study continues with an account of regional dynamics relevant to the evaluation of the small arms issue, and then examines public perceptions of the small arms problem. A discussion of national, civil society, and international responses to the issue of small arms in Kyrgyzstan rounds off the 2004 material.

Methods

Before proceeding, it is appropriate to comment on a number of methodological problems encountered in this project. Regarding official data, researchers faced serious difficulties in obtaining time-series data on weapons possession (legal and illegal) and use, firearm-related deaths and injuries, and leakage of weapons from official sources. Kyrgyz authorities display a distinctly Soviet hangover in their belief that information should be a commodity in short supply. The owners may use it for their own ends and thus be reluctant to share information. On the other hand, official estimates obtained in interviews were, broadly speaking, sufficiently consistent to provide a clear account of official views on the dimensions of the problem.

Official information—in Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere—is vulnerable to motivated bias.⁴ Government personnel in Kyrgyzstan have an interest in projecting an image of stability, security, and effective control, which may affect the reliability of their information. Researchers were struck, for example, by the fact that cause-of-death data for 2002 showed no substantial increase in firearm fatalities, when it is well known that security forces killed six people in a disturbance in Aksy during that year. According to official data for all of Kyrgyzstan, there were six firearm fatalities in 2000 and nine in 2002. Somewhat paradoxically, although seeking to minimize impressions of endogenous instability and insecurity, the Kyrgyz government also has an interest in inflating the dimensions of exogenous threats to its security (e.g. terrorism and drugs trafficking). The

Kyrgyz experience suggests that external flows of assistance are determined in considerable measure by outside perceptions of the dimensions of such problems. Based on 12 years of experience, and having seen the significant increase in contributions from donors following the events in the United States of 11 September 2001, Kyrgyz officials expect donors' perceptions of regional security issues to play a considerable role in the distribution of aid. Opposition figures and the NGO community may have divergent biases, resulting in inflation of their estimates of the small arms problem. These variations came out clearly in the contrasts between official and non-official sources.

Data may also be distorted for other economic reasons. It is probable, for example, that widespread corruption of public officials affects data concerning reported crime, as, in return for a bribe, police may not report the crime.

There is also reason to question the capacity of official organs to generate complete data on various aspects of the study (e.g. size of weapons stockpiles). It is not clear whether the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defence had full data on weapons left among the armed forces and in government stockpiles at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the joint command structures of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991–92. Comprehensive data collection was also impeded by the propensity of government agencies holding firearms (e.g. the Ministry of Internal Affairs [MVD], the Ministry of Defence, the customs and tax services, and the Border Guard Service) to limit data sharing among themselves on quantity and types of weapons. Official data was also affected by changes in measurement methods. For example, apparent increases in National Statistical Committee figures for firearm-related injuries may simply reflect more sophisticated approaches to data collection rather than any significant change in the rate of injury. Finally, in Kyrgyzstan as elsewhere, it is intrinsically difficult to estimate illegal possession, as well as trafficking. As one Kyrgyz official put it: 'If we knew how many there were, we would know where they were, we would confiscate them, and then they wouldn't be illegal anymore.'⁵

Concerning external data sources, researchers noted that these are largely dependent on inputs from government agencies, which suffer from the same problems at one remove. In addition, external agencies are not immune to motivated bias. Budgets and activities are in part affected by funders' perceptions

of the seriousness of the issue at hand. Implementing agencies have not only a professional propensity to emphasize the importance of their issues, but also a material stake in emphasizing them. More broadly, some major state actors (notably the Russian Federation and the United States) have strategic reasons to enhance their engagement in the region. In response, potential aid recipients may exaggerate the threats that justify such engagement.

Household survey data suffers from the fact that people may be reluctant to talk to strangers about firearm possession and use. Interview respondents in Kyrgyzstan often inquired who was behind the survey and whether the information would be handed to government authorities. The language in which interviewing is conducted and the ethnic origin of the interviewer may also affect the results.

With these difficulties in mind, the researchers developed a deliberately eclectic methodology. They began with a thorough desk review of primary and secondary sources (academic, governmental, and international organizations and NGOs). They also commissioned a survey of the Kyrgyz newspaper *Delo No*, which focuses on crime and criminality. They then proceeded to a sustained search for official statistics on possession, use, and impact. Given difficulties inevitably encountered with official data, they complemented this effort with a wide range of elite interviews both in Bishkek and in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Interview subjects included officials from the Foreign, Interior, and Defence Ministries, and the SNB, as well as a selection of medical personnel, journalists, academics, and civil society representatives. In addition, researchers interviewed a wide range of diplomatic and international organization personnel, and representatives of international NGOs. It is believed that the breadth of the interview sample provides an adequate basis for triangulation of interview results.

Research was conducted not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of regional dynamics of arms flows, as well as the connection between these flows and other modes of trafficking. In order to ascertain public perceptions of the issue, researchers designed and implemented a household survey, focusing on the south, where political tension and criminality have been high. They were careful to seek a balance between Kyrgyz and minority communities. Given limited resources, the sample was too small to be statistically significant, but is nevertheless

indicative of perceptions of the problem in these key regions. In specific situations, researchers complemented their survey efforts by attending village meetings. 🗨️

II. Context

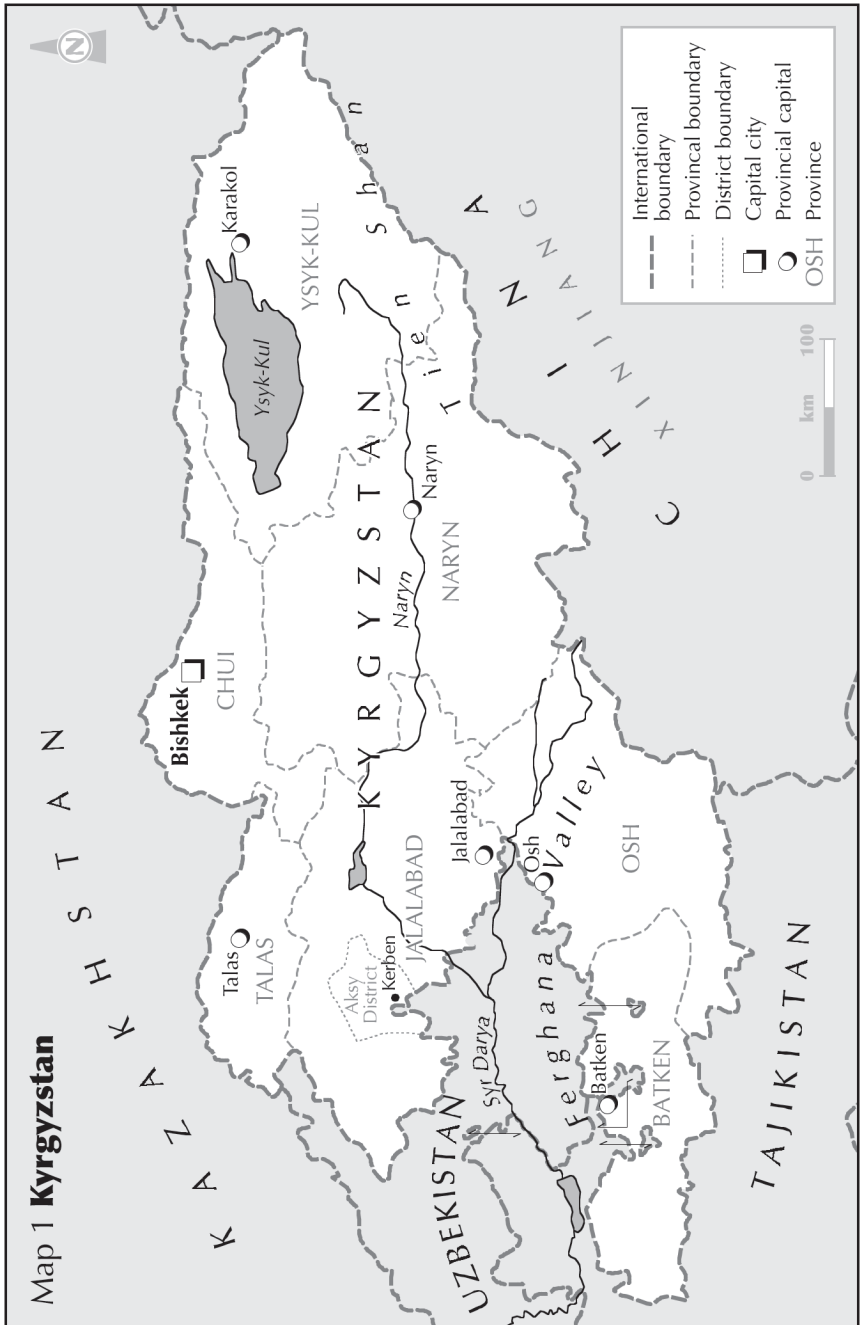
This section provides statistical information and associated commentary as background for the more specific discussion of small arms that follows. In addition, from the perspective of conflict prevention, the data provides a basis for a preliminary judgement on the durability of political stability in Kyrgyzstan. As will be seen, the republic displays many of the root causes generally considered to favour internal conflict.

Demographic and ethnic issues

The Kyrgyz Republic is slightly smaller than the United Kingdom, covering some 199,900 square kilometres. More than 90 per cent is mountainous terrain, of which 12.5 per cent is arable. According to the national census of March 1999, the country's population is 4.9 million (see Tables 1 and 2 for general and ethnically specific demographic data). Two-thirds of the population are ethnic Kyrgyz, with significant Russian (11.2 per cent) and Uzbek (11.2 per cent) minorities. There are no identifiable tensions in Kyrgyz–Russian relations, although there has been a significant decline in the Russian population since independence, owing to emigration. This change has significant implications for the legal possession of arms, since Russians made up a disproportionately high proportion of firearm owners in Kyrgyzstan.⁶

Kyrgyz–Uzbek relations are a different story. Uzbeks are for the most part compactly settled in agricultural communities in the Ferghana Valley of southern Kyrgyzstan. Significant land and water shortages affect both populations and have encouraged competition between them, and, to a lesser extent, between Kyrgyz and Tajiks (0.9 per cent of the population). These tensions boiled over into communal conflict in 1990 in Osh and Uzgen (see Box 1).

The Osh and Uzgen events of 1990 constitute the most-serious ethnic conflict to date in Kyrgyzstan; however, there have been smaller incidents in southern Kyrgyzstan, such as clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the Batken area in



Box 1

Ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan⁷

During the week of 4 June 1990, violence between ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Kyrgyz broke out in the southern city of Osh and surrounding villages. Disagreement over land sparked the riots. The Kyrgyz nationalist organization Osh Aymaghi demanded that land belonging to an Uzbek collective farm be distributed to the Kyrgyz for housing projects. As the authorities started reallocating small parts of the land, clashes broke out on the outskirts of Osh city. The violence continued in Uzgen and other nearby areas the following day, as rumours spread about the event. Fear of attack and pledges of revenge from both sides fuelled the escalation in fighting. The riots ended when a state of emergency was imposed and Soviet troops were brought in, preventing, some Kyrgyz observers note, mobs of Uzbeks from Andijan in neighbouring Uzbekistan from joining the riot.⁸ Official sources claim 120 Uzbeks, 50 Kyrgyz, and 1 Russian were killed. The investigation commission registered more than 5,000 crimes, including murder, rape, and pillage. Most commentators note the death toll is likely to have been more than 171. Lubin et al. (1999) claim that Kyrgyz authorities have admitted to at least 300 dead, but that the number could be significantly higher. The International Crisis Group (ICG) alleges, on the basis of UN Development Programme (UNDP) sources, that as many as 1,000 people were killed in the fighting (ICG, 2001a, p. 6).

Kyrgyz authorities and law enforcement officials stress there was no widespread use of small arms during the riots. Instead, the participants used knives, axes, and agricultural tools. Transcriptions from court proceedings against perpetrators indicate that many crimes, including murder, were committed without the use of firearms; however, small arms (in particular pistols and hunting rifles) were also used in a number of recorded instances. Lubin et al. (1999) claim that the insufficient local police forces quickly lost control of the situation and were at times shooting indiscriminately into crowds.

The law enforcement bodies and local authorities neither foresaw nor reacted efficiently to the uprisings. It bears mention, however, that Kyrgyzstan is the only former Soviet state to undertake a major juridical proceeding following mass ethnic unrest. This development indicates that the Kyrgyz law enforcement structures continued to function relatively well in the period immediately after the transition from Soviet republic to independent nation.

Land shortage and economic deprivation were important underlying causes of the conflict. Furthermore, the under-representation of Uzbeks in government structures was, and continues to be, a serious problem. For example, during the Soviet period only 11 per cent of the leaders of municipal and district executives in Osh Province were Uzbeks. In 1997, 28 per cent of the population in Osh Province was Uzbek. Some commentators also stress that the Osh events happened against the backdrop of *perestroika*. Not only was the Soviet Union facing its demise, but the political reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev had also opened up space for independent political activities. Newly founded organizations such as the Kyrgyz Osh Aymaghi and the Uzbek Adolat (separate from Adolat in Namangan, Uzbekistan) were active in the run-up to the crisis.

Table 1
Selected indicators on population and migration flows, 1993–2001

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
Population (millions)	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.9	4.9
Net migration outflow	120,600	18,900	6,700	9,900	26,600
Life expectancy (years)	67.3	66.0	66.9	67.0	68.7

Source: UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2002, statistical annex)

1989. In January 2003 tensions mounted between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in Batken Province over new border checkpoints, but fighting was prevented. Frustrations over the alleged political advantages of the titular ethnic group and the struggle over scarce resources such as water and land run along ethnic lines. There is no indication that any of these underlying causes of hostility will disappear in the near future.

Interview data suggests continuing animosity between the two communities in this region. The phenomenon is exacerbated by the clear under-representation of Uzbeks both in local administrations and at the national level, by continuing tensions between the two governments over border demarcation and border closure, and by the Uzbek government's mining of border territories, which has caused several civilian fatalities. In short, there has been and remains a potential for conflict along ethnic lines in this region of Kyrgyzstan.

Table 2
Ethnic composition (yearly %), 1993–2000*

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2000
Kyrgyz	59.7	60.8	64.9	65.7	66.3
Russian	16.2	15.3	12.5	11.7	11.2
Uzbek	14.1	14.3	13.8	13.9	14

* Data disaggregating fertility by ethnic group was not available. The changes evident in the table are probably the result of a number of factors: Russian emigration and low numbers of births among those remaining; comparatively high Kyrgyz fertility; and, in the case of Uzbeks, limited emigration.

Source: UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2002, statistical annex)

Economic issues

The Kyrgyz economy declined substantially after independence, as the economic connections once linking it to the rest of the Soviet Union disintegrated. Production declined massively; unemployment and underemployment increased significantly. Hyperinflation wiped out the value of savings in 1991–93; public revenue and public services declined dramatically. The social safety net largely disappeared.⁹ Like most former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan returned to growth in 1995–96. After a setback in 1998–99 resulting from the rouble crisis in the Russian Federation, it attained a fairly steady 5 per cent rate of growth. This trend is reflected in a slight improvement in Kyrgyzstan's score on the Human Development Index (HDI) (see Table 3).¹⁰ In the foreign sector of the economy, Kyrgyzstan has been hobbled by large external debt,¹¹ while foreign direct investment is stagnating.¹²

More generally, the country's 2001 per capita gross national income of USD 280 per year and average wage of as low as USD 35 per month places the country well into the lower ranks of development.¹³ In 2000 more than 50 per cent of households were below the national poverty line (UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 2002). Although there has been a slight reduction in poverty levels since then, there is little evidence that recent growth has had a significant impact on the living standards of the bulk of the population. The general standard of living remains well below that to which people had become accustomed in the Soviet era. In the meantime, the disappearance of the state safety net has had a disproportionately severe impact on vulnerable groups within the population (e.g. single mothers, orphans, and pensioners). No available evidence suggested that any specific ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable to economic hardship.

Although conditions are difficult, there is little evidence of starvation or real desperation. The one sector outside government control that has done noticeably well (7 per cent annual growth since 1996) is agriculture, and the principal output growth is in staple foods. The population has been cushioned by strong extended-family support networks and by the possibility of living off the land.¹⁴ In the mid-1990s, thorough and reasonably equitable land reform enhanced this option by breaking up large collective farms into smallholdings based on residence in communities.¹⁵ In addition, many in rural areas supplement cul-

Table 3
Economic indicators, 1993–2001

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
GDP ^a /real GDP per capita ^b	850/2,330	690/1,850	470/2,264	300/2,377	280/2,364
GDP change ^c	84.5	94.6	109.9	103.7	105.4
CPI ^d	1,029.9	132.1	113.0	139.9	103.7
ME/GDP ^e	0.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.3
HDI	0.700	0.676	0.696	0.706	0.723

^a Gross domestic product (GDP) in nominal USD.

^b Real purchasing power parity GDP per capita in USD.

^c GDP as a percentage of the previous year.

^d Consumer price index as a percentage of prices for December of the previous year.

^e Military expenditure (ME) as a percentage of GDP.

Source: UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2002, statistical annex)

tivation with hunting. Nevertheless, there is anecdotal evidence that widening income differentials, deepening frustration over the lack of economic opportunity, and awareness of widening income differentials carry some potential for spillover into political unrest.¹⁶

Governance

The issue of widening income differentials is related to problems of governance in Kyrgyzstan. Many analysts consider Kyrgyzstan to be the most corrupt country in the CIS.¹⁷ President Askar Akaev himself has identified corruption as a central issue, and has called for ‘a new comprehensive strategy to fight [it]’ (Åslund, 2003). Corruption spans the entire spectrum of activity by public officials, from gifts and small bribes in return for services or to avoid fines or legal action, to large-scale corruption at the highest levels of government. As a recent World Bank study puts it: ‘A large number of firms in the Kyrgyz Republic reported being affected by “state capture,” in which concentrated and well-connected economic interests subvert the law-making process to their advantage.’ The study found that 56 per cent of households believed that bribery

Table 4
Perceptions of corruption as ‘widespread’ in official bodies, 2002

Perceiving group	Police	Courts	Prosecution system	Customs	Tax inspection
Enterprises	52%	39%	38%	49%	48%
Households	54%	50%	48%	n/a	n/a
Public officials	55%	44%	n/a	54%	n/a

Source: World Bank (2002, pp. 71–72)

‘is a definite part of contemporary life’, while 42 per cent reported having made an ‘unofficial payment’ in the previous 12 months (World Bank, 2002, pp. 5, 15, 16).

Table 4 suggests that for the three groups surveyed by the World Bank (enterprises, households, and public officials), more than half of each group considered corruption to be widespread in the police. All three groups held similar, although less vehement, views regarding other bodies involved in law enforcement. This data has significance in gauging popular trust in those institutions of the state responsible for maintaining the security of citizens. It may also raise concerns about the degree to which such bodies discharge their duties regarding regulation of firearms within the country. A corrupt police force may easily be persuaded to ignore illegal firearm ownership. More fundamentally, research interviews reflected a widespread belief that the state is a machine for private resource extraction rather than for the provision of public goods, which suggests widespread cynicism regarding the state’s legitimacy.

Research suggests that the weakening of state institutions is driven by political factors as well as economic ones. Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the US State Department, and others have all reported that judicial institutions are manipulated by the government to suppress political opposition and curb critics of government performance. In 2002 the police were used in Aksy to suppress a demonstration protesting the arrest of an opposition deputy. This deployment led to 6 firearm fatalities and more than 60 injuries (see Box 2).

In the wake of the Aksy events the OSCE was invited by the Kyrgyz government to initiate a programme on police reform. One of the eight components

Box 2

'For those who perished by the bullets of the authorities'¹⁸

Kyrgyz police forces fired at a group of 2,000 protestors in the south-western rural district of Aksy on 17–18 March 2002. Five people died and 62 were injured.¹⁹ The demonstrators were protesting the imprisonment of the parliamentary deputy representing Aksy, Azimbek Beknazarov. Beknazarov had been an outspoken critic of President Akaev and had protested fervently against Kyrgyzstan's cession of land to China as part of the border demarcation negotiations between the two countries. Following Beknazarov's imprisonment in January 2002, tensions were high in Aksy. Parents kept their children home from school in protest. After rumours that Beknazarov was being beaten in jail, angry protesters briefly took visiting government officials hostage.²⁰ Local NGOs claim that government officials at the ministerial level were well informed about the unfolding events and monitored the political developments in the region closely.²¹

The shootings occurred on a quiet country road leading into the regional centre, Kerben. The police tried to stop the demonstrators from proceeding into Kerben. When the crowd refused to return to their villages, the region's MVD chief ordered the police to shoot.²² All the demonstrators shot during the initial encounter were men, although eyewitness accounts claim women were at the forefront of the demonstration.²³ Special provisions in the Kyrgyz legal framework prohibit firing at women (Kyrgyzstan, 1994, sec. 3, para. 4). The deaths of male demonstrators suggest that the police aimed at the demonstrators rather than firing warning shots into the air, as government press statements first claimed (RFE/RL, 2002). Five demonstrators died of gunshots, while at least 10 of the injured had bullet wounds. Others suffered beatings and head injuries. On the night of 17–18 March villagers gathered outside the regional police station in Kerben to protest the shootings. During the course of events that night, one additional person was shot, allegedly from a police car, pushing the total figure of civilian deaths to six.²⁴

The shootings triggered a wave of protests, all of which were peaceful. The protests culminated in an attempt by Beknazarov supporters to mount a 530-kilometre protest march from Aksy to Bishkek in August 2002. A memorandum signed by Beknazarov and the government called off the march. At present, the Beknazarov opposition remains active,

though fewer in number than in spring 2002, when as many as 10,000 were expressing their dissatisfaction with the government.²⁵ The disturbances in Aksy, and the subsequent political crisis, fostered a number of significant changes in policy. The Government of Kyrgyzstan resigned in May 2002 and was replaced. In September 2002 the government established a commission to develop constitutional amendments to strengthen the legislative branch. In the following month, President Akaev announced that he would not seek re-election in 2005. Additional resources were ploughed into infrastructure improvements in the south.



Kyrgyz police officers drag away a demonstrator in Bishkek in November 2002.
© Valdimir Pirogov/Reuters

Table 5
Governance indicators, 1993–2001^a

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
Political rights index	4	4	4	5	6
Civil rights index	2	3	4	5	5
Freedom rating	PF ^b	PF	PF	PF	PF

^aNumbers are on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being best and 7 being worst.

^bPartly free on a scale of free, partly free, not free.

Source: Freedom House (2003)

in the EUR 3.8 million project is introducing Kyrgyz police to ‘less-than-lethal-force’ methods in crowd control. The aim is to prevent future bloodshed of this type. Local human rights organizations in Kyrgyzstan, however, see the programme as directed at the suppression of civic initiatives in Kyrgyzstan, and have voiced strong criticism of the OSCE (Karim kyzy, 2003; RFE/RL, 2003).

In the meantime, election-monitoring agencies report that, over time, Kyrgyz electoral processes have increasingly failed to meet the ‘free-and-fair’ standard. More importantly, research interview material suggests that elections are perceived by the public to be a means to keep the current elite in power. The effects are clear in Table 5: a steady decline in the state’s performance in the areas of political and civil rights, a trend that many consider a gradual slide into authoritarianism.

Democratic processes provide constitutional channels for expression of dissent. When the processes are undermined, these channels close down. With respect to Kyrgyzstan, major political indicators suggest that the country is developing an increasing susceptibility to crises. The fragility of the situation was underlined by the Aksy events. At the time, observers were not convinced that the repercussions of these police killings could be contained. Many felt that the country was at a tipping point, where it could easily have descended into mass political violence, leading to state collapse.

In short, by most indicators, Kyrgyzstan is in trouble. Its economy is performing poorly. Living standards are very low and show few signs of significant improvement. Economic growth is impeded by ubiquitous corruption. The state is unrepresentative, and shows signs of sliding into authoritarianism. It

appears to be incapable of consistently providing essential public services and is widely perceived by the population as illegitimate. The country is also vulnerable in the south to conflict along ethnic lines.

Some observers believe that the combination of tension and conflict and the easy availability of small arms in the region could have explosive consequences. Bobo Pirseyedi writes:

The existence of a considerable infrastructure for illicit small arms trafficking in Central Asia suggests that a breakout of armed internal conflict in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or Kyrgyzstan would lead to immediate and massive shipments of small arms to the conflict region. However, given the proportions the proliferation of small arms has already assumed within these countries, it can be argued that the easy availability of small arms itself may become the decisive factor transforming political disagreements into full-scale armed confrontations. (Pirseyedi, 2002, pp. 85–86)

The issue of availability is addressed in the following section. Suffice it to note here that there is little evidence that the tensions just mentioned are producing serious political instability. This situation reflects not only the effectiveness of informal coping mechanisms in the economy, but also the absence of any obvious political alternatives. The opposition remains weak and divided, stimulating little enthusiasm among the population as a whole. As one interviewee said: 'There is no real difference between the government and the opposition. They both want power and the resources that go with it.' Although much is made of the danger of Islamism in Central Asia, there is no substantial evidence that radical Islamist movements are taking hold within the Kyrgyz majority of the country.

The incidence of political violence in society is sporadic and low. In the one recent instance where isolated unrest appeared to be close to spiralling out of control, the government reacted flexibly and effectively to the subsequent political crisis. The weakness of the opposition and the forceful government reaction contained the process (see Box 2).²⁶ Furthermore, there is little evidence that economic privation or social and political frustration have produced increasing crime (see Table 6). Officially reported firearm deaths remain at a low level, with no obvious upward trend: 6 in 2000, 11 in 2001, and 9 in 2002.²⁷ Despite

Table 6
Crime indicators, 1993–2001

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
Total crimes	42,495	41,008	37,262	39,951	39,986
Reported rape/100,000 women	28	26	24	21	24
Premeditated murder/100,000 people	13	12	8	7	7

Source: UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2002, annex 3)

the possibility of under-reporting in officially registered firearm deaths, extensive field research suggests little reason to reject the logical conclusion: Kyrgyzstan has a strikingly low firearm death rate, with no obvious upward trend (see Tables 8 and 9 and Figure 1).

Regional factors

Understanding the context of small arms and light weapons in Kyrgyzstan requires knowledge not only of the country’s internal situation, but also of the regional dynamics. Four interrelated factors are significant to the analysis that follows. Firstly, Central Asia borders on the world’s principal producer of opium: in 2000 Afghanistan produced 70 per cent of the world’s supply of illicit opium. Between 1994 and 2001 the Central Asian share of seizures of heroin originating in Afghanistan grew from 0.1 per cent to 23 per cent (UNODC, 2003, p. 5; UNODCCP, 2002, p. 14). Kyrgyzstan lies on one of the major routes for shipping opium products to markets in Europe. The prevalence of narcotics trafficking has two potential implications for the present study: (1) traffickers in narcotics are frequently armed, and their presence may contribute to illegal firearm possession in Kyrgyzstan; and (2) it is plausible that drug traffickers also traffic in weapons. These issues are discussed further below. A second factor is that Kyrgyzstan is also widely believed to be both a source and transit country for human trafficking, which may affect the number of illegal weapons in the country, for analogous reasons.

A third factor impinging on the issue of small arms and light weapons in Kyrgyzstan is the nexus of conflict along Kyrgyzstan’s southern borders.

Tajikistan experienced civil war from 1992 to 1997. The war was characterized by extensive casualties, a government loss of control over much of the country, and the displacement of large numbers of civilians to Afghanistan. During the war, Tajikistan experienced considerable leakage of weapons from government stocks, as well as substantial flows of weapons into the country, notably, but not only, from Afghanistan. A degree of stability was restored in Tajikistan after the May 1997 peace agreement. The government has mounted a number of comparatively successful confiscation programmes. But small arms and light weapons remain common in the country, and a number of regions remain outside government control.

Beyond Tajikistan is Afghanistan. Afghanistan's civil war lasted from 1979 to 2001, and involved a very large intervention by Soviet forces between 1979 and 1989. It is widely believed that large numbers of arms leaked from Soviet forces into private hands during this intervention. In addition, the United States, alongside regional powers such as Pakistan and China, flooded Afghanistan with small arms and light weapons in an effort to defeat the Soviet intervention. A recent assessment by the Small Arms Survey estimates that between 500,000 and 1.5 million weapons are to be found in Afghanistan (Small Arms Survey, 2003, pp. 57, 74). Even if a small percentage of Afghanistan's firearms were taken out of the country, it could provoke a serious rise in crime rates in the regions bordering Afghanistan. There are also substantial stocks of small arms and light weapons in the Pashtun and Baluch border areas of Pakistan. Recent estimates indicate that these two provinces are home to 1.9 million registered and more than 1 million unregistered firearms (Makhmudov, 2002). The region is also a significant producer of small arms in its own right. Production in the Orakzai region of the North-west Province of Pakistan alone is estimated at 1,000 weapons per day (Makhmudov, 2002, p. 77).

The fourth factor is radical Islamism and associated terrorism. In the mid-1990s, the Taliban established control over most of Afghanistan. Subsequently, it granted sanctuary to an array of terrorist and insurgent groups and likeminded individuals, including not only al Qaeda, but also Uighur separatist groups challenging Chinese rule in Xinjiang. Kyrgyzstan, as a state bordering Xinjiang, is a possible sanctuary and conduit for these movements.²⁸ In addition, it has an Uighur minority of its own that has close links to co-ethnics in China and Kazakhstan.

More prominent is the IMU, which grew out of the Uzbek government's suppression of the Islamic movement in the Ferghana Valley, and which first took refuge in insurgent areas of Tajikistan and then moved to Afghanistan.²⁹ By 1999 the IMU was attempting to penetrate Uzbekistan via Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, mounting raids into the Batken area of the Ferghana Valley in 1999–2000 (see Box 3). IMU militants left considerable caches of weapons in Kyrgyzstan, many of which were subsequently found by Kyrgyz security forces. Although the IMU was severely weakened by the American-led action in Afghanistan in late 2001, it remains in existence, as do the conditions conducive to its emergence in Uzbekistan.

The Kyrgyz government was unprepared for the incursions in 1999. Following the first incursion, however, new border posts were erected, and troops were relocated to the south.³⁷ All the Central Asian countries have tightened control at border crossings, thereby impeding movement by the local population. Most cross-border traders are forced to pay bribes to the border guards, and some civilians have been shot while trying to cross borders illegally. Uzbekistan has unilaterally mined its border with Kyrgyzstan, causing the death of at least 13 Kyrgyz civilians (IWPR, 2003).

Many of the soldiers who served in the Batken operations were veterans of the Afghan war. Soldiers who served in the Kyrgyz Army note that the equipment they used to fight the IMU was old: the firearms, machine guns, and grenade launchers dated from 1974. They also claim they were only paid a small percentage of the salary promised (USD 50 per day in 1999): some say as little as USD 28 for their participation in the defence of Batken (IWPR, 2000). Local analysts note that the inability of the Kyrgyz government to pay military staff encouraged military personnel to sell equipment, including arms, on the black market.³⁸

It is widely agreed that Kyrgyzstan's capacity to insulate itself from these transnational flows is quite limited. There was no established border between Kyrgyzstan and its former Soviet neighbours at the time of independence in 1991. Kyrgyzstan had no independent border guard service until 1999, and its capacity to control the border with Tajikistan remains limited, despite improvements in 2001–03. 🗉

Box 3

Incursions of Islamic rebels into Kyrgyz territory

In 1999–2000 activists of the IMU led several incursions from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan. The IMU was led by Juma Namangani and Takhir Yuldash, Islamic activists from the Ferghana Valley who were forced to flee Uzbekistan after President Islam Karimov initiated a government crackdown on clandestine Islamic groups in 1992. Namangani fought with the United Tajik Opposition commander Mullah Abdullo in the Tajik civil war. The IMU later based itself in Afghanistan, where members received training and financial support from al Qaeda. During the incursions, the IMU demanded that the Uzbek government release all religious activists imprisoned in Uzbekistan, reopen mosques previously shut down, permit Muslim dress in the country, and introduce *sharia* law (ICG, 2000b). The IMU also called for President Karimov's resignation, and defined their sole enemy to be the Tashkent regime (RFE/RL, 2001).

Estimates of the size of the IMU vary greatly. International observers who lived near IMU bases in Tajikistan claim that the IMU never consisted of more than 50–60 fighters.³⁰ By contrast, newspaper reports, usually citing Russian Federation military sources, estimate up to 5,000 fighters (ICG, 2000b, p. 5).

The first incursion was on 6 August 1999. The group initially took four hostages, who were later released. On 22 August the group seized another 13 hostages near Kan village in the Batken area. Among the hostages were four Japanese geologists and a general of the Kyrgyz MVD. Fighting broke out between the Kyrgyz Army and militants as the rebels approached the Uzbek Sokh enclave, which is surrounded by Kyrgyz territory. Uzbek



Kyrgyz soldiers guard their headquarters in Batken in September 1999. For several weeks, armed radical Islamists, allegedly from Uzbekistan's Muslim opposition, held hostages in the mountainous region.

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fighter planes bombed Kyrgyz areas where the rebels were located without Kyrgyz authorization. The rebels released the hostages on 25 October 1999 and retreated to Tajikistan (ICG, 2000a).

A new, large-scale incursion took place the following year. IMU fighters entered both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in separate groups on a number of occasions in August and September 2000. A key area of IMU activity in Kyrgyzstan was the Karavshi Valley leading down to the Tajik Vorokh enclave on Kyrgyz territory.³¹ The incursions produced many internally displaced persons. At the height of tensions in 1999, as many as 7,831 people had to leave their homes; but the figure was considerably lower in 2000 (UNDP Kyrgyzstan, n.d., p. 3). Government officials claim that 50 Kyrgyz soldiers and border guards died in the events of 1999 and 2000, while the IMU death toll was at least 120.³²

The Kyrgyz SNB has found ten weapons caches in the mountains near Batken.³³ The biggest cache was discovered in June 2000. According to Russian Federation sources, the cache weighed three tons and included four grenade launchers, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, and a large quantity of cartridges (Interfax, 2000). The majority of the arms discovered in the ten caches were of Soviet manufacture, though there were some items of Chinese and Belgian origin. A few US-produced grenades were also recorded.³⁴ The recent discoveries have been more modest, with the latest discovery (in July 2003) containing only a small store of 200 Chinese-produced rifle bullets.³⁵ Most weapons confiscated during the fighting or found in caches have been sent to Bishkek, while some individual items remain in the hands of the Batken border guards.³⁶

III. Small arms in Kyrgyzstan: general trends

Legal possession

There are three main categories of legal arms possession in Kyrgyzstan: military and law enforcement; registered members of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic;³⁹ and 'legal persons with special authorized tasks' (Kyrgyzstan, 1999). The latter category only represents a marginal percentage of overall firearms possession.⁴⁰ It includes representatives of state and private enterprises with a need for protection (i.e. security of property, money transportation, and protection of nature and natural resources) (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, para. 4).⁴¹ The army has 10,900 active personnel (IISS, 2002). Assuming that the standard for calculating the number of firearms in national armies holds for Kyrgyzstan (2.25 arms per soldier), there could be 24,525 weapons in the Kyrgyz Army. The border guards make up an additional 5,000 personnel. Each border guard is likely to have at least one firearm, pushing the overall figure for military possession close to 30,000. The main law enforcement agency is the MVD (the police), which has 17,000 staff.⁴² It is complemented by 1,200 members of the SNB (formerly KGB). MVD officials claim that there is at least one firearm per individual in the law enforcement agencies.

The Kyrgyz Army uses weapons transferred from Soviet forces in May 1992.⁴³ The arms inventory of Kyrgyzstan resembles that of other former Soviet army units. The most common weapons are Kalashnikovs: AK-47s, AK-74s, and AKM Kalashnikovs (Modernized Assault Rifle); Makarov pistols; and Dragunov sniper rifles (SVDs). Army officers claim that there have been no new supplies of arms since independence, although some press reports note Russian Federation arms supplies to Kyrgyzstan in 1999.⁴⁴ Statistics on declared imports and exports for Kyrgyzstan show insignificant military imports (see Appendix 1, Tables 12F, 12G, 12J, 12R). A shortage of SVDs was revealed during the Batken events of 1999 and 2000, making it difficult for the Kyrgyz Army to respond effectively in mountain operations. It is unclear whether a similar shortage of other weapons exists. Kyrgyzstan is likely to have had sizeable stores of arms

during Soviet times; however, the Soviet troops, which were relocated to the Russian Federation after 1991, took much of the equipment with them as they left. The shortage of SVDs, in a country where 93 per cent of the territory is mountainous, bears witness to the dismal state of the national army. Further evidence of hardship is the growing number of contracted soldiers who are deserting following the Kyrgyz government's failure to pay wages (IWPR, 2002b). The financial constraint on the Kyrgyz forces has ensured that the arms inventory remains modest. The conservative benchmark figure of 2.25 arms per soldier is thus a likely number.

Strict legal rules govern civilian possession, and the legal framework resembles the stringent Soviet system of firearms control (see the legal framework sub-section in Section VI, below). Permission to own weapons is only given to members of the Hunters' Association. In 2002 there were 7,410 registered hunters in the association. Each hunter can have up to four firearms (two smooth-bore shotguns and two rifles). Most members, however, only have one or two weapons.⁴⁵ Both the MVD and the Hunters' Association estimate that there are approximately 15,000 registered arms in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁶ Chui Province, which surrounds the capital, Bishkek, is home to 80 per cent of all registered hunting guns in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁷ In other regions, such as Batken and Osh Provinces, possession of registered hunting guns is found predominately in urban centres.⁴⁸ Kyrgyzstan differs in this respect from most other countries in having less rather than more hunting weapons registered in rural areas. A disproportionately high share of Russian hunters, most of whom live in urban centres, continues to account for this unusual ratio. The result may also reflect less complete registration in rural areas. The large majority of hunting guns come from Russian Federation producers, with Izhevskii Mekhanicheskii Zavod and Tulsii Oruzheinyi Zavod dominating the market. The most-common hunting guns are the double-barreled shotgun TOZ-34 and the BAIKAL IZH-27. There was one instance of Canadian-produced shotguns and ammunition being imported in 1993. (For imports of civilian arms and ammunition, see Appendix 1, Tables 12D–I, 12L–Q, and 12S–T.)

Imported Russian Federation shotguns cost between USD 232 and USD 348.⁴⁹ The average monthly salary in Kyrgyzstan is about USD 35, making purchases of new hunting guns a major investment for the average consumer in Kyrgyzstan,

especially given the steep increase in prices since independence. During Soviet times, hunting guns were easily affordable for middle-income earners. At present, however, the purchase of new hunting guns is increasingly restricted to Kyrgyzstan's small economic elite. The increase in costs associated with hunting explains in part the sharp drop in membership numbers of the Hunters' Association. Overall membership (fishermen included) decreased from 25,900 members in 1990 to 8,617 in 2002. Yet the reduction may also be explained by the high rates of Russian emigration from Kyrgyzstan (see Section II, above). The majority of members of the Hunters' Association were ethnic Russians at the time of independence.⁵⁰ In the third—significantly smaller—category of individual security providers such as government and private security guards, the most common weapons are Makarov pistols and gas pistols.⁵¹

Illegal possession and the black market in weapons

The MVD confiscated 5,000 firearms between 1996 and 2003. This is a low figure in comparison with that of Tajikistan, where 22,831 firearms were confiscated in the same period (Tajikistan, 2003). The low confiscation rate may stem from inactivity on the part of Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies. Unlike in neighbouring Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, there has been no major confiscation campaign in Kyrgyzstan.⁵² Nevertheless, Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies, although reluctant to make specific estimates, stress that illegal firearm possession is likely to be low.⁵³ Their assertion is confirmed by very moderate firearm injury and murder-by-firearm rates in Kyrgyzstan (see Tables 8 and 9). Moreover, in the household survey researchers conducted in Batken and Osh Provinces, only 2.5 per cent ticked 'armed robberies' when asked to give multiple answers to the question about the most common crimes. 'Theft' and 'drunken disorder' by contrast received high scores (see below). While the police have yet to undertake a wide-scale confiscation effort, law enforcement structures in Kyrgyzstan continued to operate after independence and did not lose control of the criminal situation. Although the relatively low level of firearm confiscation in Kyrgyzstan to some extent may reflect inactivity on the part of the Kyrgyz police in relation to firearm proliferation, these other sources of evidence favour the judgement that overall illegal possession in Kyrgyzstan is in fact low.

The main items circulating on the black market are Makarov pistols and Kalashnikovs.⁵⁴ There are some reports of illegal possession of home-made firearms (i.e. converted gas pistols) in rural areas. It is unlikely, however, that this is a widespread phenomenon.⁵⁵ Price estimates of a Kalashnikov vary from USD 500 to USD 1,500 (Kyrgyzstan. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003).⁵⁶ These are very high prices compared with other countries. The steep prices are explained primarily by the relatively moderate supply and circulation of firearms. The price of weapons in black markets in Bishkek and Osh has increased, whereas in Dushanbe prices rose prior to 1994–95, but began to fall once the civil war ended in 1997 and the government consolidated its position. The early increase in prices in Dushanbe was caused by increasing demand. The drop in prices is likely to have been caused by a drop in demand, since it occurred in conjunction with a government crackdown on illegal firearm possession.

In Kyrgyzstan, the relatively low demand for arms prevents a large-scale illegal provision of firearms. In the absence of an ‘economy of scale’ for arms smuggling, and given the repercussions of being involved in arms deals, prices are naturally set high. It bears mentioning that prices are lower in the southern city of Osh, which is located close to the Tajik border. While law enforcement officials stress that the black market in Kyrgyzstan is very modest, they estimate that 20–25 per cent of the few illegal firearms in Kyrgyzstan come from border smuggling, 30–35 per cent from leakage in the army, and the remaining part from old hunting rifles and home-made firearms.⁵⁷

Leakage from army stockpiles has been a common feature in most post-Soviet societies, and Kyrgyzstan has been no exception. Representatives of the Kyrgyz Army claim that a commission checks the weapons inventory of the armed forces every three months.⁵⁸ In checking two regiments and one artillery division in 1996, one such commission found that 26 sub-machine guns, 138 pistols, 5 machine guns, and 17,500 bullets were missing (FTI, 2002).

It is unlikely that the control commissions, which may not work regularly to begin with, effectively manage to tackle arms leakage. The small military budget has left the Kyrgyz Army in a dismal state. Low salaries and poor material conditions create an environment conducive to crime. In the period 1993–2002, the Military Prosecutor’s Office assessed a total of 1,100 cases, with the result that more than 30 officers and 500 soldiers faced criminal charges. There

Table 7A

Black market prices for AK-47s (USD), 1991–2003^a

	1991–92	1994–95	1997–98	2000	2003
Bishkek	n.i.a. ^b	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	800–1,000
Dushanbe	450–500	500–700	300	n.i.a.	400
Osh	n.i.a.	300–700	n.i.a.	300–1,200	250–1,200

Table 7B

Black market prices for Makarov pistols (USD), 1991–2003^c

	1991–92	1994–95	1996–97	1997–98	2000	2003
Bishkek	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	300–500
Dushanbe	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	900–1,000	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	500–600
Osh	n.i.a.	70–120	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	n.i.a.	50–80

^a The prices are approximate, and were listed in the following confidential interviews: representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003; informed observer and former drug trafficker in Osh and Batken Provinces, 7 August 2003; and former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

^b No information available.

^c Makarov pistols have cost more than Kalashnikovs in Dushanbe since 1996 because of the government crackdown on firearms possession. Makarovs are easier to hide and hence in higher demand.

Source for Tables 7A and 7B: Confidential interviews

were seven registered incidents of large-scale theft of firearms by military personnel in the period 2000–02 (FTI, 2002).

Given the high overall corruption levels in the Kyrgyz government structure, the actual crime rate among army personnel could be substantially higher than revealed in the statistics of the Military Prosecutor's Office.

Production of and trade in weapons

Kyrgyzstan has no weapons production facilities, but in Soviet times the republic was a major producer of ammunition for the Soviet armed forces, providing as much as 30 per cent of Soviet force requirements.⁵⁹ There is still ammunition production at the Bishkek Machine Tool Factory (Bishkekskii Mashinostroitel'nyi Zavod), and Kyrgyzstan was the 13th-largest exporter of ammunition in the world in 1996, with the bulk of exports going to former Communist countries (see Appendix 1, Table 12B).⁶⁰

There is one recorded incident of military small arms export from Kyrgyzstan: 199 kg of military weapons to Slovakia in 2000 (see Appendix 1, Table 12C). There has also been one recorded episode of illegal ammunition transfers: Kyrgyzstan sold three million 5.45 calibre assault rifle rounds for USD 180,000 to Armenia in 2000 (*Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 2001; see also SAFERNET, 2003). There have also been other serious incidents of exports in weapons categories that do not fall within the Small Arms Survey purview (e.g. the Kyrgyz export of a helicopter to Liberia) (Human Rights Watch, 2001b). Some of these exports may have been officially sanctioned. Armenia, for example, is one of Kyrgyzstan's defence partners in the Collective Security Treaty. Other deals, however, such as the helicopter sale, point to corruption and the lack of effective export controls. In the wake of the helicopter sale to Liberia, the Kyrgyz government strengthened the supervision and coordination of army exports. The absence of a domestic military-industrial complex, with the exception of ammunition production, poses obvious restrictions on Kyrgyzstan's potential as a legal or illegal exporter of weapons. Exports will naturally be limited to the selling of old Soviet equipment. In the case of small arms, the supply seems limited, as is evident from the shortage of SVDs (see above).

The use and impact of small arms and light weapons in Kyrgyzstan

Official statistics show a relatively low reported crime rate in Kyrgyz society. There were 33 reported murders by firearms in the period 2001–03. For the same period, crime statistics confirm the trend of higher urban than rural firearm possession: 65 per cent of the 325 reported firearm offences took place in urban centres. MVD analysts estimate that there are two to three firearm-related offences in Bishkek per month (Kyrgyzstan. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). The annual reported crime rate is decreasing in Kyrgyzstan: the total number of crimes in 1993 was 42,495, while in 2001 the figure fell to 39,986.⁶¹ It is possible that the statistics on homicide are under-reported, since, in rural societies, homicides are concealed and dealt with by traditional mechanisms of tribal, clan, and family justice that bypass the state. The MVD has representatives in the villages, however. Moreover, relatives of deceased persons must have death

certificates, obtained from the authorities, to settle inheritance matters. As a result, it is probable that cause of death is reasonably accurately recorded.⁶²

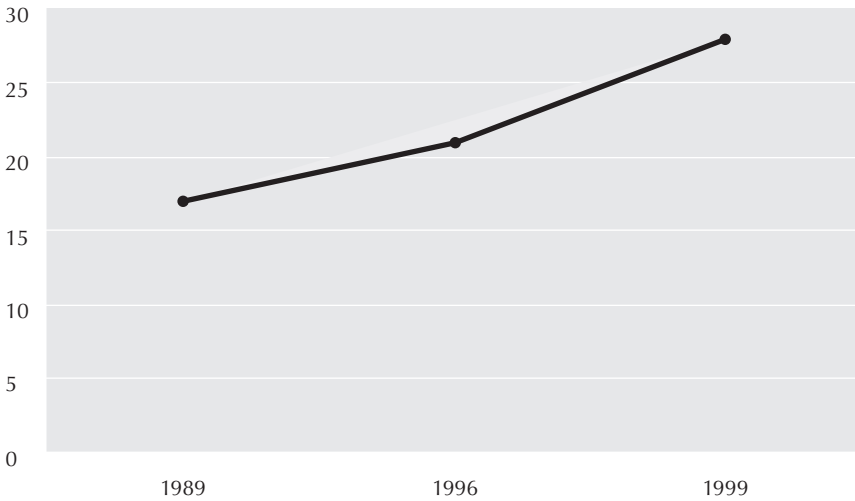
Perceptions of personal security have improved in recent years as compared to 1991. Analysts note that the early period after independence was a time of upheaval and insecurity, during which citizens were more inclined to possess firearms for their personal safety.⁶³ More than a decade after the break-up of the Soviet Union, trends within the Kyrgyz state and society have become more predictable. There is still ambiguity in relations between the police and civilians (i.e. expectations of bribes), but basic law and order, and hence personal security, seem to be provided for by law enforcement structures.⁶⁴ Interviews and statistics point to better personal security in rural as opposed to urban areas.⁶⁵ In both settings, however, due to low firearm possession rates, small arms are not a major factor influencing crime patterns and perceptions.

Kyrgyzstan has a non-permissive firearm culture. As the proverb 'Even an uncharged gun shoots once a year' testifies, Kyrgyz society is aware of the dangers associated with firearm proliferation and discourages misuse of arms. The household survey confirms this approach. A large majority of respondents said buying a firearm was a not a legitimate use of household resources, and found firearms to be dangerous rather than helpful in protecting the family (see Figure 3 and Appendix 2). Representatives of women's organizations and crisis centres claim there are only minor connotations of masculinity associated with firearm possession. Nevertheless, as the assessment of impact reveals, it is mostly men who own and are harmed by firearms. Firearm use in Kyrgyzstan is thus structured along gender roles, and as such conforms with gender stereotypes found worldwide. Judging from interviews, however, it seems fair to conclude that firearm possession is not an essential ingredient in the construction of masculinity in Kyrgyz culture, and that concerns related to masculine image and self-esteem do not give rise to firearm demand.

The available national health statistics show a slight increase in firearm-related violence and injuries in the last 15 years. There were 17 accidental injuries from firearms in 1989, 21 in 1996, and 26 in 1999 (see Figure 1) (WHO, 2003b). The overall murder trend (by firearms or other weapons) also shows a slight increase over time (WHO, 2003a). The figures for 1989, which are the only available statistics broken down by gender, reveal that no women received

Figure 1
Firearm injuries, 1989, 1996, and 1999

Number of injuries



Source: Unpublished mortality statistics from the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

accidental injuries from firearms. In addition, interviews with medical officials in Bishkek suggest that they rarely encounter firearm trauma cases in female patients. They also note, more generally, that knives are more frequently used in domestic disputes than firearms.⁶⁶ The Small Arms Survey’s interviews with

Table 8
Deaths by weapon and age, 2002

	1–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54
Handguns	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	–	–
Rifles, shotguns, and high-calibre weapons	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	1	–
Other and unspecified weapons	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Shots/explosions from other substances	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Unpublished mortality statistics from the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

Table 9

Kyrgyzstan and other countries: comparative firearm murder rates

Country and date ^a	% of murders committed with firearms
Argentina (1997)	58.47
England and Wales (1999)	7.80
Hungary (2000)	21.46
Kyrgyzstan (2000)	10.65
Tajikistan (2002)	23.33 ^b
United States (2001)	63.39

^a The dates did not appear in the 2004 paper.

^b This figure has been changed from the 2004 paper, as it is more accurate.

Source: WHO (2003a)

representatives from women's crisis centres and injury statistics from these centres confirm that firearms are rarely used in violence against women in Kyrgyzstan.⁶⁷ Firearm injuries among the male population tend to be concentrated in the 15–39 age group (see Table 8). The injury figures for Kyrgyzstan are substantially lower than for Tajikistan, where in just one of the city hospitals in Dushanbe, two to three patients are admitted with firearm injuries every month.⁶⁸ Global health statistics confirm the limited impact of firearms in Kyrgyz society. Kyrgyzstan's rate of homicides committed with firearms is 10.65 per cent. This is far lower than countries such as the United States, Hungary, and others (see Table 9). 📄

IV. Trafficking

There have been three main categories of arms flows through Central Asia. The first was the retreat of Soviet forces with their equipment from Afghanistan in 1989 and subsequent supplies of firearms from the Soviet Union to its Afghan allies. The second flow was the arming of different factions in the Tajik civil war from 1992 to 1997. These weapons came mainly from the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The third flow pertains to the intensification of arms shipments to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan following the attacks in the United States of 11 September 2001. In this context, for example, the Russian Federation supplied the Northern Alliance with 100 portable anti-tank guided missile systems, including Fagot systems, in October 2001 (Pyadushkin with Haug and Matveeva, 2003). Most recently, the Russian Federation and other countries are rearming the Kabul government. The United States spent USD 7 million in 2002 in training, rebuilding infrastructure for, and re-arming the Afghan National Army (US State Department, 2003, p. 425). The United States has bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and it is likely that some of the supplies reached Afghanistan via Central Asia.

Regarding the first flow, the majority of shipments associated with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan crossed the Uzbek–Afghan border rather than travelling through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, since transportation infrastructure in southern Uzbekistan was more developed.⁶⁹ A range of sources fed the second flow, which supplied warring factions in Tajikistan’s civil war from 1992 to 1997. Russian Federation supplies to government forces came, most likely, via airports in government-controlled areas such as Kulyab, as well as through the long-established supply chain from Osh to Murghab.⁷⁰ The 3333 Avtobatalion of the Soviet/Russian Federation border forces had been based in Osh (southern Kyrgyzstan) since 1952. It played a key role in supplying Soviet and then Russian Federation military and border forces in Tajikistan.⁷¹ Although Russian Federation military supplies flowed principally to their own forces and to those of the Tajik government, interviews with ex-fighters reveal that

leakage from Russian Federation stockpiles to all factions in the civil war was endemic.⁷²

The Russian Federation supplies to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan following the Taliban seizure of power in 1996, and then particularly after 2001, probably did not transit Uzbekistan directly to Afghanistan, given the Uzbek decision to seal the Uzbek–Afghan border. Moreover, military cooperation between the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan weakened in the late 1990s. It is likely, therefore, that the Russian Federation shipped weapons to the

Box 4

Weapons transit through Kyrgyzstan bound for Afghanistan⁷³

Between 4 and 13 October 1998 three trains arrived in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, filled with 700 tons of weapons and ammunition, hidden under 300 tons of food supplies, most of which was flour. The shipment included anti-tank mines, F-1 grenades, 122 mm artillery shells, mortar bombs, and 122 mm rockets.⁷⁴ The cargo was listed as ‘humanitarian aid’ destined for Afghanistan. The trains originated in Mashad, Iran, and the Iranian Embassy in Kyrgyzstan was identified as the owner of the cargo. The shipment crossed Turkmen and Uzbek territory before arriving in Osh. The third train reportedly stopped in Bekabad, Uzbekistan, where local Uzbek authorities seized four wagons. This train did eventually arrive at Osh, but it is not known whether any weapons remained on board.

The arms and flour were intended for the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Osh is an end point in the Central Asian railway network. It is, however, also on the M41 road, which goes through the Pamir mountain range and connects Kyrgyzstan to Murghab in the eastern part of Tajikistan (Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Province). Murghab is linked by road to Khorog and Ishkoshim, two cities situated on the Tajik–Afghan border. There are other more direct entry points to Afghanistan in Central Asia, notably through Kulyab in Tajikistan and Termez in Uzbekistan. By using the Osh–Murghab road, however, the initiators of the arms cargo could draw on the transport services and infrastructure of the Russian Federation’s 3333 Avtobatalion, which is stationed in Osh. Moreover, unlike many other areas in Tajikistan at the time, the Osh–Murghab–Khorog/Ishkoshim road was under the control of Russian Federation and Tajik government forces.

Several countries were implicated in the arms transfer. Iran was the initiator, but cooperated closely with the Russian Federation. It would be impossible to use the Osh–Murghab road network for major shipments without Russian Federation military knowledge. It is unlikely, moreover, that units other than the 3333 Avtobatalion could have handled a 700-ton weapons cargo. The role of the Turkmen, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz governments remains an open question. Some investigations stress the complicity of the Kyrgyz government. In an interview with the Small Arms Survey, however, Muratbek Imanaliev, who was Kyrgyz foreign minister at the time, claimed that the Foreign Ministry knew nothing of the arrangements, but that there had been an agreement among top military representatives from all countries in the region.⁷⁵

Map 2 **Osh, Ferghana Valley, and the Pamir Mountains**



Northern Alliance by air or via the above-mentioned Murghab–Osh road. The Northern Alliance also received weapons from Iran and other states. That Kyrgyz territory was used as a conduit for some of this assistance is illustrated by the Osh rail wagon incident of 1998 (see Box 4).

The Osh wagon incident sheds light on arms-related issues in Central Asia. It confirms the persistence of Russian Federation involvement in the region, and highlights the continued use of the old Soviet military infrastructure. More importantly, it illustrates the lack of coordination, control, and oversight both among national ministries and between national ministries and local authorities. The local authorities who opened the cargo and exposed it to the media were allegedly uninformed about the contents of the wagons. The head of the Osh Customs Department, I. Masaliev, and chief of the Osh SNB, Colonel O. Suvanaliev, were both dismissed after the incident. Despite official assurances from the Kyrgyz government that the cargo was returned to Iran, the United Opposition later claimed that the weapons transfer had reached them.

Kyrgyzstan itself may have acted as a supply country during the Tajik civil war. Judging from supply and demand dynamics, it is likely that firearms from Kyrgyzstan entered Tajikistan. In 1996–97 a Makarov pistol cost USD 900–1,000 in Dushanbe, while it sold for USD 120 in Osh. For this reason, it is probable that much of the leakage from army stockpiles in Kyrgyzstan described above did not remain in the country, but exited to Tajikistan. Until 1999 the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was unguarded, with the exception of a few border crossings on main roads.⁷⁶ There are, however, no records of official Kyrgyz arms shipments to Tajikistan. Similarly, the Small Arms Survey interviews with former combatants in Tajikistan showed no indication of major arms deliveries from Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁷ This suggests that if any arms shipments from Kyrgyzstan did take place, they involved small quantities and were probably conducted by individual sellers and buyers.

Is arms trade or trafficking currently flowing through Kyrgyz territory? Members of the anti-terrorist coalition continue to resupply certain groups in Afghanistan, particularly with ammunition. Much of the weaponry used in Afghanistan is of Soviet and Russian Federation origin. Spare parts and ammunition would therefore also be in demand from mainly Russian Federation producers, who may ship goods through Kyrgyz territory.⁷⁸ Contrary to what

some European analysts argue, there is no available evidence suggesting large-scale northward shipment of small arms and light weapons from Afghanistan through Central Asia. Some analysts asserting the existence of such a flow base their postulations on the assumption that arms flows accompany drug flows (see endnote 2) (Pirseyyedi, 2002). Most local analysts and law enforcement personnel in Kyrgyzstan, however, stress that there is no northbound trafficking in arms. The Russian Federation is a major producer of weapons, which in turn suggests that the demand for firearms from outside is low.⁷⁹ Chechnya could potentially be a major source of demand for Central Asian weapons, yet, as the Small Arms Survey study on Russia points out, Chechen separatists were armed mainly from Russian Federation stockpiles (Pyadushkin with Haug and Matveeva, 2003). SNB officers in Bishkek note that there have been no cases of the Chechen diaspora in Bishkek facilitating arms transfers to Chechnya. In contrast, there have been reported cases of Chechens bringing individual weapons into Kyrgyzstan.⁸⁰

Drug traffickers use firearms for protection, but there is no available evidence of major arms shipments accompanying drugs shipments. Intelligence sources from one Western country suggest that firearms might be one commodity in the recently established barter exchange of psychotropic drugs.⁸¹ Since the establishment of laboratories for heroin production in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, shipments of chemical substances have been going south from the Russian Federation and Central Asia to Afghanistan.⁸² Intelligence sources claim that this is a non-monetary exchange of drugs and, in part, firearms for chemicals. It should be noted that neither the statistics of border seizures by Kyrgyz border guards nor the annual reports of the State Commission on Drugs Control under the president of the Kyrgyz Republic have confirmed these individual intelligence reports on northbound arms trafficking (Kyrgyzstan, 2002).⁸³ Government sources tend to describe the confiscation of one or two Makarov pistols alongside major drugs seizures. There have been no recent incidents of drug traffickers opening fire on Kyrgyz border or law enforcement personnel when crossing into Kyrgyz territory. By contrast, on the Afghan–Tajik border, drug traffickers are heavily armed, and serious skirmishes take place between Russian Federation or Tajik border troops and well-armed drug dealers on a near-daily basis. These border troops seize a number of weapons each year. For example,



from January to October 2002, Russian Federation border forces found 45 arms caches containing 70 firearms and 5,800 pieces of ammunition. Tajik border forces seized 62 Kalashnikovs in all of 2003.⁸⁴ The groups transporting drugs further through Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan are not armed to the same degree. Indeed, as one law enforcement representative noted, being caught with both illegal drugs and illegal weapons could result in a penalty for a trafficking crime. This risk reduces the incentive to bring firearms along with drugs shipments.

Despite the absence of substantial flows,⁸⁵ a number of arms caches spread throughout Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are cause for concern. There are three types of caches, the first of which line the Afghan–Tajik border. The key areas where the Russian Federal Border Service found arms in 2002 were the border regions of Moskovsky and Shurobod up to Kalaikum, and then further east in the Vanj region. There was also one arms cache in the south-west region of Ishkoshim.⁸⁶ These seem to be mainly intended for the protection of drug dealers caught in skirmishes with border guards. The second type of arms caches are those left in Tajikistan after the civil war, largely in the Rasht Valley, Kofarnihon, and Tavildara regions. These caches were abandoned by opposition fighters belonging to groups that are now mainly inactive. The third type of caches are IMU weapons stores in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Approximately ten caches of weapons have been uncovered in the Kyrgyz mountains (see Box 3). These firearms were probably carried into Kyrgyzstan prior to the first major IMU incursion in 1999. The IMU continues to operate in Central Asia, though in a much reduced form. In August 2003, a group of 20–25 unarmed IMU fighters reportedly made its way into the Ishkoshim region and then infiltrated Kyrgyz and Uzbek territory (Islamov, 2003).⁸⁷ The fact that these fighters were unarmed suggests the continued presence of hidden caches in Central Asia. Judging from the inventory of recent caches found by the authorities, however, these mountain weapons stores seem relatively modest. 📌

V. Household survey

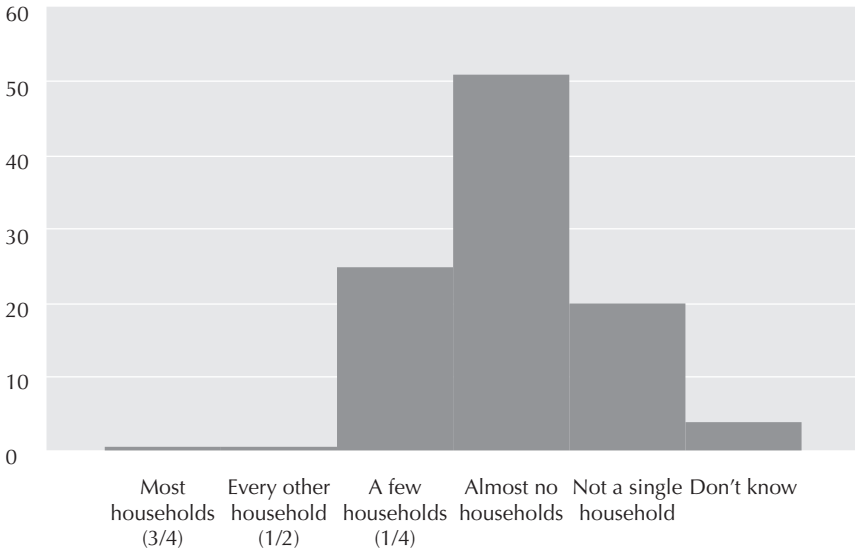
In order to assess key issues such as availability, demand, possession, and cultural perceptions regarding firearm use, a household survey involving a total of 236 respondents was conducted in late summer 2003. As noted in the introduction, weapons are a sensitive issue in Kyrgyzstan, so that respondents may have been cautious in their answers. Most of the questions were therefore indirect. For example, interviewers did not ask if the respondent owned a firearm, but whether the person knew of firearms in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, respondents could still have played down the availability of firearms in their neighbourhood for fear of a government-related repercussion. By contrast, respondents were more comfortable answering questions related to perceptions of security and attitudes to firearm ownership. Results for this type of question might therefore have greater validity than those related to availability. A detailed statistical breakdown of responses is attached as Appendix 2. The respondents were selected from villages across two southern provinces (Batken and Osh), including villages close to the Kyrgyz–Uzbek border and Kyrgyz–Tajik border.⁸⁸ These two provinces are often considered the key trouble areas of Kyrgyzstan. Batken was the scene of the IMU incursions in 1999 and 2000. Both provinces are part of the Ferghana Valley, where ethnic tensions and disputes over land and water remain common. In each of the 23 villages, interviewers interviewed 8 to 10 randomly selected people. They also interviewed 24 inhabitants of Osh city.⁸⁹

Half of the respondents claimed that ‘almost no households’ had firearms, while almost one-quarter noted that ‘a few households’ have firearms (see Figure 2); 78.8 per cent said they had never heard a gunshot, while 76.7 per cent claimed that they had never seen a firearm.⁹⁰ The respondents tended to indicate hunting rifles as the most common weapon (39.8 per cent), but other weapons such as Kalashnikovs (20.3 per cent) and pistols (13.1 per cent) were also mentioned. Asked what groups in society were most likely to have firearms, 50.8 per cent of the respondents identified criminals, while 24.6 per cent selected

Figure 2

Household survey, 2003: 'In your opinion, how many households in your neighbourhood have firearms?'

Per cent



businesspeople. The respondents did not always seem to differentiate between the two groups. The overwhelming majority (93.6 per cent) held that the government had never confiscated firearms in their village. This information is interesting, as officials claim many illegal firearms were taken from the population following the Osh and Uzgen events. If confiscation attempts did not take place, it may be concluded that illegal firearms were not present in the villages surveyed, or that confiscation efforts were more limited than law enforcement agencies had implied.

Regarding availability, 12.7 per cent claimed that there was nowhere to get firearms 'if a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, needed a firearm'. A larger number (30.5 per cent) replied that a person would need to 'ask around', while 21.6 per cent noted that firearms could be available 'in the black market'. Both the latter answers indicate that people believe that informal channels for firearm purchases exist in southern Kyrgyzstan.⁹¹ In contrast, only 13.6 per cent responded that a person could 'get a licence and buy'

one. The low number of respondents indicating use of official channels is no surprise, given that there is only one store in the region (Osh city) selling legal weapons. Only 5.9 per cent indicated that a person could get firearms if he/she knew 'of a hidden cache', and more Osh Province residents than Batken Province residents selected this option. This divergence is curious, since it is in the Batken region that IMU caches are likely to be hidden. It points to a significant degree of separation between the Islamic rebels and the local population (see the sub-section on administrative changes in Section VI, below). When asked to identify neighbouring regions where arms might be available, the majority indicated provinces in Tajikistan: Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Province (36 per cent) and Sughd Province (17.4 per cent).

In describing perceptions of security, almost all respondents (98.7 per cent) said that no one in their household had been threatened or made fearful by the use of firearms in the previous three months. The majority of respondents (49.2 per cent) listed 'theft' when asked to name a few of the most common types of crime in their area. 'Fighting' was listed by 39.4 per cent of the respondents and drunken disorder by 45.3 per cent. Armed robbery was listed by a mere 2.1 per cent. Half of the respondents (53 per cent) felt that their personal safety had remained the same, while 36 per cent claimed that it had worsened over the past decade. Most of the respondents thought their safety was the same (51.7 per cent) or better (33.1 per cent) than in other parts of the country.

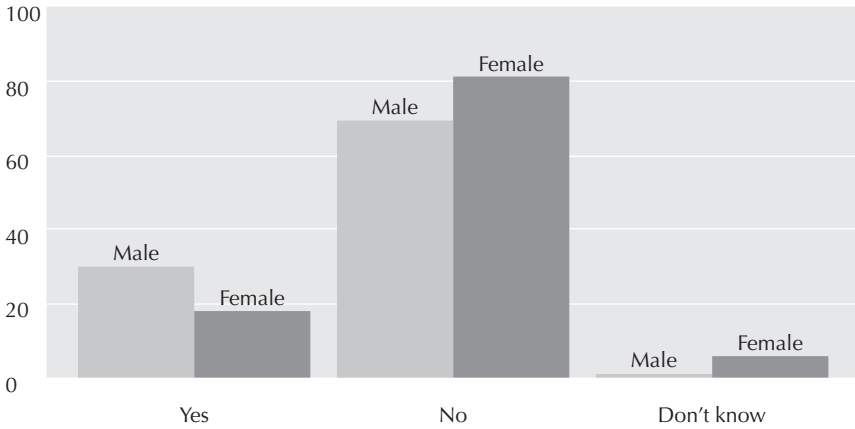
In correspondence to the low levels of threat perception, issues related to demand received similar moderate replies. In particular, 73.3 per cent thought firearms were not a legitimate use of household resources, and 57.2 per cent held that small arms posed a danger to their families rather than being useful in protecting them. Nevertheless, 19.9 per cent did claim that arms helped to protect the family. These low levels of demand and moderate perceptions on weapons possession form an interesting contrast to questions on conflict behaviour. When asked whether a person would fight for the village's safety if under attack (as had been the case during the times of ethnic conflict in the early 1990s), 69.1 per cent said that they would fight, while 34.7 per cent claimed that their village would use firearms if under attack.

There is a degree of conformity in answers along ethnic lines. Only a slightly higher percentage of Uzbeks (48.6 per cent) as opposed to Kyrgyz (45.7 per cent) said that they would use firearms to protect their village. Similarly, 73.1 per

Figure 3

Household survey, 2003: 'Is buying a firearm/ammunition a legitimate use of household resources?'

Per cent



cent of the Kyrgyz and 73.5 per cent of the ethnic Uzbeks did not support the buying of arms as a legitimate use of household resources.

Results indicate slight differences between urban and rural perceptions. All 24 respondents in Osh provided similar answers to those of the rural population when they stressed that there had been no armed threats to their household members in the previous three months. Nevertheless, more respondents noted that 'a few households' had firearms than that 'almost no households' had firearms in Osh. In contrast, most rural respondents claimed that 'almost no households' had firearms.

Only slightly more women than men (81 per cent versus 69.2 per cent) held that it was not legitimate to spend household resources on firearms (see Figure 3). In response to questions designed especially to reveal gender perspectives, results reveal a remarkable degree of homogeneity in the answers by men and women. For instance, 34.6 per cent of the men and 29.1 per cent of the women agreed that 'men only' should own or know how to handle a firearm. Likewise, 25.6 per cent of the men and 32.0 per cent of the women selected 'all adults' in response to the above question, while 36.1 per cent of the men and 36.9 per cent of the women held that the only 'authorities and army' should own firearms. ▣

VI. Responses to the challenge of small arms in Kyrgyzstan

Legal framework

The Kyrgyz government has retained a strict regulatory system for small arms. The key provisions are found in the Law on Arms of June 1999 (Kyrgyzstan, 1999). Most of the elements in the legal framework mirror Soviet legislation. The Law on Arms divides weapon types into three categories: battle arms, civil arms, and service arms. Civil arms are only given to citizens over 20 years old and are subdivided into four groups: arms for self-defence, gas pistols, sport arms, and hunting arms (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, paras. 2–7). Citizens are barred from keeping firearms if they: do not have appropriate mental and physical health; have a previous criminal conviction or are serving a sentence for a crime; have infringed public order; do not have a permanent residence registration; or do not have documents proving ability to handle firearms safely (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, para. 15). There are similar strict rules on the purchase, import, and export of arms. Only legal bodies with the permission of state authorities may sell or produce arms (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, paras. 17–22). The law allows for the use of arms against other persons in a situation of self-defence. Special provisions, however, forbid the use of arms against pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and minors, unless the person using the firearm is under ‘armed or group attack’ (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, para. 26). Penalties for the illegal storage, transfer, selling, and carrying of firearms and ammunition are set at six months to three years. The penalties are considerably more severe if the crimes are committed by an organized criminal group rather than an individual (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, para. 241).

The legal framework envisages an extensive regulatory role for law enforcement agencies. They must facilitate the registration and issuing of appropriate documents to firearm owners, whose storage facilities and documentation they are obliged to inspect. Law enforcement agencies are also charged with the task of collecting arms in the case of cancellation of licence, infringement of rules of

conduct and transfer, self-made firearms or illegal alterations of firearms, the death of the owner, or the liquidation of the legal person (Kyrgyzstan, 1999, paras. 27–30).

Kyrgyzstan added a code on Rules of Management, Handling and Circulation and Security of Weapons in response to the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (Kyrgyzstan, 2001). This code further specifies the duties of law enforcement agencies and individuals in handling small arms and light weapons stockpiles. Kyrgyzstan's provisions for strong government control and tracing of arms is in correspondence with the *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (Programme)*. Nevertheless, as *Biting the Bullet* finds in its assessment of the *Programme's* implementation, the Kyrgyz government has neither established a national coordination body for *Programme* implementation nor taken steps to enhance transparency and accountability. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan has no legislation on arms brokering (*Biting the Bullet*, 2003).

The collection and confiscation of illegal firearms in Kyrgyzstan is characterized by Kyrgyz law enforcement officials as an ongoing and integral part of daily policing activities.⁹² As noted above, Kyrgyz law enforcement officials state that 5,000 firearms have been confiscated in the last 8 years.⁹³ Kyrgyzstan differs from neighbouring Kazakhstan in that its officials do not see the need for overall confiscation campaigns. They believe daily policing on firearms issues to be sufficient, largely because they perceive the problem of illegal possession to be less serious than elsewhere.⁹⁴ Kazakhstan, in contrast, made a determined push in the previous two years, and collected, according to government statements, 36,000 weapons (Kazakhstan, 2003).

The low levels of confiscation may, of course, suggest limits in Kyrgyzstan's capacity to implement fully its rigorous regulatory framework. One related concern is that neither the archives on firearms in the MVD's provincial departments nor the membership records of the Hunters' Association are computerized. All permits for hunting weapons are granted on the basis of membership of the Hunters' Association. Yet while membership records for Batken Province in 2002 showed 10 members, the MVD Batken department's records for 2002 listed 472 hunters with 484 registered hunting weapons.⁹⁵ It is unclear how

this discrepancy has come about and whether the local law enforcement bodies are aware of it. Likewise, the recent theft of weapons in Jalalabad suggests problems in implementing MVD procedures for control of weapons stocks (see Box 5). In short, while Kyrgyzstan's legal framework is extensive on paper, it is unlikely that the full control mechanisms envisioned are actually put into practice.

Box 5

MVD weapons stock control systems

According to MVD officials, the body's weapons are held in locked facilities with one door for the duty officer and a window for issuing weapons to other officers, who are not allowed into the store. The door to the store is locked behind the duty officer after he enters, and the locking is electronically monitored. Officers coming on shift surrender a card through the window to obtain their weapon (usually a Makarov pistol). The weapon is logged out and passed through the window. After a shift, the officer hands the weapon back through the window and it is logged in. This procedure operates for all MVD weapons stores.

At the beginning of each shift, the shift supervisor (who is the only other individual in the station allowed into the weapons store) checks the weapons in the store against the log. Weapons not in the store have to be accounted for (e.g. the officer was late in returning it). There are regular city-wide checks in Bishkek, in which a designated officer visits all facilities where weapons are stored. Any instances of late return or missing weapons are investigated.

Weapons loss resulting from negligence is severely punished. At a minimum, the officer is fired and has to repay two to three times the cost of the weapon, regardless of whether it is later found. In cases of possible criminal intent, there is an investigation by the MVD's special investigation service, which reports to the minister.

The 2003 weapons theft at the Jalalabad Provincial Internal Administration (OVD) station raises questions about the implementation of these procedures. On 15 May 2003 ten people entered the Jalalabad OVD offices, beat the security guards, and stole some 35 weapons (around 20 Kalashnikov automatic rifles, more than 10 Makarov and Stetchkin pistols, a Dragunov sniper rifle, and a machine gun) (*Vechernii Bishkek*, 2003). They then left Jalalabad for the Aksy area. Eventually, most members of the group were arrested, and the bulk of the weapons recovered, although the sniper rifle remains unaccounted for. It is reasonably obvious that these weapons were not controlled in the manner described above. An investigation put the success of the attack down to lax procedures. The head of the Jalalabad OVD was dismissed, along with a number of his deputies. A subsequent ministerial decree ordered the installation of closed-circuit television monitors both in weapons stores and in the corridors outside them. Owing to lack of funds, this has not been fully implemented.

Administrative changes

The Kyrgyz government has taken specific measures to tackle the challenges posed by IMU incursions in southern Kyrgyzstan. The Border Guard Service was formerly under the joint control of the Ministry of Defence and SNB. It has now been formed as an independent unit. There has been an expansion of border guard posts along the Kyrgyz border with Tajikistan. Until 1999 most of the mountain border passes were unguarded. Now the Border Guard Service claims that all mountain passes on the border are either guarded or, in winter, impassable due to heavy snowfall.⁹⁶ The Kyrgyz government also initiated administrative changes in the wake of the Batken events. Batken was transformed from a region within Osh Province to a province in its own right. This gave Batken more control over government resources allocated to the area, which in turn may assist the local administration in responding to the needs of residents. There was a political motive behind this reorganization: a key worry of the Kyrgyz government had been the possibility of IMU mobilization of local villagers, though in hindsight there were few signs of extensive local support for IMU activities (IWPR, 2002a).

Responses of international organizations

There are no international programmes directly targeting small arms proliferation in Kyrgyzstan. There are a number of programmes, however, which, if successful, might have a significant impact on small-arms-related issues. There are two types of support: programmes designed to enhance border control and programmes to support domestic law enforcement structures. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has attempted to curb drug trafficking in the region. The previous Osh Knot programme in 1997–99 attempted to tie control mechanisms in three neighbouring provinces in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan together (Murghab, Osh, and Andijan, respectively). Customs and border agencies were promised communications and detection equipment, but the task of supplying local units was not fully completed (ICG, 2001b, p. 19). UNODC is presently cooperating with the US government to help transform the Kyrgyz State Committee on Drugs into a Drug Control Agency (DCA). This will follow a model developed in Tajikistan, where an entirely new agency

was established in parallel to MVD and National Security Service structures. Donors claim the likelihood of corruption in these new agencies is lower.⁹⁷ There has been a significant increase in drug interception rates following the establishment of the Tajik DCA.⁹⁸ Controlling drugs flows would entail better control of any arms flows, however small, across national borders in Central Asia. Moreover, drug trafficking is the key income source for criminal groups. Fighting drugs means curbing the growth of armed criminal groups in the region.

Similar aims figure in the EU's new Border Management Programme, which plans to spend EUR 23 million over a 3–5 year period starting in 2003. Programme activities include: the establishment of a new border guard academy; the construction of three new border posts; support of sniffer dog centres; the transfer of technical equipment; and the improvement of working, health, and nutrition conditions of the border guards. The EU also supports the efforts of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to enhance immigration controls at key entry points to Kyrgyzstan.

The EU project only pertains to the Kyrgyz–Tajik border. As is the case with other projects of its kind, international organizations have had difficulties in engaging the Uzbek authorities in meaningful cooperation on border management.⁹⁹

The US Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) programme is the largest bilateral assistance programme on border security in Kyrgyzstan. It has assisted the Kyrgyz Border Guard Service, the Customs Service, and the Ministry of Defence with radios, computers, base stations, vehicles, and shelters (US State Department, 2002). In 2002 the US Customs Service announced that it would deliver two refurbished Mi-8 helicopters to Kyrgyzstan (US State Department. Office of the Spokesman, 2002). The EXBS programme functions jointly with Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related (NADR) programmes and Anti-Crime Training and Technical Assistance. The US State Department has requested USD 2.6 million to be spent on EXBS–NADR programmes in 2003–04. The United States sees a vital interest in enhancing Kyrgyz border security, and estimates that drug trafficking in Central Asia provides financing to global terrorist activities. The US State Department also warns that nuclear material from former Soviet production sites might cross Kyrgyz territory (US State Department. Office of the Spokesman, 2002).

The OSCE Police Assistance Programme initiated in July 2003 will be the largest multilateral assistance programme to Kyrgyz police structures to date. The programme has a budget of EUR 1.8 million over an 18-month period. The initiative will support the police academy, establish a model police station advocating ideas of community policing, establish eight mobile and two new permanent drug control units, modernize and re-equip the emergency response centre, disseminate new criminal investigation techniques and equipment, and establish a criminal investigation database. An additional, controversial component is the effort to equip and train the Kyrgyz police in crowd control methods (see Box 2). This is a component with direct links to small arms. Enhancing the Kyrgyz police's ability to react without firearms to demonstrations would lessen the potential misuse of small arms in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, support of criminal investigation activities may help Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies to better implement the strict firearm control regime that the Kyrgyz legal code envisages. 🗨️

VII. Conclusion

The introduction notes the common belief that Central Asia as a whole is awash with arms. In the discussion of the context of issues related to small arms and light weapons in Kyrgyzstan, it was suggested that many of the factors that frequently contribute to small arms problems were evident in the region: economic decay; weak and illegitimate government; fragile law enforcement structures; rampant corruption; regional inequities; and substantial social frustration, including an important component of ethnic tension. Despite the serious economic, social, and political challenges facing Kyrgyzstan, however, small arms are not a crucial human security issue in that country. Legal possession is low and dominated by hunting guns. Illegal possession is difficult to quantify, but appears to have little social impact. Leakage has occurred, but it appears to have been sporadic, declining over time, and relatively insignificant to begin with. Firearm use and associated death and injury are quite low, and do not appear to be increasing. The population does not appear to perceive a significant threat from small arms. There is little evidence to substantiate claims that Kyrgyzstan is a significant transit country for the small arms trade. The evidence that Kyrgyzstan is an important transit country for drugs is reasonably compelling, as is that for its role as both source and conduit for human trafficking. Direct evidence of persons involved in these activities also smuggling substantial numbers of small arms is almost impossible to obtain in Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere. Pricing data and the lack of significant firearm confiscation from traffickers do suggest, however, that the linkage between the trafficking of firearms and that of drugs and people is not a serious problem in the country. In short, from the perspective of small arms, Kyrgyzstan seems a rather benign environment. Results of the household survey suggest that residents of the country's least stable regions share this view.

The explanation for this finding has historical, economic, social, and cultural components. In the first place, Kyrgyzstan was not an important weapons location during Soviet times. Although it bordered China, the difficult terrain along

the border kept prospects of Chinese incursions and consequent calls to defend Soviet territory to a minimum. Support for the Soviet Afghan campaign (1979–89) was based in the Turkestan Military District (covering Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) rather than in the Central Asia District that included Kyrgyzstan. For the most part, Soviet forces in Afghanistan were not supplied through Kyrgyzstan, again as a result of terrain. The withdrawal from Afghanistan largely proceeded through Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, rather than through Kyrgyzstan. In other words, the numbers of weapons that could leak from Soviet military stores and movements were lower than in many other Soviet republics (e.g. Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova).

In addition, the simple fact that Kyrgyzstan did not experience large-scale civil conflict matters. Governmental structures holding, or having responsibility for, small arms and light weapons did not disintegrate. According to interview data, they retained much of their Soviet-era culture of strict weapons control. There were few incentives in early post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan to raid weapons stores. There are reports of a limited number of thefts from Soviet army depots in the early days of independence.¹⁰⁰ It is probable that the weapons involved exited the country to areas (such as Tajikistan) where there was significant demand, given the porous nature of the border and the civil war that was gathering steam in that country.¹⁰¹

With respect to legal civilian possession, acquiring a weapon for hunting is a cumbersome and expensive business. Hunting weapons were disproportionately held by the Russian minority. Substantial numbers of this minority emigrated in the early years after independence. The decision to acquire a firearm for personal security carries certain costs and risks. It is extremely difficult to obtain permission to possess a small arm for this purpose. Illegal possession, if discovered, carries significant penalties. Price data on the black market also suggests that—at Kyrgyz income levels—acquiring such a weapon would be a sizeable expenditure relative to average household income. The combination of significant risk and high cost means that people must have very strong reasons to seek a weapon. Yet the security environment in Kyrgyzstan is reasonably benign, and crimes against people involving small arms are comparatively rare. Property crime involving weapons use is low. In this context, perception of threat to personal security is also low, as suggested by the

household survey findings. It follows that the demand for personal weapons for security purposes would be insignificant.

These conclusions regarding demand seem to conflict with black market pricing data. Here one should note that this data is anecdotal and approximate. Moreover, the comments above concerning flows to Tajikistan during that country's civil war pertain to a period prior to that for which price data is available in Kyrgyzstan. Finally, high prices may not indicate high demand as much as they do restriction of supply. From the supplier perspective, if demand is relatively low and price inelastic, there is no obvious point in flooding the market. Increasing the supply would reduce the profit per unit.

The other major reason to own weapons is cultural. In the Caucasus, for example, weapons often convey status and are linked to gender identity. The interviews with women's organizations and the household survey discussed in Sections III and V, respectively, suggest that this is not the case in Kyrgyzstan.

Turning to cross-border movements of weapons, if demand is low in Kyrgyzstan, then it is unlikely that the country would be a significant destination for arms trafficking. Although Kyrgyzstan clearly served as a transit country for weapons moving south during the Afghan civil war, it is difficult to understand why it would be a significant transit country under current circumstances. Although there is demand for smuggled weapons in western China, the transit of weapons to Xinjiang from Kyrgyzstan is difficult, given the comparatively advanced nature of Chinese border control. Tajikistan is currently engaged in a far-reaching disarmament process of its own, resulting from the gradual stabilization of that country. In this situation, the existence of a significant demand for transited weapons is improbable. The general view of Afghanistan is that it has a substantial in-country supply of small arms, while getting further supplies from Pakistan is comparatively easy. Finally, there is little incentive to smuggle weapons in bulk northwards to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, as these countries have considerable supplies of their own, and obtaining additional weapons from official stores has been comparatively unproblematic. There is a (political) incentive to smuggle weapons to Uzbekistan, but transiting the relevant sections of Kyrgyzstan's border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is increasingly difficult, while the IMU was significantly damaged in the coalition campaign against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In short, the lack of evidence of a substantial small arms problem in Kyrgyzstan suggests not so much distortions in or insufficiency of data, but rather that the problem is in fact not that serious. Structures of control are relatively effective, weapons are expensive relative to the disposable income of most residents, people feel comparatively secure, there is no cultural proclivity to possess firearms, and there is little to be gained by smuggling weapons through the country. 📄

VIII. Epilogue: small arms and light weapons in Kyrgyzstan, 2004–06

The field work for the initial (2004) report was done in summer 2003. Kyrgyzstan has since suffered substantial political upheaval, which has affected the attitudes to firearms in the country. This epilogue therefore covers the period from the time of the initial research to 2006, to bring the report up to date by assessing the significance of the changes that have taken place.

Trade in firearms and ammunition

Recent figures (2004–06) for export and import flows of small arms and light weapons items are given in the relevant tables in Appendix 1 (Tables 12A–T). The figures for 1993–2004 from the 2004 study are also provided in Tables 12A–H, alongside figures for the period 2004–06 (wherever available) to allow for comparisons.

The major change is that export volumes of small arms ammunition produced in Kyrgyzstan have dropped considerably since 1996. While in that year the country exported ammunition worth USD 4,543,500, in 2004 this amount fell to USD 281,909 (see Appendix 1, Table 12A).

Kyrgyzstan imported hunting rifles and shotguns throughout the 1990s and up to 2005, primarily from Russia and Germany, and there was an overall increase in reported volumes. The traded value for shotguns and hunting rifles from the Russian Federation reached USD 37,735 in 2004, up from USD 3,136 in 2002, although still not matching the USD 44,671 of trade value from 1996 (see Appendix 1, Table 12D).

It can be concluded that legal trade in small arms and ammunition, both exported and imported, has remained negligible, and if anything has decreased in the period 2004–06.

Political upheavals and their consequences

Trade is not the key issue, however. Rather, the attitude of people towards the use and ownership of firearms has changed in Kyrgyzstan, largely as a result of the political upheavals that took place after the 2004 study was published.

In early spring 2005 demonstrators protesting alleged rigging of parliamentary elections gathered in Bishkek and demanded that President Askar Akaev step down. On 24 March 2005 the president fled the country and protesters stormed the Presidential Administration building. Two days of lawlessness and looting followed.¹⁰² An interim administration headed by Kurmanbek Bakiev was formed and later endorsed in a presidential election on 7 July 2005.

The upheavals have contributed to a weakening of the Kyrgyz state's monopoly of violence and have also augmented some negative trends from the Akaev period—in particular the increasing presence of criminal groupings in politics and society. These developments in turn have had implications for the small arms and light weapons situation in the country.



Kyrgyz's police investigators collect evidence at the site of parliamentary candidate Ryspek Akmatbaev's murder in Bishkek, 10 May 2006. © Vyacheslav Oseledko/AFP/Getty Images



Bayaman Erkinbayev, a 37-year-old Kyrgyz parliamentarian, attends a news conference in Bishkek a day after being wounded in an assassination attempt in April 2005. Erkinbayev was shot dead five months later.

© Vladimir Pirogov/Reuters

Firearms violence in national politics

The national political arena is one of the spheres where changes since 2005 have been the greatest—and where the emergence of firearm violence has also been most significant. Murders or violent attacks on members of the political elite were extremely rare previously in Kyrgyzstan, the exception being the murder of the anti-corruption police chief Chynybek Aliev in May 2004 (IWPR, 2004).

Since the upheavals of March 2005, however, a number of influential politicians, officials, and businesspeople have become targets of contract killings and violent attacks. These include Members of Parliament (MPs) Bayaman Erkinbayev, Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev, and Tynychbek Akmatbaev. The first two were wealthy businesspeople thought to have created their wealth through criminal activities, whereas the third was the brother of a well-known criminal kingpin, Ryspek Akmatbaev—also shot in May 2006. The killings sparked criticism of the law enforcement agencies and indicated the inability of the Kyrgyz state to protect threatened prominent individuals from firearms violence. Erkinbayev had appealed for protection on several occasions prior to his killing.

Table 10 lists recent murders of and attacks on members of the political elite.

Two underlying trends account for how, in the more insecure post-Akaev period, violence and threats have emerged as central features of political life. Firstly, the shift in the top echelon of power has had implications for semi-legal businesses and criminal structures. Whole sectors of the economy were previously controlled or protected by the Akaev family or former regime insiders. The change of power has triggered a chaotic situation with regard to market shares, ownership of profitable assets, and the legality of business practices. This has led to competition and insecurity, which in turn may have sparked some of the fatalities since March 2005.

Secondly, on a more profound level, Kyrgyzstan is experiencing an elite transformation where elite members that emerged in the Communist period are gradually being replaced by persons that have managed to navigate successfully in the new market economy. These actors have used their new-found wealth to build up their political capital. Many have sought positions in the Kyrgyz Parliament or executive branches of the government. Success-

Table 10

Recent murders of and attacks on members of the political elite

Name	Position	Incident
Usen Kudaibergenov	Political ally of Felix Kulov, central in organizing self-defence brigades against looting and lawlessness on 24–25 March 2005	Shot in Orto-say village near Bishkek, 10 April 2005
Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev	Elected MP in February 2005, head of Union of Entrepreneurs – ‘New Steps’, owned the country’s second-largest car market, alleged to have criminal ties, suspected of organizing pro-Akaev rallies in March 2005	Shot 10 June 2005, Bishkek
Abdalim Junusov and bodyguard	Director of the large Kara Suu bazaar in Osh Province for an interim period in 2005	Shot in his home in Osh, 5 September 2005
Bayaman Erkinbayev	Elected MP in February 2005, owner of parts of the Kara Suu bazaar, previously alleged to have ties with criminal groups and drugs trafficking networks	Attacked and shot at on 28 April 2005—survived. Shot and killed in Bishkek, 21 September 2005
Raatbek Sanatbayev	Wrestling world champion, running for the chairmanship of Kyrgyzstan’s Olympic committee	Shot 12 January 2006 in Bishkek
Ryspek Akmatbaev	Criminal kingpin who previously had faced murder charges, won a parliamentary election on 29 April, receiving 79 per cent of the votes	Shot 10 May 2006 after evening prayers in a mosque in the village of Kok Zhar near Bishkek
Tynychbek Akmatbaev	MP, chairman of the legislature’s committee on defence and security, brother of Ryspek Akmatbaev	Killed during a visit to Moldovanka penal colony outside Bishkek, 20 October 2005
Edil Baisalov	Head of the NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, had arranged a large-scale demonstration against the increasing influence of criminal groups on national politics four days before being attacked	Survived violent attack, 12 April 2006. Forensic results indicated he had been attacked by either a blunt instrument or firearm

ful navigation in the market economy has, nevertheless, often also meant engaging in criminal activities. This has, in turn, increasingly made crime groups and associated practices of firearms violence central features of national politics.

Small arms and law enforcement agencies

The murders of high-profile politicians and businesspeople have sparked criticism of law enforcement agencies and have raised doubts as to whether they are able to deal with rising crime levels. The concern is twofold: organizational and financial challenges, as well as concerns over alleged close relations between the law enforcement structures and criminal groups. Prime Minister Felix Kulov stressed in September 2005 that ‘the biggest problem is that the law enforcement has become intertwined with the criminals, and honest law enforcement structures are afraid to fight crime’ (ICG, 2005, p. 17).¹⁰³ A recent ICG report similarly raised concerns over a possible lack of neutrality on the part of law enforcement structures. Recent episodes seem to indicate that segments of these structures have their own business or other interests, and that these may have shaped their response to specific crimes or security challenges.¹⁰⁴

Lack of financial resources has resulted in severe material shortages (cars, petrol, forensic equipment, and security installations for weapons storage facilities), as well as continued low pay for police officers. Average monthly salaries are still low: in the key MVD unit combating organized crime, monthly salaries are USD 50–60 per month (IWPR, 2005c). Since March 2005 the different branches of the law enforcement system have also suffered internal strife, as well as engaged in inter-agency turf wars. There have been frequent shifts in the top management of the agencies.

The consequence of these challenges facing the MVD and SNB is a law enforcement structure unable to uphold the rule of law effectively.¹⁰⁵ This incapacity has direct effects on the small arms situation. The weak performance of the police fuels ordinary citizens’ security concerns and contributes to increasing demand for small arms (see below) (IWPR, 2005a). Moreover, equipment shortages and corruption within law enforcement structures ensure that concerns persist with regard to stockpile leakages.

Armed groups and radical religious movements

The threat posed by militant or radical groups has evolved considerably since 2003—and with it the nature of associated small arms and light weapons problems. Previously the threat from these groups was assessed in light of the incursions in 1999 and 2000 by the IMU (which is also increasingly referred to as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, or IMT). These attacks by well-armed and well-trained guerrilla soldiers were a significant challenge to the national armies of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The groups mounted their attacks from permanent camps in Afghanistan. The IMU, as detailed in this report, also established a number of secret weapons caches in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the course of the Enduring Freedom campaign in Afghanistan, the permanent bases were eradicated and the IMU's organizational strength greatly weakened. One of the leaders (Tahir Yuldashev) has survived and is believed to be hiding on the Afghan–Pakistani border, possibly together with other IMU fighters (RFE/RL, 2006c). A repeat of the forceful incursions of 1999 and 2000 seems highly unlikely, however (RFE/RL, 2006c).

At present, the security threat and associated weapons challenges from the IMU and other radical groups are tied to (underground) affiliates of these groups based in the Fergana Valley regions of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and possibly Uzbekistan. There have been a number of alarming episodes in 2006 featuring armed groups, which the Kyrgyz authorities claim are IMU or Hizb ut-Tahrir affiliates. Some law enforcement officers link the increase in activity to the prison break that formed part of the Andijan demonstrations and massacres in Uzbekistan in May 2005.¹⁰⁶ In January 2006 a prison in northern Tajikistan was attacked by two gunmen, who shot the prison director and released one of the inmates—later claimed by the chief prosecutor in Sughd Province (Tajikistan) to be an IMU member. On 12 May, the anniversary of the Andijan events, a border post on the Kyrgyz–Tajik border was attacked by a number of assailants, who killed two Kyrgyz and three Tajik border guards. The group stole 19 assault rifles and one heavy-calibre machine gun from the Tajik border post and fled into Kyrgyz territory, pursued by Kyrgyz law enforcement personnel. Four of the attackers were killed in the incident. The episode triggered a crackdown and further shoot-outs between law enforcement personnel and armed gunmen in the summer. A well-known Muslim cleric, Rafiq

Qori Kamoluddin, held to be sympathetic to Hizb ut-Tahrir members, was also killed in a raid by Kyrgyz security forces on 6 August 2006.

In addition to these shoot-outs, there have been a number of arrests of Hizb ut-Tahrir members—in which, together with leaflets, law enforcement personnel discovered illegal weapons (IWPR, 2006a). This is a significant change. Previously, as the research for this report in 2003 found, there was no indication that Hizb ut-Tahrir members (unlike the IMU) engaged in violent activities, adhering strictly to their manifesto of peaceful resistance. Experts believe Hizb ut-Tahrir is a far more populous movement than IMU, with some suggesting it has up to 10,000 supporters, although this appears to be a significantly inflated figure.¹⁰⁷ If Hizb ut-Tahrir members are arming themselves, this would mean that a large, well-organized, and clandestine network is now in possession of illegal firearms in the Ferghana Valley.

Two serious caveats need to be stressed in relation to this analysis. The first is the indiscriminate use of labels such as IMU, IMT, and Hizb ut-Tahrir by the law enforcement agencies in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. It seems that any group of people involved in unsanctioned religious or political activities may easily be labelled IMU or Hizb ut-Tahrir—even if there is no real link. Secondly, it is reported that law enforcement personnel in the region occasionally ‘plant’ compromising material (drugs, weapons, etc.) on suspects immediately prior to arrest so as to ensure that there is a case for conviction (ICG, 2002). This makes it difficult to judge how many of the reported weapons-related activities of alleged radical religious groups should in fact be interpreted as a sign that there is an increase in small arms proliferation.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, it remains a fact that at least five shoot-outs occurred in 2006 in southern Kyrgyzstan and that new arms caches have been found.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, it is clear that the groups involved were not necessarily purely ‘criminal’ in nature—even if there is insufficient information and analysis of the religious identities and political aims that the groups may have had.

Small arms and society

The looting and lawlessness associated with the March 2005 events have had profound consequences for the small arms situation in Kyrgyzstan. The break-

Table 11
Official MVD statistics, 2004–06^a

Item	2004	2005	Jan.–Aug. 2006
Number of licences to carry firearms issued by the MVD	176	335	189
Number of robberies	1,669	2,718	1,560
Total number of all crimes	32,616	33,277	21,297
Number of accidental deaths due to weapons	15	13	5
Number of murders by firearm	35	41	15

^a These statistics were made available by the MVD in an official letter, government reference 29.09.06 No. 1/5030.

down in order and the sudden need for business owners to protect themselves from looters triggered a major increase in demand for small arms. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) reported shortly after the events that ‘diplomatic and police sources estimate several thousand weapons have been sold in the capital after the revolution’ (IWPR, 2005a). According to official statistics, there has been a near doubling in licences issued for firearm ownership (see Table 11).

A total of 335 new licences were issued in 2005, up from 176 in 2004. In addition, a considerable number of people, possibly several thousand, might have acquired firearms but not registered them (and thus these are illegal). More than 1,200 illegal firearms were seized in 2005—50 per cent more than in 2004 (*Transitions Online*, 2006c). As noted in the original (2004) version of this report, in the period 1995–2003 Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies confiscated approximately 5,000 firearms in total.

Kural Toibaev, head of the licensing and permit section at the Bishkek police department, explains that ‘people buy weapons for self defense, as they want to protect their lives and those of their families and children, as well as their property . . . both men and women of all ages and ethnicities buy weapons if they are well-off and have something to lose’ (IWPR, 2005a). According to interviews conducted for the preparation of this epilogue with NGO representatives in Jalalabad, Osh, and Batken Provinces, there has not been a major

increase in firearm possession in the rural areas nor major changes in the security situation since the upheavals of 2005, while big city areas like Osh and Bishkek are perceived to have higher degrees of weapons possession than previously, in the context of a worsening security situation.¹¹⁰

These changes are accompanied by a significant normative evolution. The findings in the original (2004) report indicated that there was strong normative aversion in Kyrgyz society to weapons possession. This notion seems to be waning in favour of a belief in the need for and right of people to protect themselves by way of firearm possession. A former general prosecutor, Azimbek Beknazarov, noted in May 2005 that 'if people are arming themselves, it means they are scared for their safety and want to protect themselves, and this is a normal process' (IWPR, 2005a). Kyrgyzstan's parliament passed a bill on 14 November 2006 amending current criminal and civil legislation to allow individuals to defend their property to the extent that is reasonable with firearms, provided they have a gun licence (IWPR, 2006d).

The sources of illegal firearms, whether for the use of criminals, radical political-religious groups, or ordinary people, seem to be similar to those indicated in the original report. Law enforcement agencies stress the possibility that arms may have been smuggled to Kyrgyzstan from abroad, while independent experts continue to note the likelihood of leakages from government stockpiles. A recent report notes that these could either be recent leakages or 'old' leakages from former Soviet army stockpiles in the early 1990s (*Transitions Online*, 2006c).

Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan is at a crossroads. On the one hand, the security situation has rapidly worsened since the March 2005 upheavals. On the other hand, a politically mobilized population may ensure that much-needed and deep-seated reform takes root—thus eventually enabling the country to obtain prosperity and stability. Moreover, there have also been some positive developments in relation to small arms in the political battles that have taken place in Kyrgyzstan. The vast majority of demonstrations have so far not involved demonstrators using or carrying small arms. Through this present period of upheaval, a civic and

peaceful democratic culture could be emerging—one that can draw inspiration from Kyrgyzstan’s recent peaceful past, which was largely free from firearms violence. 📖

Appendix 1: Kyrgyzstan’s arms trade, 1993–2005

Figures in the following tables are taken from the Comtrade database, as supplied by NISAT (NISAT, n.d). The tables may considerably underestimate or overestimate Kyrgyzstan’s trade in small arms.

Table 12A
Exports from Kyrgyzstan of small arms ammunition and parts (reported by Kyrgyzstan), 1995, 1996, and 2004

Destination	1995 trade value (USD)	1996 trade value (USD)	2004 trade value (USD)
Bulgaria	2,004,300	225,000	n/a
China	225,000	264,000	n/a
India	n/a	453,500	n/a
Kazakhstan	93,800	402,200	97,781
Russian Federation	542,000	257,700	n/a
Tajikistan	n/a	156,000	184,128
Uzbekistan	4,941,000	2,785,100	n/a
Total	7,806,100	4,543,500	281,909

Table 12B
Largest reported exporters of small arms ammunition and parts in 1996 (USD)

USA	169,014,720
UK	49,868,440
Switzerland	30,425,764
Germany	27,789,472
Italy	27,276,840
Austria	18,204,232
Norway	15,278,295

Spain	11,499,269
Canada	10,702,074
Finland	8,875,788
Brazil	8,794,171
Czech Republic	4,605,654
Kyrgyzstan	4,543,498
Romania	4,216,000
Russian Federation	4,016,698
Australia	2,044,601
Portugal	1,258,678

Table 12C

Small arms exports from Kyrgyzstan (reported by the importing state), 1999–2004

Year	Importing state	Commodity	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1999	Sweden	Shotguns, or shotgun-rifles, for sport or hunting	604	4
1999	Sweden	Combination sporting & hunting shotgun/rifles	815*	n/a
2000	Kazakhstan	Bombs, grenades, ammunition, mines, & others	43,000	97
2000	Slovakia	Military weapons	2,607	199
2000	Slovakia	Bombs, grenades, ammunition, mines, & others	7,635	472
2001	Turkey	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	100,610	58,488
2002	Turkey	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	58,093	20,550
2002	Germany	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	3,639	898
2002	Germany	Roughly shaped gun stock blocks for sporting & hunting rifles	4,851*	n/a
2002	Italy	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	7,334	3,125

2002	Italy	Roughly shaped gun stock blocks for sporting & hunting rifles	10,202*	n/a
2003	Turkey	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	72,177	71,882
2003	Canada	Bombs, grenades, ammunition, mines, & others	1,001,150	n/a
2004	Austria	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	90,374	15,812
2004	Turkey	Parts & accessories of shotguns or rifles	7,033	190
2004	Austria	Parts & accessories of sporting & hunting shotguns or rifles	95,530*	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12D

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): shotguns or shotgun-rifles, for sport or hunting, 1993–2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg	Units
1993	Canada	70,122	4	338
1993	Germany	21,000	199	n/a
1994	Germany	27,000	398	n/a
1996	Germany	5,980	97	n/a
1996	Russian Federation	44,671	808	n/a
1998	Russian Federation	35,654	820	n/a
1998	Austria	8,435	n/a	n/a
1999	Russian Federation	3,867	210	210 (est.)
2000	Russian Federation	29,391	824	824
2002	Russian Federation	3,136	74	n/a
2003	Russian Federation	6,257	148	n/a
2004	Italy	37,176	156	n/a
2004	Russian Federation	37,735	550	n/a
1993–2004	Total	330,424	4,288	n/a

Table 12E

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): rifles for sport, hunting, or target-shooting, 1996–2005

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg	Units
1996	Russian Federation	61,755	625	n/a
1998	Austria	3,887	25	n/a
1998	Germany	6,000	37	n/a
1998	Russian Federation	55,789	804	n/a
1999	Russian Federation	8,123	171	n/a
2000	Russian Federation	19,417	453	453
2001	Russian Federation	15,435	195	195
2002	Russian Federation	15,436	273	n/a
2002	South Korea	88,029	1,062	n/a
2003	Russian Federation	28,063	746	n/a
2004	Italy	11,837*	n/a	7
2004	Russian Federation	21,632	316	n/a
2005	Czech Republic	3,063*	n/a	5
1996–2005	Total	338,466	4,707	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12F

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): small arms ammunition and parts, 1994–2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1994	Germany	10,000	97
1995	Germany	23,000	97
1996	Germany	3,986	238
1996	Russian Federation	9,081	460
2002	South Korea	11,534	60
2004	Germany	1,000	51
1994–2004	Total	58,601	1,003

Table 12G

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): revolvers and pistols, 1995–2005

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1995	Spain	3,817	18
1998	Switzerland	10,370	20
2000	Kazakhstan	599	n/a
2005	Czech Republic	9,319*	n/a
1995–98	Total	24,105	38

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12H

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): cartridges and shotguns, 1995–98

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1995	UK	1,859	210
1998	Switzerland	2,765	128
1995–98	Total	4,624	338

Table 12I

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): parts and accessories of shotguns and rifles, 1994

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1994	Germany	2,000	25
1994	Total	2,000	25

Table 12J

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): parts and accessories of military weapons, 1996–98

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1996	Russian Federation	901	8
1997	Germany	12,383*	n/a
1998	Austria	39*	n/a
1996–98	Total	13,323	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12K

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): rimfire cartridges, not including cases or for shotguns, 2004–05

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
2004	Germany	53,872*	n/a
2005	Czech Republic	3,049*	n/a
2004–05	Total	56,921	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12L

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): air gun pellets, lead shot, and parts of shotgun cartridges, 1995–2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1995	Germany	5,000	386
1996	Germany	1,993	242
1997	Germany	1,153	148
1998	Germany	2,000	273
2004	Germany	1,000	121
1995–2004	Total	11,146	1,170

Table 12M

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): single-barrelled smooth-bore sporting and hunting shotguns, 1993–2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1993	Germany	24,444*	n/a
1994	Germany	30,551*	n/a
2004	Italy	37,430*	n/a
1993–2004	Total	92,425	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12N

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): parts and accessories for sporting and hunting shotguns or rifles, 1994

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1994	Germany	2,035*	n/a
1994	Total	2,035	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12O

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): cartridges and parts not specified elsewhere, 1994–96

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1994	Germany	10,290*	n/a
1995	Germany	23,677*	n/a
1996	Germany	4,121*	n/a
1994–96	Total	38,088	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12P

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): parts of cartridges for shotguns or rifles, 1995–2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1995	Germany	4,896*	n/a
1996	Germany	1,580*	n/a
1997	Germany	1,483*	n/a
1998	Germany	2,166*	n/a
2004	Germany	1,485*	n/a
1995–2004	Total	11,610	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12Q

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): combination sporting and hunting shotguns/rifles, 2004

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
2004	Italy	1,880*	n/a
2004	Total	1,880	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Table 12R

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): bombs, grenades, ammunition, mines, and others, 2000

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
2000	Kazakhstan	1,000	2,500
2000	Total	1,000	2,500

Table 12S

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): parts and accessories of revolvers or pistols, 2002

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
2002	South Korea	42,302	3,125
2002	Total	42,302	3,125

Table 12T

Imports by Kyrgyzstan (reported by exporting state): revolvers and pistols of 9 mm calibre or greater, 1995

Year	Exporting state	Trade value (USD)	Kg
1995	Spain	3,794*	n/a
1995	Total	3,794	n/a

*This price was reported in EUR and converted to USD at an exchange rate of EUR 1 to USD 1.31.

Appendix 2: Interview list

Interviews 2006

NGO representative (via telephone), Leilek, 18 October 2006.

NGO representative (via telephone), Aksy, 18 October 2006.

NGO representative (via telephone), Osh, 19 October 2006.

NGO representative (via telephone), Batken, 19 October 2006.

Kazakhstan

Fikret Akcura, UNDP resident representative, Kazakhstan, 22 August 2003.

Maj. Anthony C. Kwietniewski, air attaché, US Embassy in Kazakhstan, 22 August 2003.

Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz, political and mass media officer, OSCE Almaty, 16 August 2003.

Ulrich Rainer and Philippe Bernard, project manager and programme officer, respectively, EU, Delegation of the European Commission in Kazakhstan, 22 August 2003.

Kyrgyzstan

David Akopyan, deputy resident representative, UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 22 August 2003.

Salamat Alemonov, head of the Parity Commission for Delimitation of State Borders, 17 July 2003.

Baktibek Madanbekovich Alimbekov, head of OVD, Jalalabad Province, 8 August 2003.

Abdimajit Kopbolsunovich Alimkulov, head of the Osh Province section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 25 July 2003.

Atyrkul Alisheva and Zumrat Salmorbekova, researchers, Institute for Regional Studies, 16 July 2003.

Col. Karavai Asanaliev, deputy director for academic affairs, MVD Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic, 22 August 2003.

Sheishenbek Baisakov, head of OVD, Batken Province, 30 and 31 July 2003.

Leonid M. Bondarets, senior expert, IISS under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, 25 August 2003.

Eliferenka Alexandra Borisovna, director, Crisis Centre 'Chance', Bishkek, 16 July 2003.

Marat Bozgunchiev, director, WHO Information Centre on Health for Central Asian Republics, 14 July 2003.

Fredric Chenais, associate expert, IOM Bishkek, 18 July 2003.

Jennifer Croft, Political/Economic Section, US Embassy, Bishkek, 22 August 2003.

Joep Cuijpers, economic/environmental officer, OSCE Osh Field Office, 24 July 2003.

Deputy general prosecutor, Jalalabad Province, 8 August 2003.

Director of FTI, Osh branch, 25 July 2003.

Abdimalik Abikarovich Egemberdiev, head of Aksy District, 25 August 2003.

Iskender Gaipkulov, former head of Batken Province, Expert Secretariat of the Special Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on Foreign Investment, 22 July 2003.

Almas Gairfulin, deputy head of the State Commission on Drugs Control under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 11 July 2003.

General procurator, Batken Province, 30 July 2003.

Gerhard Gunter, team leader, GTZ Batken Capacity Building Project for Food Security, Regional Cooperation, and Conflict Mitigation, 28 July 2003.

John Heathershaw, instructor, International and Comparative Politics, American University of Central Asia, 14 July 2003.

Lt. Col. Zarif Hudayberdiev, head, MITBC Department, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

Orumbek Ibraev, analyst, International Cooperation Department, Kyrgyzstan National Committee for Statistics, 10 July 2003.

Aydin Idil, ambassador, OSCE Centre in Kyrgyzstan, 15 July 2003.

Muratbek Imanaliev, academic dean, American University of Central Asia, 29 August 2003.

Bahadyr Ismailov, legal assistant, OSCE Osh Field Office, 25 July and 5 December 2003.

Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003.

Chinara Jakypova, country director, IWPR, Kyrgyzstan, 14 July 2003.

Abdimunon Joldoshov, expert, Secretariat of the Special Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on Foreign Investment, 24 July 2003.

Abdiraim Jorokulov, regional coordinator for Osh Province Preventive Development Programme, UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 20 July 2003.

Chukun Junusaliev, head of the SNB, Aksy, 25 August 2003.

Ulan Jusupov, deputy head of Department for UN and International Security in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 July 2003.

Egamberdy Kabulov, reporter, Kyrgyz State Television Channel Kabar, 18 July 2003.

Raya Kadyrova, president of FTI, 15 July 2003.

Alexander Kashkarev and Mia Rimby, programme officer and programme analyst, respectively, UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 9 July 2003.

Mr Kenjesariev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.

Andrei Khanzhin, UN liaison officer, south Kyrgyzstan/UNDP preventive development coordinator, 23 July 2003.

Alexander Kim, chief editor, *Moya Stolitsa*, 19 August 2003.

Alexander Alexeivich Knjasev, lecturer in International Journalism, Kyrgyz–Russian Slavic University, 13 August 2003.

Asylbek Kochkorov, head of FTI, Aksy, 26 August 2003.

Alexander Antonovich Kolesnikov, consul, Consulate of the Russian Federation in Osh, 6 August 2003.

Jocelyne Lacourt, operational programme manager, OSCE Police Assistance Programme in Kyrgyzstan, 27 August 2003.

David Lewis, Central Asia project director, ICG, Osh, 22 August 2003.

Marat Immankulov Makanovich, head of the SNB, Jalalabad Province, 8 August 2003.

Bahtiar Mambetov, national programme coordinator, UNODC Kyrgyzstan, 8 July 2003.

Col. Marat K. Maniazov, chief, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, 26 August 2003.

Orozbek Moldaliev, professor and director, Research Centre 'SEDEP', 21 August 2003.

Oskon Moldokulov, liaison officer, WHO Kyrgyzstan, 10 July 2003.

Aitbai Ushatalievish Nasiev, state inspector for southern regions in the State Commission on Drugs Control under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 25 July 2003.

Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.

Phillipe Noubel, senior researcher, ICG, Osh, 22 August 2003.

Isaev Nurkaly, head of Department for International Development (DFID) Office, resident representative DFID, Bishkek, 10 July 2003.

Cecilie Gulbraar Orestis, political and human dimension officer, OSCE Osh Field Office, 25 July 2003.

Gulsira Osorova, senior researcher, IISS under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, 14 July 2003.

Abdilbek Sahdimonov, FTI programme officer, former head of staff in Batken Province Administration, 29 July 2003.

Kathrine Samuel, senior researcher, ICG, Dushanbe, 11 August 2003.

Amankulov Taluntbek Sarikevich, commander, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Province, 31 July 2003.

Kubanichbek Satiev, planning officer, GTZ Batken Capacity Building Project for Food Security, Regional Cooperation, and Conflict Mitigation, 28 July 2003.

Kamil Satkanbaev, freelance journalist, Osh, 23 July 2003.

Secretary/accountant, Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, Osh, 6 August 2003.

V. Sergeev, representative of the Russian Federation, CIS Counter-terrorism Centre, Bishkek, 29 August 2003.

Iskender Sheivmetov, former head of Bishkek Ambulance Service, 16 August 2003.

Andrei A. Sopuev, deputy director (scientific research), National Surgical Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic, 20 August 2003.

Kilichbek Toktogulov Toktogulovich, procurator of Aksy District, 25 August 2003.

Bermeta Galieвна Tugelbaeva, president of Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003.

Kyrgyzstan: confidential interviews

Independent journalist, Bishkek, 17 July 2003.

Independent journalist, Osh, 22 July 2003.

Informed observer and former drug trafficker in Osh and Batken Provinces, 7 August 2003.

Batken Province administration official, 30 July 2003.

Local opposition representatives in Kara Suu, Aksy District village, 26 August 2003.

NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003.

NGO representative in Aksy, 25 August 2003.

NGO representative in Aksy, 26 August 2003.

Representative of the SNB of the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 July 2003.

Representative of the SNB of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Province, 30 July 2003.

Representative of the Aksy Committee of the Wounded, 26 August 2003.

Western intelligence officer, Bishkek, 5 August 2003.

Tajikistan

Soudabeh Ahmadzadeh, emergency officer, UNICEF Tajikistan, 13 August 2003.

Nazira P. Artykova, liaison officer, WHO Tajikistan, 14 August 2003.

Igor Bosc, chief of mission, IOM Dushanbe, 15 August 2003.

Brad Evans and Amanda Cranmer, second and third secretary, respectively, Political and Economic Affairs, US Embassy, Tajikistan, 14 August 2003.

Johannes Hoffman, logistician, International Committee of the Red Cross, 14 August 2003.

Davlatyor Jumakhonov and Khaleel Tetlay, deputy general manager and social development adviser, respectively, Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (a project of the Aga Khan Foundation), 11 August 2003.

Abdurahim Abdulahadovoic Kakharov, first deputy minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, 15 August 2003.

Col. Arpad Nagy, UN CIVPOL adviser, UN Tajikistan Office of Peace Building, 12 August 2003.

Radjabali Kurbanovich Pirakov, head of department, General Procurator's Office, Republic of Tajikistan, 14 August 2003.

Artikon Karim Polatovich, head of science, National Medical Reconstruction Unit, Dushanbe, 20 August 2003.

Tharir Rakhmonov, former member of the National Reconciliation Committee in Tajikistan, 13 August 2003.

Saifullo Safarov, deputy director, Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 12 August 2003.

Mia Seppo, deputy resident representative, UNDP Tajikistan, 12 August 2003.

Michael Smith, ambassador, UK Embassy, Dushanbe, 13 August 2003.

Abdullo Soliev, senior specialist, Constitutional Guarantees of Citizens' Rights Department in the Tajik President's Administration, 20 August 2003.

Erkin Tadjibaevic Tadjibaev, head of International Affairs Division, Committee for State Border Control in the Republic of Tajikistan, 14 August 2003.

Becky Thompson, project coordinator, CIS Mine Awareness Project, 14 August 2003.

Vladimir Semenovitch Trofimov, Russian Federation military attaché, Tajikistan, 11 August 2003.

Dilbar Turakhanova, national programme officer, legal support/gender, Swiss Cooperation Office, Tajikistan, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 15 August 2003.

Tajikistan: confidential interviews

Journalist, Kulyab region, Tajikistan, 16 August 2003.

Former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

United Kingdom

Col. Christopher Langton, editor of *IISS Military Balance* and research fellow for Russian Federation, King's College London, 2 July 2003.

Michael Page, *International Alert*, 2 July 2003.

Domitilla Sagramos, research fellow, King's College London, 2 July 2003.

Appendix 3: Household survey frequency tables

1A. How often do you hear firearms in your neighbourhood?

	Frequency	% ¹¹¹
Never	186	78.8
Infrequently	43	18.2
Once a month	2	0.8
Once a week	3	1.3
Several times a week	1	0.4
Daily	1	0.4
Total	236	100.0

1B. How often do you see firearms in your neighbourhood?

	Frequency	%
Never	181	76.7
Infrequently	51	21.6
Once a month	2	0.8
Once a week	1	0.4
Several times a week	1	0.4
Total	236	100.0

2A. Has the number of firearms in your neighbourhood changed since 1991? Has it decreased, increased, or remained the same?

	Frequency	%
Decreased	42	17.8
Increased	90	38.1
The same	87	36.9
Refused to answer	1	0.4
Don't know	16	6.8
Total	236	100.0

2B. Do you feel that your personal safety has decreased, increased, or remained the same?

	Frequency	%
Increased dramatically	2	0.8
Increased	21	8.9
The same	125	53.0
Decreased	85	36.0
Don't know	3	1.3
Total	236	100.0

3. Has the government ever confiscated weapons from your village?

	Frequency	%
Yes	7	3.0
No	221	93.6
Refused to answer	1	0.4
Don't know	7	3.0
Total	236	100.0

4. In your opinion, how many households have firearms?

	Frequency	%
Most households (3/4)	1	0.4
Every other household (1/2)	1	0.4
Few households (1/4)	58	24.6
Almost no households	120	50.8
Not a single household	47	19.9
Don't know	9	3.8
Total	236	100.0

5. On average, what types of weapons do you think are most common in your area (multiple answer)?

Type of weapon	Number of respondents who identified weapon as common	% of 236 respondents
Pistols	31	13.1
Kalashnikovs	48	20.3
Hunting rifles	94	39.8
Home-made firearms	24	10.2
Other	6	2.5

6A. If a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, needed a weapon, where do you think he or she could get one?

	Frequency	%
Nowhere	30	12.7
Ask around	72	30.5
Buy on the black market	51	21.6
Buy in the village	10	4.2
Know of a hidden cache	14	5.9
Buy from someone in the army or militia	3	1.3
Borrow from someone in the army or militia	3	1.3
Borrow from a relative	1	0.4
Get a licence and buy	32	13.6
Other	5	2.1
Don't know	15	6.4
Total	236	100.0

6B. Which regions, if any, do you think supply the most firearms to your area?

	Frequency	%
Badakhshan (Tajikistan)	85	36.0
Sughd region (Khujand, Tajikistan)	41	17.4
Namangan region (Uzbekistan)	6	2.5
Andijan region (Uzbekistan)	12	5.1
Ferghana region (Uzbekistan)	11	4.7
Other	12	5.1
Refused to answer	28	11.9
Don't know	41	17.4
Total	236	100.0

7. Who in your neighbourhood has access to/owns/knows how to use firearms: men or women?

	Frequency	%
Men	189	80.1
Women	4	1.7
Everyone	17	7.2
Refused to answer	12	5.1
Don't know	14	5.9
Total	236	100.0

8. In your view, is purchasing a firearm and ammunition a legitimate use of household resources?

	Frequency	%
Yes	56	23.7
No	173	73.3
Don't know	7	3.0
Total	236	100.0

9. Has anyone in this household been threatened or been made to feel fearful by the use of firearms in the last three months?

	Frequency	%
Yes	0	0.0
No	233	98.7
Don't know	3	1.3
Total	236	100.0

10. What types of crime and violence problems occur most often in this area nowadays (multiple answer)?

Type of weapon	Number of respondents who identified crime as common	% of 236 respondents
Armed robberies	5	2.1
Theft	116	49.2
Kidnapping	5	2.1
Threats	11	4.7
Murder/assassination	6	2.5
Assault/beatings	9	3.8
Rape or other sexual assaults on men/women	8	3.4
Organized crime groups	1	0.4
Fighting	93	39.4
Violence related to smuggling	2	0.8
Revenge	11	4.7
Home/domestic violence	43	18.2
Drunken disorder	107	45.3
Burglary	39	16.5
Drug dealing/trading	15	6.4
Other	1	0.4
No crime/violence problems whatsoever	25	10.6

11. Do you think your town/neighbourhood is safer, as safe, or more dangerous than other areas in the country?

	Frequency	%
Safer	78	33.1
As safe	122	51.7
More dangerous	32	13.6
Don't know	4	1.7
Total	236	100.0

12. Many people feel that having a firearm helps to protect their families. Other people believe that having a firearm is dangerous to their families. With which opinion do you agree?

	Frequency	%
Helps protect family	47	19.9
Makes no difference	49	20.8
Dangerous	135	57.2
Refused to answer	1	0.4
Don't know	4	1.7
Total	236	100.0

13. In what groups of society are most firearms to be found?

	Frequency	%
Criminal groups	120	50.8
Businesspeople	58	24.6
Politicians	8	3.4
Ex-fighter/ex-military	43	18.2
Other group(s)	1	0.4
Don't know	6	2.5
Total	236	100.0

14. Who do you think should own and/or know how to handle firearms?

	Frequency	%
Men only	76	32.2
All adults	67	28.4
All, including children	5	2.1
Authorities and army only	86	36.4
Don't know	2	0.8
Total	236	100.0

15. Why do you think people keep firearms?

	Frequency	%
Personal protection	35	14.8
Family protection	92	39.0
Property protection	43	18.2
Protection of community	24	10.2
For political security	3	1.3
For sports shooting	1	0.4
For hunting	35	14.8
Other reason	2	0.8
Don't know	1	0.4
Total	236	100.0

16A. If a conflict were to arise, would people in your village fight for the safety of the village?

	Frequency	%
Yes	163	69.1
No	62	26.3
Refused to answer	1	0.4
Don't know	10	4.2
Total	236	100.0

16B. If people in your village were to fight for the safety of the village, do you think they would use firearms?

	Frequency	%
Yes	82	34.7
No	89	37.7
Don't know	4	1.7
Refused to answer	61	25.9
Total	236	100.0

17. With which statement do you tend to agree?

- A. Lately there has been an increase in the number of well-armed drug traffickers.
 B. Drug trafficking has been successfully tackled and smugglers have fewer arms.

	Frequency	%
Agree with A	58	24.6
Closer to A than B	77	32.6
Don't know which one to agree with	20	8.5
Closer to B than A	41	17.4
Agree with B	18	7.6
Refused to answer	4	1.7
Don't know	18	7.6
Total	236	100.0

Notes

- 1 Some of the increase in numbers of murders by firearm may also be due to improvements in government reporting and data collection.
- 2 See, for example, the references to the easy availability of small arms in Central Asia as a whole and to Kyrgyzstan as both transit route and final destination in Sagramoso (2002, pp. 82–83) and Pirseyedi (2002, pp. 11, 71–72), which suggest that large numbers of weapons are circulating throughout the Central Asian republics and that ‘the combination of small arms and latent societal tension is potentially explosive’. Pirseyedi also argues that Kyrgyzstan is a major transit country for both weapons and drug shipments (2002, p. 79).
- 3 We have since developed this argument further: see MacFarlane and Torjesen (2005).
- 4 In contrast to unmotivated bias, motivated bias involves a relatively conscious decision to evaluate or rate information in a way that reflects an individual’s pre-existing perceptions.
- 5 Interview with Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.
- 6 Representatives of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic indicate that the majority of members in the Soviet period were Russians (interview with Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 July 2003).
- 7 This section draws extensively on Lubin et al. (1999) and Tishkov (1995, pp. 133–49).
- 8 Interview with Abdimunon Joldoshev, expert, Secretariat of the Special Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on Foreign Investment, 24 July 2003.
- 9 Between 1995 and 2002 the budget deficit fell from 11.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 1 per cent. This drop reflects a rise in general revenue and transfers from 17 to 19.2 per cent of GDP, and a reduction in public expenditure from 28.6 to 20.2 per cent of GDP in the same period (National Statistical Committee, Kyrgyz Republic, unpublished data).
- 10 The fragility of this achievement should be stressed. In 2002 growth fell from 5 per cent to 0, largely as a result of a landslide at the Kumtor gold mine and falling demand from neighbouring countries for Kyrgyz electricity exports. See Åslund (2003).
- 11 External debt rose from USD 594 million in 1995 to USD 1.5 billion in the second quarter of 2002 (IMF, 2003, pp. 80–81). After several years of Kyrgyzstan courting external default, however, the Paris Club granted the country substantial debt relief in March 2002. For 2003–05 Kyrgyzstan’s external debt payment was reduced from USD 101 million to USD 6 million.
- 12 IMF data indicates that foreign direct investment peaked in 1998 at USD 109.2 million and fell to USD 5.4 million in 2001. Data for the first half of 2002 suggests disinvestment of USD 7.4 million.
- 13 Kyrgyzstan ranks 102 out of 175 in the HDI. See UNDP (2002), World Bank (n.d.), and Åslund (2003).
- 14 The privatization of land had a significant positive effect in this regard.

- 15 The ability to take full commercial advantage of privatization is hampered, however, by the failure to encourage effective private wholesaling and distribution enterprises, and by the continued effort of local officials to define choice of crop.
- 16 Interview results suggest significant concern that economic stagnation may eventually contribute to political crisis.
- 17 Interviews with Muratbek Imanaliev, academic dean, American University of Central Asia, 29 August 2003, Bishkek, and Alexander Kim, chief editor, *Moya Stolitsa*, 19 August 2003, Bishkek. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and World Bank comparative surveys of business enterprises in post-Communist countries indicate that Kyrgyzstan has the highest 'bribe tax' (3.7 per cent of sales in 2002) in the countries surveyed (Åslund, 2003). Unlike many other countries in the survey, the 'tax' actually increased by 50 per cent between 1999 and 2002. Kyrgyzstan is ranked 118 out of 133 countries surveyed in the global Corruption Perceptions Index 2003. See Transparency International (2003).
- 18 The quote is from the inscription on the memorial for the Aksy victims, placed along the road leading into Kerben in Aksy District.
- 19 There is confusion as to how many people were injured and whether police forces suffered injuries. Government officials claimed on 18 March 2002 that 47 police officers were wounded (RFE/RL, 2002). A list compiled by a neutral NGO, FTI, lists 6 people dead and 27 injured.
- 20 Interview with an NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003, and local opposition representatives in Kara Suu, Aksy District village, 26 August 2003.
- 21 Interview with an NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003.
- 22 After viewing the MVD's video recording of the events, informed observers said they were able to identify the voice of the regional MVD head ordering troops to open fire (confidential interview, Aksy, 26 August 2003).
- 23 Eyewitness account obtained by the Small Arms Survey from villagers in Karagybach, Aksy District. The eyewitness account is one of several forwarded by IWPR to the government commission in charge of investigating the Aksy events.
- 24 Interview with an NGO leader in Aksy, 25 August 2003.
- 25 Estimates by an NGO representative in Aksy, 25 August 2003.
- 26 For an account of post-Aksy political changes, see Freedom House (2003, p. 332).
- 27 National Statistical Committee, Kyrgyz Republic, unpublished data.
- 28 There have been instances of violence in Kyrgyzstan involving Chinese Uighurs with alleged links to terrorist organizations. The Chinese consul was murdered in June 2002; five Chinese law enforcement officers investigating Uighur crimes were shot dead in May 2000; and an alleged terrorist ring (ShAT: Sharik Azatlik Tashkhilati) was uncovered by the Kyrgyz SNB in January 2002. Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies claimed the group had been involved in the smuggling of arms from Kazakhstan to China in 1998. See *Delo No* (2000; 2002a; 2002b).
- 29 For a discussion of the origins and growth of the IMU, see Rashid (2002; in particular pp. 137–86).
- 30 Confidential interview with the head of mission of an international organization, Dushanbe, 15 August 2003.
- 31 Interview with Abdilbek Sahdimonov, FTI programme officer, former head of staff in the Batken Provincial Administration, 29 July 2003.

- 32 Estimates of the number of dead soldiers given in a confidential interview with a Batken OVD official, 30 July 2003. The figure of 120 dead IMU fighters comes from ICG (2000b, p. 5).
- 33 Interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 34 Interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 35 Interview with a representative of the SNB, Batken Province, 30 July 2003.
- 36 Interview with Amankulov Taluntbek Sarikevich, commander, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Province, 31 July 2003.
- 37 Interviews with Amankulov Taluntbek Sarikevich, commander, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Province, 31 July 2003; Mr Kenjesariiev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003; and Sheishenbek Baisakov, head of OVD, Batken Province, 31 July 2003.
- 38 Interview with local independent journalist, Osh, 22 July 2003.
- 39 The Union of Societies of Hunters and Fishermen in the Kyrgyz Republic will be referred to as the Hunters’ Association throughout this report.
- 40 Interview with Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.
- 41 The Law on Arms also allows for collection of firearms and for arms to be awarded by government agencies to officials as appreciation of service (paras. 6–7).
- 42 Interview with Col. Karavai Asanaliev, deputy director for academic affairs, MVD Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 22 August 2003.
- 43 Interview with Mr Kenjesariiev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 44 Interview with Mr Kenjesariiev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003. The Small Arms Survey study on the Russian Federation notes that heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, and ammunition were exported to Kyrgyzstan in 1999 (Pyadushkin with Haug and Matveeva, 2003).
- 45 Interview with Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Hunters’ Association, 16 July 2003.
- 46 Interviews with Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Hunters’ Association, 16 July 2003, and Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.
- 47 The Hunters’ Association’s membership statistics reflect a growing trend towards a concentration of legally registered firearms in Chui Province. In 1990, 11,200 of the 25,900 members were from Chui Province, while 6,234 of the 8,617 members were from Chui Province in 2002. The Hunters’ Association made national membership records available to the Small Arms Survey.
- 48 The Osh section of the Hunters’ Association made the province’s membership records available to the Small Arms Survey.
- 49 The prices are for new, legally imported hunting rifles available in Kyrgyz hunting and arms stores. The importer needs to obtain permission from Kyrgyz and Russian Federation authorities, as well as from the Kyrgyz Embassy in Moscow. Transportation, customs, and registration costs inflate the prices. Hunting rifles are cheaper in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, but the purchaser must obtain relevant import permits independently (interview

- with Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Hunters' Association, 16 July 2003).
- 50 The Osh Hunters' Association made the province's membership records available to the Small Arms Survey. Information is also based on an interview with Ivan Ivanovich, head of the Chui Province section of the Hunters' Association, 16 July 2003.
- 51 Interview with Bermeta Galieвна Tugelbaeva, president of the Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003, and confidential interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 52 The MVD in Tajikistan has been actively engaged in collecting firearms since 1994 (Tajikistan, 2003). Kazakhstan recently organized Karu-2003, a campaign to withdraw illegal firearms from the population. Nine hundred firearms were confiscated in four days, while 3,000 infringements of weapon-keeping rules were reported (*Times of Central Asia*, 2003).
- 53 Interviews with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003, and Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, Bishkek, 27 August 2003.
- 54 Interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 55 Interviews with Bermeta Galieвна Tugelbaeva, president of the Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003, and a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 56 Interviews with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003, and with an informed observer and former drug trafficker in Osh and Batken Provinces, 7 August 2003.
- 57 Interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 58 Interview with Mr Kenjesariiev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 59 Interview with Mr Kenjesariiev, head of the Department of Military–Technical Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 60 The figures for Kyrgyzstan's arms trade up to 2003 were given in the original paper in Tables 8A–H (see McFarlane and Torjesen, 2004). This information is given in the present (2007) paper in Appendix 1, Tables 12A–H, which contain the original information from the 2004 study, together with updated figures for 2004–06, where available. Tables 12I–T contain figures for 2004–06 only.
- 61 It is uncertain how many crimes are unreported in Kyrgyzstan; in the EU an estimated one-third to one-half of all crimes are reported.
- 62 Interview with Bahadir Ismailov, OSCE legal expert, 5 December 2003.
- 63 Interview with a local independent journalist, Bishkek, 17 July 2003.
- 64 Interview with a local independent journalist, Bishkek, 17 July 2003.
- 65 Interview with Bahadir Ismailov, OSCE legal expert, 5 December 2003.
- 66 Interview with Andrei A. Sopuev, deputy director (scientific research), National Surgical Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic, 20 August 2003.
- 67 Interview with Bermeta Galieвна Tugelbaeva, president of the Women's Association DIAMOND, 15 July 2003.
- 68 Interview with Artikon Karim Polatovich, head of science, National Medical Reconstruction Unit, Dushanbe, 20 August 2003.
- 69 Interview with Leonid M. Bondarets, senior expert, IISS under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 25 August 2003.
- 70 Interview with a former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.

- 71 At the time of writing, 50–60 trucks leave southern Kyrgyzstan every week with supplies for the Russian 201 Motorized Rifle Division and for the Russian border guards stationed in Tajikistan.
- 72 Interview with a former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.
- 73 This box draws extensively on the excellent research undertaken by Human Rights Watch (2001a), particularly the Appendix 1 case study, ‘Supplying the United Front: Iranian and CIS Cooperation’.
- 74 The authors note that these weapons do not fall into the category of small arms. Nonetheless, the episode is indicative of the nature of weapons smuggling throughout the region during the later phases of the Afghan war.
- 75 Interview with Muratbek Imanaliyev, academic dean, American University of Central Asia, 29 August 2003. In principle, this movement of weapons raises significant questions about the involvement of border guards in the trafficking of weapons. At the time (1998), however, there was no organized Kyrgyz border service and the frontier with Tajikistan was essentially unmonitored.
- 76 Interviews with Sheishenbek Baisakov, head of OVD, Batken Province, 31 July 2003; Amankulov Taluntbek Sarikevich, commander, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, Batken Province, 31 July 2003; and Lt. Col. Zarif Hudaiberdiev, head, MITBC Department, Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 77 Interviews with a journalist, Kulyab region, Tajikistan, 16 August 2003, and a former Tajik MVD officer, 20 August 2003.
- 78 Interview with Alexander Alexeivich Knjasev, lecturer in International Journalism, Kyrgyz–Russian Slavic University, 13 August 2003.
- 79 The one likely exception is specialist weapons used by professional killers. In these instances, weapons from outside the jurisdiction in which the crime takes place are preferred.
- 80 Interview with a representative of the SNB, 17 July 2003.
- 81 Confidential interview with an intelligence officer from a Western country, Bishkek, 5 August 2003.
- 82 In 1995 heroin accounted for 3 per cent of all Central Asian drug seizures; in 2000, it accounted for 74 per cent (UNODCCP, 2002).
- 83 Interviews with Almas Gairfulin, deputy head of the State Commission on Drugs Control under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 11 July 2003, and Lt. Col. Zarif Hudaiberdiev, head, MITBC Department, Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 84 Confidential source material.
- 85 This raises the intriguing question of whether Kyrgyzstan is, in this respect, typical of, or unique among, the countries of the region. Answering this question, however, would require further research in neighbouring countries.
- 86 Confidential source material.
- 87 Also sourced from confidential material.
- 88 Batken Province has 382,426 inhabitants, while Osh Province has 1,175,998 (National Statistical Committee, Kyrgyz Republic, 1999).
- 89 Osh city is home to 20 per cent of the population of Osh Province. A group of 24 respondents equals 20 per cent of the 126 respondents in Osh Province.

- 90 These findings seem implausible. They may reflect reticence in answering questions regarding the presence of weapons in regions that have been tense in the past. In addition, they may reflect the use of the term '*strelkovoe*' (shooting) as opposed to '*obychnoe*' (common) '*oruzhie*' (weapon) in the survey. The term '*strelkovoe oruzhie*' is often associated with military weapons.
- 91 It bears stressing that even if respondents assumed the existence of these informal channels, they might not themselves have been connected with or have access to black market arms trading.
- 92 Interview with Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, 27 August 2003.
- 93 Interview with Mr Nazarov, deputy director, Criminalistic Centre, MVD, 27 August 2003.
- 94 Interview with Baktibek Madanbekovich Alimbekov, head of OVD, Jalalabad Province, 8 August 2003.
- 95 Interview with Sheishenbek Baisakov, head of OVD, Batken Province, 31 July 2003; provincial membership records made available to the Small Arms Survey by the Osh section of the Hunters' Association.
- 96 Interview with Lt. Col. Zarif Hudayberdiev, head, MITBC Department, Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 August 2003.
- 97 Interview with a US intelligence officer, Bishkek, 5 August 2003.
- 98 Interview with Brad Evans and Amanda Cranmer, respectively second secretary and third secretary, Political and Economic Affairs, US Embassy, Tajikistan, 14 August 2003.
- 99 Interview with Ulrich Rainer, project manager, and Philippe Bernard, programme officer, EU, Delegation of the European Commission in Kazakhstan, 22 August 2003.
- 100 Interviews with Leonid M. Bondarets, senior expert, IISS, 25 August 2003, and Col. Karavai Asanaliev, deputy director for academic affairs, MVD Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic, 22 August 2003.
- 101 Interview with V. Sergeev, representative of the Russian Federation, CIS Counter-terrorism Centre, 29 August 2003.
- 102 IWPR reported that all major supermarkets and boutiques were looted on 24–25 March 2005, causing damage estimated at up to USD 25 million. More than 1,500 businesses were affected by the violence, 2 people died, and approximately 360 were injured (IWPR, 2005).
- 103 President Kurmanbek Bakiev similarly noted in an address to the Kyrgyz Parliament that: 'everyone knows well who is tied up with whom . . . there are businessmen among you who, unfortunately, are not always in alignment with the law, starting with tax evasion. I know that many of you bribe the law enforcement agencies, and that they take bribes from you. The agencies and the gangsters work hand in hand. I know this for a fact . . . directly or indirectly, everyone is involved in what has happened [the killing of Bayaman Erkinbaev]' (IWPR, 2005b).
- 104 Former general prosecutor Azimbek Beknazarov has argued that the police and the SNB orchestrated the campaign against MP Bayaman Erkinbayev for political and economic purposes (ICG, 2005, pp. 6, 16–17).
- 105 ICG (2005) argues that powerful evidence of the weakness of the law enforcement agencies is found in the case of a rebel/criminal leader, Nurlan Motuyev, taking control over a coal mine. It took months before the law enforcement agencies responded and ended control over

- the area by the rebel leader's security gangs—despite the major tax losses incurred by the Kyrgyz government during the occupation.
- 106 The Andijan prison in Uzbekistan that was attacked on 12–13 May 2005 contained several inmates claimed to be IMU members (RFE/RL, 2006b).
- 107 Nurnek Tokoev, an officer with the SNB, claimed in July 2006 that '[Hizb ut-Tahrir] has greater number [*sic*] of supporters in Kyrgyzstan than any political party registered in our country, according to unofficial statistics there are already around 10,000 of them. Furthermore they are very secretive, which makes it difficult for the special services to detect them' (IWPR, 2006a).
- 108 The imprisonment of and criminal case against Gulmira Maqsutova, the 21-year-old daughter of Akram Yuldashev, and three other alleged Islamists in Osh involve accusations of 'illegally possessing ammunitions, counterfeiting Kyrgyz passports, and plotting terror attacks' (RFE/RL, 2006k). Lawyers for the group have vigorously denied the accusations.
- 109 *Transitions Online* (2006c); IWPR (2006a); RFE/RL (2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2006d; 2006e; 2006f; 2006g; 2006h; 2006i).
- 110 Interview (via telephone) with an NGO representative, Leilek, 18 October 2006; interview (via telephone) with an NGO representative, Aksy, 18 October 2006; interview (via telephone) with an NGO representative, Osh, 19 October 2006; interview (via telephone) with an NGO representative, Batken, 19 October 2006.
- 111 Percentages in all tables are rounded to one decimal point, so may not total to precisely 100 per cent.

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