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## POLICY BRIEF

# Arms Trade Treaty Reporting on Small Arms Transfers: What Have We Learned?

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## Introduction

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) seeks to promote transparency and responsible action in the international arms trade. Since 2015, States Parties have been required to report annually on their imports and exports of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons (SALW).

After a decade of reporting, has the ATT increased transparency in international SALW transfers?

This policy brief seeks to address this question and provide some food-for-thought in advance of the upcoming meeting of the ATT Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR).

The following sections consider the trend in reporting on international transfers of SALW and the types of information that have been provided to aid our understanding of how ATT States Parties are applying the treaty in their decisions to export or import SALW.

The policy brief also highlights worrying trends in ATT reporting, before introducing national practices for reporting on brokering, transit and transshipment authorizations and denials.

## Why does transparency on international transfers of small arms and light weapons matter?

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are used in every contemporary conflict and are frequently used in violent crime, acts of terrorism, and gender-based violence. More than a billion small arms are estimated to be held not only by state military and security forces, but also by civilians, private security companies, and armed groups. Given the scale at which SALW are produced and traded, their portability and comparative ease of use, there is a risk that even authorised international SALW transfers can be diverted to unauthorised users or used to violate international humanitarian law or international human rights law.

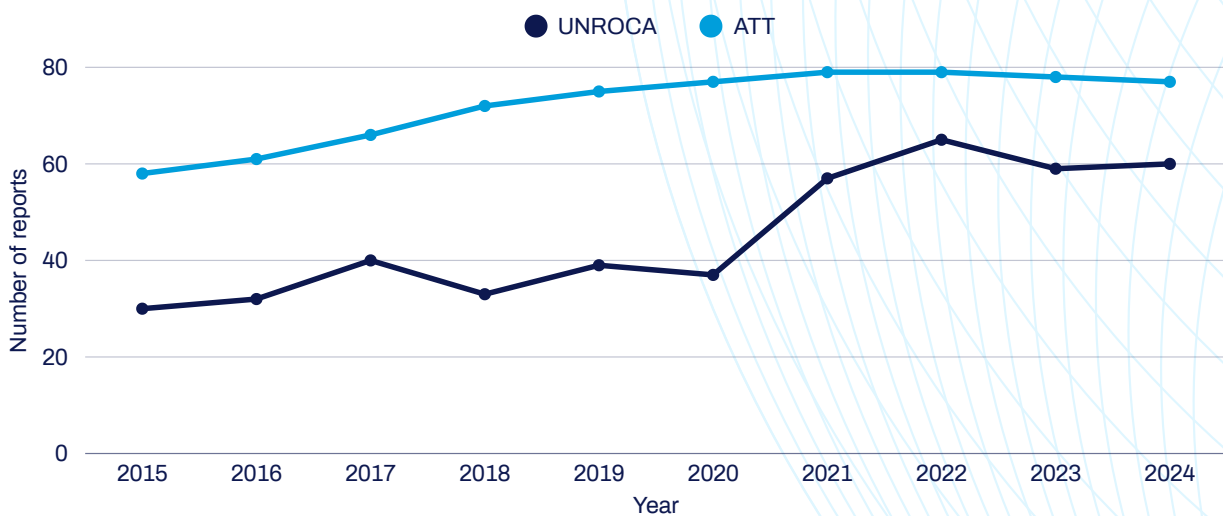
The ATT annual reporting obligation is intended to promote cooperation, transparency, and responsible action in the international arms trade, including for SALW. Sharing such information can support national risk assessments. It helps show that ATT States Parties are authorising arms transfers in accordance with their ATT obligations, contributing to peace, security, and stability, and reducing human suffering.

## More reporting on SALW transfers

One of the most visible changes associated with the ATT has been an increase in the number of States reporting on their authorised international SALW transfers. Since 2003, all UN Member States have been invited to provide information on international SALW transfers to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). In the first year of ATT reporting, only 23 Member States provided such information to UNROCA, compared with 58 ATT States Parties (see Figure 1).

In 2025, 77 ATT States Parties reported on SALW exports and imports, with 39 of these providing their reports for use in UNROCA. Despite some reports not being publicly accessible and inconsistent reporting, the ATT has had a notable impact on the number of African states reporting on their international transfers of SALW. Before 2015, nine African States had reported on their international SALW transfers to UNROCA at least once. Since the ATT entered into force, an additional eight African states have reported on such transfers. The ATT's legal obligation has not yet led to 100 per cent reporting by States Parties on SALW transfers. Still, it has significantly increased the number of States reporting annually on their SALW exports and imports.

**Figure 1. A comparison of national reporting on international SALW transfers under the ATT and UNROCA, 2015-24**



**Source:** UNROCA and ATT websites, and UNIDIR's internal database on UNROCA reports submissions.

**Note:** The year shown on the horizontal axis refers to the year in which the international transfer took place, not the year in which the UN Member State submitted its report to UNROCA or the ATT. For example, UN Member States are called upon to report by 31 May 2025 on international transfers that took place in 2024. Data included in the graph are current as of 7 February 2026.

## Reporting beyond the minimum requirements

ATT guidance on annual reports notes that the “minimum information” to be reported should include: the number of items or their financial value, and the final importing or exporting states. Following a recommendation of the 2025 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of UNROCA and its further development, Member States should provide information on the designation, model, or type of conventional arms in their UNROCA submissions, as reporting only by category or sub-category may obscure significant differences in weapon capabilities. Forty-nine ATT States Parties have already provided such information for SALW. Therefore, ATT States Parties could consider updating the ATT reporting guidance to include this type of information in their annual reports.

Information on the end use/r is particularly useful for understanding the different risks associated with SALW transfers, depending on whether SALW are destined for military, law enforcement, or civilian markets. Thirty-four ATT States Parties have provided such information in their ATT annual reports, thereby increasing understanding and

confidence among ATT States Parties and other stakeholders regarding the application of ATT Articles 6, 7, 8, and 11.

## Worrying trends

While ATT reporting appears to have increased overall transparency regarding international SALW transfers, there are two worrying trends. First, the number of ATT States Parties restricting access to their annual reports to only States Parties has increased significantly. Only four States Parties restricted access to their 2015 reports, compared to a high of 26 States Parties for 2020 and 2021. For 2024, 24 reports are not publicly available. Overall, 40 States Parties have restricted access to at least one of their annual reports; 16 have transmitted only restricted reports.

Second, of those States that have made their reports publicly available, seven always aggregate data on their SALW imports and/or exports (see Figures 2 and 3). A further 17 States have aggregated some of their SALW data at least once, shifting from disaggregated to aggregated data. Such aggregation or omission of key details limits understanding of transfer decisions.

Figure 2: Aggregating data on importing states

Category of arms <sup>6</sup> [I-VIII]	Authorised or actual exports <sup>7</sup>		Extent of exports <sup>8</sup> (choose one or both)		Final importing State <sup>11</sup>	State of origin (if not exporter) <sup>12</sup>	Remarks <sup>13</sup>	
	Auth.	Act.	Number of items <sup>9</sup>	Value <sup>10</sup>			Description of Item	Comments on the transfer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
II. Armoured combat vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
III. Large-calibre artillery systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
IV. Combat Aircraft	a) manned	<input type="checkbox"/>						
	b) unmanned	<input type="checkbox"/>						
V. Attack helicopters	a) manned	<input type="checkbox"/>						
	b) unmanned	<input type="checkbox"/>						
VI. Warships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
VII. Missiles & missile launchers	a) Missiles etc	<input type="checkbox"/>						
	b) MANPADS	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>B. VIII. Small Arms and Light Weapons<sup>16, 17</sup></b>								
Small Arms (aggregated) <sup>18</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
1. Revolvers and self-loading pistols	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	292			Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Haiti, Panama, Trinidad, USA		
2. Rifles and carbines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	334			Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Panama, Trinidad, UK, USA		
3. Sub-machine guns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil					
4. Assault rifles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil					
5. Light machine guns	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	35			Haiti, Belize, UK, USA		
6. Others	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 (Shotguns)			Haiti, USA		

Source: ATT Secretariat

**Figure 3: Omitting information on importing states**

Category of arms <sup>6</sup> [I-VIII]	Authorised or actual imports <sup>7</sup>		Extent of imports <sup>8</sup> (choose one or both)		Exporting State <sup>11</sup>	State of origin (if not exporter) <sup>12</sup>	Remarks <sup>13</sup>	
	Auth.	Act.	Number of items <sup>9</sup>	Value <sup>10</sup>			Description of Item	Comments on the transfer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			Actual: 40 & 25		Actual: USA & Czech Republic		Actual: MCX RATTLER & AK 47	
3. Sub-machine guns	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5					
4. Assault rifles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NIL					
5. Light machine guns	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Authorised: 15 Actual: 10		Authorised: Multiple states Actual: Czech Republic		Actual: PKM	
6. Others	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Authorised: 4009 Actual: 1		Authorised: Multiple states Actual: Germany		Actual: GLM GRENADE LAUNCHER	Authorised: This includes smooth-bored shotguns, which in some instances are registered as others.
<b>Light Weapons (aggregated)<sup>19</sup></b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
1. Heavy machine guns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NIL					
2. Hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NIL					
3. Portable anti-tank guns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NIL					

Source: ATT Secretariat

Thankfully, the ATT Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR) has created an institutional space for dialogue and clarification on national reporting practices. For instance, Sweden has used the WGTR to explain why it doesn't provide unit numbers for missile exports in its ATT annual reports. It has used this approach in its UNROCA reporting for decades, but had not previously explained it publicly. This platform could be used more frequently to clarify misunderstandings, reduce misperceptions and disinformation, and move beyond discussing how to complete forms. States could use the WGTR to explain restrictions on report access, data aggregation, or other challenges to increasing transparency in international SALW transfers.

## Room for Improvement? Considerations for the ATT Working Group in 2026

ATT CSP11 encouraged States Parties and other stakeholders to use the WGTR meeting during CSP12 to give presentations on "Reports to cabinet

and/or parliament", with future sessions due to consider providing information to the public. There are two good practices contained in national reports on arms transfers provided for scrutiny by parliaments and the publics in several ATT States Parties that are not included in ATT reports and could be promoted. The first practice is reporting on authorizations for the brokering, transit, and transshipment of conventional arms, ATT "transfer" activities covered by Articles 9 and 10, but for which there are no reporting obligations in the ATT. The second practice is reporting on denials of applications for transfer authorizations or licences and revocations for licences or authorizations that have been granted.

Many States Parties make publicly available, annually, information on transit, transshipment, and brokering authorisations. For example, Romania's annual report on arms exports provides information on transit, transshipment, and brokering authorisation, specifying the state of origin, destination, and types of weapons being transferred (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Operation on transit authorizations

Transit Operations									
ML	Value (EUR)	Number	Product name	Exporter Country	Neighboring Entrance Country	Neighboring Exit Country	Importer Country	Final Destination	Transport
ML3	2,406,382	1	Small arms ammunition	CN	BG	HU	CZ	CZ	road
ML3	1,565,300	2	Small arms ammunition	BG	BG	HU	US	US	road
ML8	146,250	4	Military explosives	CZ	HU	BG	TR	TR	road
ML10, ML4	94,626,367	1	UAV system, ammunition	TR	BG	HU	PL	PL	road
ML8	8,881,000	1	Military explosives	SL	HU	BG	MK	MK	road
ML11	289,000	1	Military drone detection system	PL	HU	MD	MD	MD	road
ML3	112,000,000	2	Artillery ammunition	TR	BG	HU	US	US	road
ML2	128,815	1	Missiles system	NO	BG	BG	GR	GR	road
ML13	5,940,376	1	Ceramic ballistic plates	TR	BG	HU	PL	PL	road
ML18	3,200	1	Cartridge binding machine	BG	BG	HU	SO	SO	road
ML3	3,065,323	1	Small arms ammunition	China	BG	HU	CZ	CZ	road
ML3	126,000	1	Small arms ammunition	BG	BG	HU	US	US	road

Source: Romania, Annual Report on Export, Brokering, Transit and Transshipment Operations with Military Goods, January – December 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for Export Controls, June 2025, p. 58, [https://ancex.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Rap-anual-2024\\_eng\\_final.pdf](https://ancex.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Rap-anual-2024_eng_final.pdf)

All European Union Member States are required to provide information on brokering authorisations, which are made available in annual reports and an [online database](#). The EU annual report and database also provide aggregated data on export and brokering licence denials. Thus, these EU Member States, which are also ATT States Parties, are already collecting and sharing information on all four types of transfers covered by the ATT. Should this information be shared with ATT States Parties?

The ATT does not require reporting on risk assessment outcomes that lead to denials or revocations. Some States Parties provide this information annually to the parliament and the public.

The [UK's Strategic Export Controls Annual Report](#) provides aggregated information on the number of transfer licences issued, refused, and withdrawn, as well as the reasons for refusal or revocation.

The [Netherlands' annual report on Dutch Export Policy on Strategic Goods](#) provides information on denials, including the final destination, recipient, end user, military items concerned, and the reasons for licence denials (see Figure 5). Thus, States Parties could be encouraged to voluntarily share information that is already collected and presented in reports for their parliaments and national publics.

Not all ATT States Parties that provide information on denials for compilation in the EU annual report make this information available in their national reports. It is shared only between EU Member States, as is the case with participating States in the Wassenaar Arrangement. Rather, such information is shared among states with sufficient trust to help inform licensing decisions in a timely manner. As this year's WGTR considers functions for the information exchange platform, maybe States Parties could consider whether it could be used to share information on denials in a timely manner?

**Figure 5: Information on license application denials for exports of military goods**

Country of final destination	Brief description	Number of items	Recipient	End user	Date of denial	Reason for denial (criteria)
Israel	Ammunition	84,000	Xcalibre Arms Ltd.	Unknown, destined for local resale	15 May 2024	7
Guinea	M813 Lorry	1	Private end user	Private end user	16 May 2024	7
Israel	Ballistic helmets	52	Yakhin Hakal Ltd.	Israeli Defence Forces	13 June 2024	2, 4, 6, 7
Israel	Bullet-proof plates	436	Yakhin Hakal Ltd.	Israeli Defence Forces	13 June 2024	2, 4, 6, 7

**Source:** Netherlands, *Dutch Export Policy on Strategic Goods in 2024, Report by the Minister for Foreign Trade and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the issuing of export licences for military, dual-use and torture goods*, 27 June 2025, p. 66, <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/documents/reports/2025/06/27/dutch-export-policy-on-strategic-goods-in-2024>

Of course, such exchanges between States Parties would not preclude making information on denials publicly available in an ATT annual report.

## Conclusion

After 10 years of ATT reporting on international SALW transfers, is the glass half full or half empty? There is notable progress in the quantity of reports, especially in Africa. Yet, more European States Parties are restricting access to their ATT reports than before, or aggregating or omitting data that prevents understanding of their decision-making on international SALW transfers.

At the same time, European States Parties provide information to their parliaments and the public on authorisations for all types of transfers covered by the Treaty, as well as denials of such transfers.

This year’s WGTR and the process to develop an ATT strategy offer an opportunity to encourage the sharing of such information to increase transparency in international SALW transfers, and to apply ATT provisions to counter diversion and reduce human suffering. Next week provides a great opportunity for the ATT to help further enhance transparency in small arms transfers and realise its potential.

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