

# 5

## SALW control capacity

### 5.1 National capacity

#### 5.1.1 MOD

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

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

##### 5.1.1.1 Production

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

However, by the mid-1990s, much of the production equipment was broken, had been stolen, or was largely redundant in terms of producing SALW capable of competing on the international arms market.<sup>345</sup> For example, according to a newspaper article from March 2005, the military production facility in Poliçan, which apparently employed 4,000 people for SALW and ammunition production during its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was largely abandoned in 1999.<sup>346</sup> According the head of the facility, in 1990 it employed 3,200 workers but in 1994 it employed just over half this number

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

<sup>344</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

<sup>345</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

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

Nevertheless, the production and repair of SALW and ammunition has taken place at military production facilities in Albania since 1990.<sup>353</sup> Databases on the NISAT website indicate that Albania was producing rifles and carbines in Gramsh in 2001,<sup>354</sup> and a number of interviewees stated that there have been limited and occasional instances of ammunition production at the Poliçan facility for export to Turkey and the US.<sup>355</sup> For example, the Director of Poliçan Military Factory, Memli Kasapi, informed the research team that they continue to produce 7.62 mm blanks for military use, 9 mm rounds for MOI and 85 mm rounds for ceremonial use.<sup>356</sup>

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

<sup>347</sup> Interview, MOD official, 29 July 2005.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid; interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>351</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>352</sup> This opinion was also shared in interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>353</sup> Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

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

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

<sup>356</sup> Interview, MOD official, 29 July 2005.

<sup>357</sup> Op cit 'Albanian Defence Minister Promises Revival of Arms Manufacturing Plant'.

<sup>358</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

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

### 5.1.1.2 Stockpile management

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

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

As part of its commitments to NATO's PfP process, the Albanian Armed Forces have embarked upon a restructuring plan that will downsize the Albanian military to an overall strength of 35,000 personnel, with only 6,000 professional soldiers, by 2010.<sup>363</sup> This process will also have a variety of impacts upon stockpile levels and their management and security. Less depots and active personnel will also mean more surplus military materiel and less personnel for performing guard duties. This will have a potentially serious negative impact upon the already overstocked depots.

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

#### Storage conditions

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

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004.

<sup>361</sup> Op cit South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005, pp. 30–1.

<sup>362</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>363</sup> Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005; Kusova, 19 February 2003, p. 64.

<sup>364</sup> Source: Albania UN PoA Report 2004.

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

<sup>366</sup> Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

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

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

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

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

#### Security

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

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

<sup>368</sup> Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

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

<sup>370</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>371</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>372</sup> Interviews, former MOD official, 18 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>373</sup> Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

<sup>374</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

#### Recordkeeping

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

<sup>376</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>377</sup> Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

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

<sup>381</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>382</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>387</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

#### Model depot

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

<sup>388</sup> Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

<sup>389</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>390</sup> Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>391</sup> Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

<sup>392</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>393</sup> Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 12 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>394</sup> Correspondence with international official, 10 November 2005.

<sup>395</sup> Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

<sup>396</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>397</sup> Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>398</sup> Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>399</sup> Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005.

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

#### Destruction capacity

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

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

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

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

<sup>400</sup> Interviews, international official, 19 April 2005; former MOD official, 18 April 2005; international official, 23 July 2005.

<sup>401</sup> Correspondence with private contractor, October 2005.

<sup>402</sup> Interviews international official, 19 April 2005; MOD official, 29 July 2005; MOD official, 27 July 2005.

<sup>403</sup> Data collected during visit to Mengel military base, 27 July 2005.

<sup>404</sup> Data collected during visit to ULP Mjekes, 27 July 2005.

<sup>405</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>406</sup> Interviews, international official, 27 July 2005; MOD official, 27 July 2005.

<sup>407</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 17 March 2005.

In 2000, the AAF calculated that their stores contain an excess of 117,476 tonnes of ammunition.<sup>408</sup> This figure was reduced to 85,424 by the end of 2004 as a result of destruction activities carried out by the AAF, EOD Solutions Ltd, NAMSA and the NDC. In the period 2001–2004, AAF destroyed 26,473 tonnes of ammunition, NAMSA destroyed 2,874 tonnes of anti-personnel mines and 1,475 tonnes of ammunition and EOD Solutions Ltd destroyed 1,229 tonnes of ammunition. It is estimated that the AAF will destroy a further 11,780 tonnes and EOD Solutions 1,000 tonnes during 2005.<sup>409</sup> By 2006, NAMSA aims to destroy an additional 8,000 tonnes as part of a €6.4 million grant provided by the NATO Pfp Fund.<sup>410</sup> Therefore, based on current levels, Albania will still have at least 60,000 tonnes of surplus ammunition to destroy after current projects end in 2006.

**Table 25: Ammunition destroyed and used 2000–apr. 2004<sup>411</sup>**

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

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

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

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

<sup>408</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>409</sup> Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

<sup>410</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

<sup>413</sup> Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

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

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

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

### 5.1.1.3 MEICO and the transfer control system

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

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

<sup>414</sup> Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005.

<sup>415</sup> Interview, international official, 18 April 2005.

<sup>416</sup> Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>422</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

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

<sup>424</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>429</sup> An exception to this rule is sometimes exports of trophy arms to the USA.

<sup>430</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>431</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>432</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

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

<sup>434</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

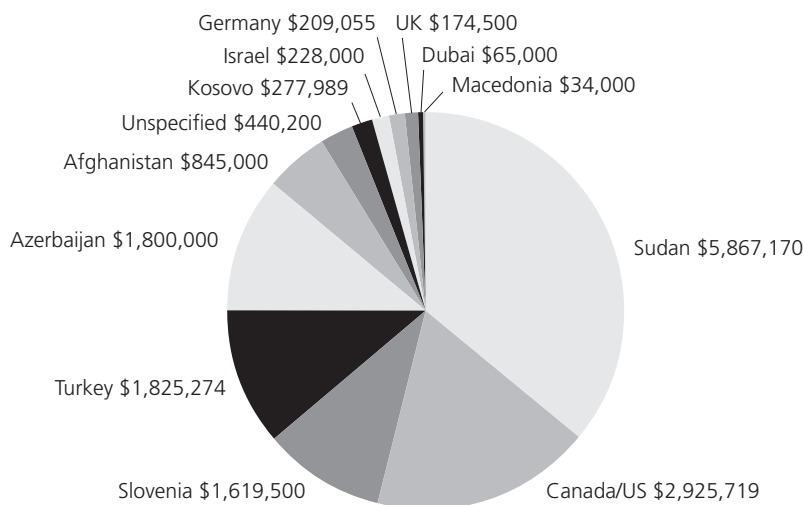
<sup>435</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>436</sup> Interview, parliamentarian, 3 May 2005.

#### 5.1.1.4 Transfers

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

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



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

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

<sup>437</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

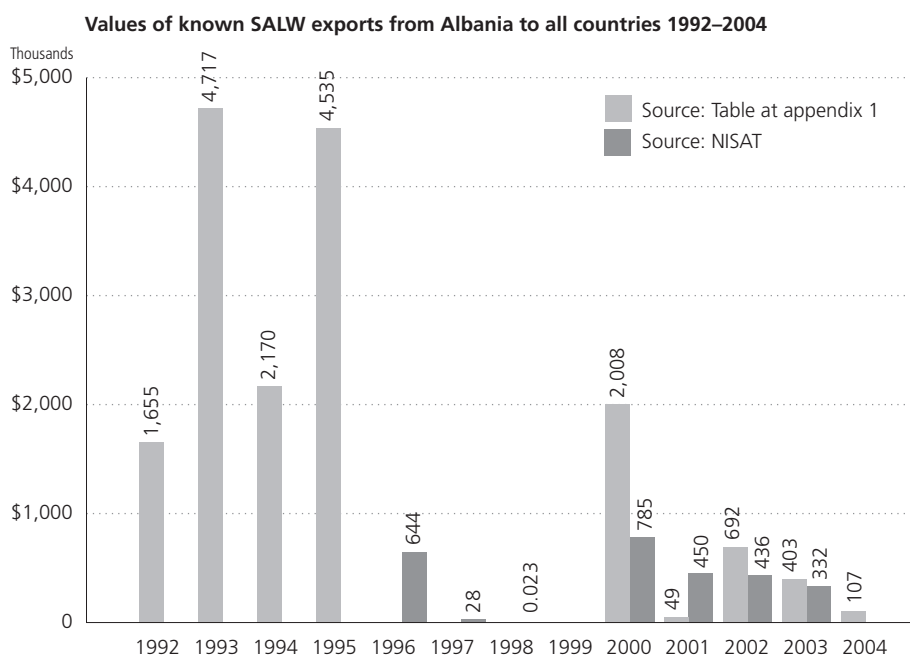
<sup>438</sup> Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

<sup>439</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>440</sup> Interview, British government official, 21 April 2005.

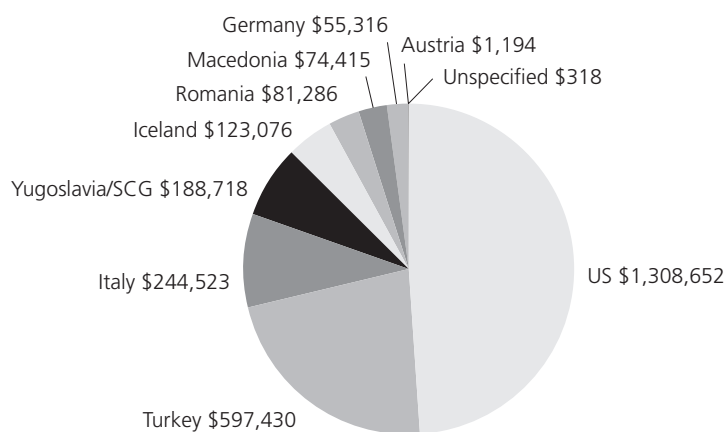
<sup>441</sup> 'Albanian Defense Ministry confirms donating assault rifles to Afghan army', AFP (Paris), 28 November 2002. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

<sup>442</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.



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

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



Note: NISAT figures may include some non-SALW items

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

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

<sup>443</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>444</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

- In 2003 10 million rounds of ammunition were exported to the US.<sup>445</sup>

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

#### 5.1.1.5 Transfers of concern

Between 1992 and 1997 MEICO oversaw exports to many ‘blacklisted’ destinations<sup>447</sup> as prior to 1997 virtually any export could gain authorisation in a context where a single signature was required, and the necessary documents were available, “if the price was right” (either quote him saying this or rephrase).<sup>448</sup> The most infamous case of an Albanian consignment of arms and ammunition being discovered in an UN-embargoed state relates to the story of the UK company Mil-Tec<sup>449</sup> supplying military equipment from Albania to Government forces in Rwanda suspected of being involved in the massacre of Tutsis in 1994. In 1996, the Albanian MOD issued a statement that stressed: “Albania has never breached the UN embargo. It has always respected and will respect all the international bodies and their decisions. Albania has never been engaged in smuggling and illegal traffic”.<sup>450</sup> However, it has been suggested that six shipments of weapons that were exported from Albania to Zaire, in deals brokered by Mil-Tec in 1994, found their way into Rwanda.<sup>451</sup> At the time of these shipments, Zaire was not under a UN embargo, but “research by aid organisations, the UN, and journalists has not established that any firm other than Mil-Tec supplied arms from Albania to Rwanda in 1994”.<sup>452</sup> The extent to which Albanian authorities were aware of these diversions at the time is unclear.

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

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

<sup>445</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>446</sup> Interview, Sadria, 20 July 2005.

<sup>447</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

<sup>448</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

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

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

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

<sup>452</sup> Wells M, ‘Arms firm linked to Rwandan army chief’, *The Guardian*, 10 February 2000, p. 8.

<sup>453</sup> Interview, international official 19 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

An Albanian investigative journalist also informed the research team of covert transfers of military equipment to Rwanda in 2002 and 2004.<sup>457</sup> The interviewee was in possession of documents detailing the flight plans for two shipments of 'secret' cargoes bound for Rwanda, and alleged that the covert shipment was being facilitated by a former MEICO official that worked in the cargo section of Rinas airport. The investigation into this affair halted when no support or protection was offered to the journalist by their employer. In another investigation that was also not taken to its conclusion, the journalist alleged that high level officials in the Albanian navy had concluded an agreement in 2001 with a Greek arms broker for the sale of Albanian torpedoes. According to the interviewee, the Greek broker was a known associate of the former Peruvian Prime Minister, Vladimiro Montesinos, who stood trial in 2004 for his role in smuggling arms to Colombian guerrillas. It is interesting to note that the interviewee stated that when these allegations were published, the MOD did not immediately deny them outright, but announced that an internal investigation would be carried out. No results of investigations into these allegations have reportedly been announced.

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

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

<sup>455</sup> Ibid

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

<sup>457</sup> Interview, investigative journalist, 21 July 2005.

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

<sup>459</sup> Interviews, officials from international organisations, Tirana.

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

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

### 5.1.1.6 Transparency and reporting

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

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

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

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

<sup>462</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

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

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>466</sup> Op cit Greenwood.

<sup>467</sup> Interview, Anon, investigative journalist, 21 July 2005.

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

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

### 5.1.2 Ministry of Public Order/Ministry of Interior

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

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

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

<sup>468</sup> Interview, MOD official, 20 April 2005.

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

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

<sup>471</sup> Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

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

### 5.1.2.1 Management of MOI stocks

#### Record keeping

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

#### Security

In the opinion of the head of the MOI armoury, the security of storage for SALW at the armoury and most police stations is good.<sup>474</sup> Police from the audit directorate visit police stations at different levels to check on their security of storage, and ensure that the centrally held records correspond with local holdings. The head of the MOI armoury stated with confidence that he is not aware of any recent cases of weapons being stolen from police stores. This statement appeared to be backed up by research for this report: in Fier, we were informed that there have been no major thefts from the police stores in recent years, although 45 weapons were reported 'lost' between 1997 and 2003.<sup>475</sup> The head of the MOI armoury informed us that there have been two reported incidents of lost police weapons in the past year. In Tirana, one police officer left his pistol within his commissariat building and another pistol was lost when a police officer was involved in a road accident in Shkodër. Measures have been taken to try to retrieve these pistols and authorities are currently investigating whether to punish the officers involved.

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

### 5.1.2.2 The civilian firearms licensing process

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

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

<sup>473</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

<sup>474</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

<sup>475</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 16 May 2005.

<sup>476</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>478</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>479</sup> Interviews, MOPO official, 16 May 2005; MoPo official, 14 May 2005.

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

<sup>481</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

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

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

### 5.1.2.3 Directorate of the Fight against Organised Crime & Witness Protection<sup>482</sup>

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

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

In the opinion of the Director of the Fight against Organised Crime and Witness Protection, these aims pose a number of challenges<sup>483</sup> including for example the that inter-agency collaboration within Albania still requires significant development. In particular it appears that there is room for further improvement in collaborative working relations between the Directorate and the National Intelligence Service, General Prosecutor's Office and Customs Directorate as well as with counterparts in other countries and in the provision of training in techniques for tackling organised crime.

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

### 5.1.2.4 Sector for the Fight against Illegal Trafficking<sup>484</sup>

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

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

<sup>483</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

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

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

### 5.1.2.5 Central Directorate of Border Police and Migration<sup>485</sup>

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

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

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

**Table 27: Number of border police per km**

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

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

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

<sup>486</sup> Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

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

<sup>488</sup> Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 30.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>490</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

<sup>491</sup> Op cit International Crisis Group, 2004, p. 13.

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

<sup>493</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

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

<sup>495</sup> Comment made during a workshop on Integrated Border Management. Interview 28 April 2005

<sup>496</sup> Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 31.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>498</sup> Interviews, Customs official, 4 May 2005; MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>499</sup> Op cit MOPO, p. 106.

<sup>500</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

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

### 5.1.3 The General Directorate of Customs<sup>502</sup>

The Government anticipates that by 2007 Albania’s customs legislation will be consistent with all EU standards. The operational structures and procedures of the General Directorate of Customs that are already in place are largely EU-compatible, thanks in a large part to the assistance rendered by the EC’s Customs Assistance Mission – Albania (CAM-A), which has been in Albania since 1997.<sup>503</sup>

The Customs Directorate has three divisions:

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

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

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

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

<sup>501</sup> Interviews, international official, 27 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

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

<sup>503</sup> Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

<sup>504</sup> Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

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

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

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

#### 5.1.4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

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

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

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

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

### 5.1.5 Public awareness raising and the role of NGOs

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>508</sup> SALWCP 2002–2003 page, <[www.undp.org.al](http://www.undp.org.al)>, accessed 02 February 2005.

<sup>509</sup> Interview, NGO representative, 21 July 2005.

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

<sup>511</sup> Interview, NGO representative, 21 April 2005.

<sup>512</sup> Interview, NGO representative, 8 February 2005.

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

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

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

### 5.1.6 Interagency co-operation

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

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

<sup>513</sup> Interview, NGO representative, 25 April 2005.

<sup>514</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

<sup>515</sup> Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

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

#### 5.1.6.1 Transfer control system

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

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

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

#### 5.1.6.2 Integrated Border Management<sup>521</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>518</sup> Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOD official, 27 April 2005.

<sup>519</sup> Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>520</sup> Interview, international official, 29 April 2005.

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

<sup>522</sup> Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

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

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

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

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

Since spring 2005, the border police and customs have been working with PAMECA and CAM-A on a review of their progress. There have been some fairly positive assessments of efforts in which customs and border police officers have been working together. For example, a recent experiment in Durrës port is regarded by CAM-A officials as a suitable model for rolling out to other border crossing points in Albania. In their opinion, inter-agency co-operation has improved greatly at this particular border crossing point, with initial resistance to changing working patterns eventually overcome. However, they point out that much remains to be done to achieve integrated border management, particularly in tackling corruption in the border and customs services.

Others do not share the positive experiences and optimism of CAM-A, arguing that inter-agency co-operation between the border police and customs is still a significant problem.<sup>523</sup> One set of international advisers have argued that CAM-A's initiative on joint border and customs service organised crime units has a limited presence and relies too much upon personal rather than institutionalised relations.<sup>524</sup> They go on to mention a number of barriers that need to be broken down for institutionalised relations to be established. These include trying to overcome the jealousy that the border police feel towards their counterparts in customs. The border police know that customs officers can earn bonuses, and thereby higher salaries than border police officers, although they may do many of the same tasks day-to-day. The introduction of performance-related pay for customs officers may be playing a beneficial role in combating corruption and improving professionalism within the customs service, but it appears to be an obstacle to closer border-customs service co-operation. In general it was reported that the border officers had feelings of inferiority, compounded by the high staff turnover.

It remains to be seen how progress towards integrated border management will be assessed in 2006, but while there appears to be positive pockets of progress, dividing lines between the personnel of different state agencies remain. These are not only due to pay levels, but are no doubt also linked to structural divisions that will require more than three years to overcome fully. Progress towards the goals of integrated border management will also require more than greater financial support, it will also require more reliable and steady political support.

<sup>523</sup> Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 31; Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

<sup>524</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

### 5.1.6.3 SALW collection

Interagency co-operation in the field of weapons collection is discussed in section 6.

## 5.1.7 International co-operation

### 5.1.7.1 Bilateral co-operation

According to the former MOPO's annual report for 2004, international agreements on police co-operation and co-operation against organised crime were signed in 2004 with the Governments of Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia and the UK. In addition to these agreements, MOI has developed relations and cooperated on a number of projects with international partners.<sup>525</sup> The General Directorate of Customs has signed fourteen bi-lateral agreements with customs agencies in other states in the SEE region and beyond.<sup>526</sup>

In general, bi-lateral information exchanges with central and local border and customs authorities in Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro are regarded as positive and functioning well.<sup>527</sup> For example, in 2004, the Albanian customs service had 7,000 communications with its Italian counterparts and 5,000 with its Greek counterparts at the central level. Albanian customs authorities reportedly hold institutionalised meetings with their counterparts in neighbouring states and Kosovo every three months, with additional meetings held if requested. At the border points meetings take place each month, chaired by the heads of the customs point for each side of the border. These are treated as opportunities for exchanging information on the types of goods being trafficked, the profiles of traffickers and information on suspected traffickers.<sup>528</sup>

Similar arrangements are in place for the border services, with multi-level contact points established at all levels from the border point to the central levels with each of Albania's neighbours. Thus, for example, meetings between Albanian and Macedonian border staff take place every two weeks at the local level, with monthly meetings at the regional level and quarterly meetings at the central level. It was stated that there are almost daily communications by telephone and email between border police officers on the two sides of the border, which are logged and archived, with information then passed on to Albanian agencies if the information is likely to be of interest. Arben Hanelli, Head of the Sector for Border Services, also stressed that there are good personal relations between staff at different levels. In his opinion, this is an essential basis for co-operation and trust.<sup>529</sup> In addition to this coordinated communication and information sharing there are also regular joint patrols of Albania's coastline with the Greek and Italian coast guards, although as with its 'green borders' there are also reported problems arising from cooperative border patrols.<sup>530</sup>

As stated above, the Albanian MOD also maintains informal bilateral co-operation with the UK and US Governments through their embassies in Tirana, as it reportedly consults with embassy staff when considering whether to grant export licence applications for military equipment and dual-use goods.

<sup>525</sup> This is a list of international partners that actively cooperated with the then MOPO in 2004: AEP (Association of European Police Colleges), DCAF (Democratic Control of the Armed Forces), DEA, Europol, FBI, French Police, General Secretariat of Interpol, Greek Police, ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Programme), INTERFORZE (Bilateral police mission Italy – Albania), ICMPD (International Centre for the Migration Policy Development), IOM (International Organisation for Migration), Italian Police, Macedonian Police, Montenegro Police, OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), PAMECA (Police Assistance Mission of the European community to Albania), UK Police, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Organised Crime), UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), US Department of Justice (Organised Crime Desk) – Department of Justice of the USA (Organised Crime Office). Source: *Ibid*, p. 161.

<sup>526</sup> Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

<sup>527</sup> Interviews, Customs official, 4 May 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; MOPO official, 25 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

<sup>528</sup> Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

<sup>529</sup> Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>530</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

### 5.1.7.2 Multilateral co-operation

Albania reports on SALW issues to:

- The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA),
- the UN Register of Conventional Arms
- the OSCE's SALW Programme information exchange.<sup>531</sup>

As stated previously in this report in section 5.1.6.6 Albania has identified a national focal point as part of its commitment to the South Eastern Europe Stability pact Regional Implementation Plan which is currently based within the MOD.

The Albanian Government views multilateral co-operation on arms and security issues as a vital element of aligning itself with Euro-Atlantic institutions. This can be evidenced by its interest in joining the Wassenaar Arrangement and its desire to demonstrate its commitment to reform on issues relating to arms export control through support for the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. This public support for developing effective arms controls as a step towards Europe in particular is to be welcomed and is in some cases reflected by evidence of change at the operational level. This said, there is still much to be done by the Government to realise its commitment to multilateral co-operation on arms control issues. For example, without the agreement and implementation of new legislation relating to arms transfers, which includes regulation of brokering activity, transit and licensed production as well as the establishment of a criteria based licensing regime, it is very difficult to imagine how, even with the best of intentions that the Government could honour its commitment to implement the spirit of the EU Code of Conduct.

Aside from arms control-specific co-operation, Albania also participates in a number of regional anti-trafficking, border security and anti-organised-crime initiatives as well as international conventions relating to customs duties.<sup>532</sup> These include the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organisation (BESC),<sup>533</sup> the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Ohrid Border Security and Management Common Platform and the SECI Regional Centre for Combating Transnational Crime, where an Albanian official heads the task force dealing with SALW. As part of this latter the official has developed and managed 'Operation Ploughshares' (2002–3) and 'Operation Safe Place' (2004–5), two information exchange exercises on SALW seizures in SEE.<sup>534</sup>

However, despite these positive demonstrations of progress there are examples, particularly within Albania's borders, where multilateral co-operation in the field of anti-trafficking has been less successful, including the (now closed) anti trafficking centre in Vlorë. The centre was established with the support of German, Greek and Italian Governments, but has since struggled to measure up to expectations. Its alleged problems include: claims from each participant that others have not always fully engaged in information exchanges; claims that the centre is constrained by a large bureaucratic burden; complaints that the centre suffers from a lack of important equipment including communication and detection equipment; and possibly most serious and most legitimate, the fact that Vlorë is no longer regarded as a significant

<sup>531</sup> Albania is also a member of the Treaties on Chemical Weapons, Biological Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Interview, MOD official, 27 April 2005. Albania is also preparing an application to the Australia Group, and has been invited to seminars in Bulgaria and Hungary in preparation for membership. Interview, MFA official, 25 April 2005.

<sup>532</sup> Interview, Customs official, 4 May 2005.

<sup>533</sup> Albania has signed the 'Additional Protocol on the Fight against Terrorism of the Agreement among the Governments of the Member States of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation in the fight against crime, particularly its organised forms'. Source: Op cit MOPO, pp. 24, 48 and 50.

<sup>534</sup> This planning workshop for 'Operation Safe Place' was held in Tirana in December 2004, and preceded the launch of this information exchange exercise. Source: 'Task Force – combating Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives: Project I, Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives, Operation Ploughshares', Project document, SECI Regional Centre and Ministry of Public Order, Tirana, 2002.

site for trafficking, as there has been a significant decline in the number of speedboats using this part of the coastline for trafficking people across the Adriatic.<sup>535</sup>

## 5.2 International assistance

Since 1991, Albania has received significant levels of international financial and technical assistance in a number of fields relating to SALW control. Although levels of assistance have decreased, substantial sums continue to be spent by international donors in Albania. This section of the report focuses on three of the areas in which international assistance has been provided:

1. Surplus SALW and ammunition destruction and stockpile management<sup>536</sup>
2. Border management and anti-trafficking
3. Weapons collection

### 5.2.1 International assistance: surplus SALW and ammunition destruction and stockpile management

Since 2000, the Albanian Government and international donors have funded the destruction of around 141,000 SALW in Albania. In September 2000, the Albanian MOD signed a Memorandum with the Governments of Germany, Norway and the USA, agreeing to the destruction of 100,000 SALW. This was seen as an example of Albania reaffirming its commitment to destroy the SALW looted during the 1997 crisis, committing itself to promoting the destruction of surplus weapon stocks and contributing towards the security pillar of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.<sup>537</sup> Based upon this memorandum, the Albanian Armed Forces provided 100,000 surplus SALW units for internationally-funded destruction projects in 2001. The German Government funded a German military team to destroy 40,000 SALW between January and March 2001, with a joint US-Norwegian funded project destroying a further 60,000 SALW. This latter project was run by a private contractor, EOD Solutions Ltd, and commenced in May 2001.

**Table 29: Summary of SALW and ammunition destruction in Albania 1997–2004**

Destruction activity	SALW	Ammunition (tonnes)	Remarks
UNDP WED Project (2000/2002)	16,000	N/A	Destroyed by Albanian agency
Germany Project (2001/2002)	40,000	N/A	Destroyed by German Military Team
Norway/USA Project (2001/2002)	60,000	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited
UK funded-destruction (2003/2004)	12,500	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited
US funded-destruction (2003/2004)	12,500	N/A	EOD Solutions Limited – ongoing
Albanian Armed Forces (2001–2004)		26,473	
NATO PfP APM Destruction Project (2001/2002)		2,874	NAMSA
NATO SEE Initiative Project (2003–2004)		1,475	NAMSA
US and UK funded destruction (2002–2004)		1,229	EOD Solutions Limited.
<b>Total (not including ongoing projects)</b>	<b>141,000</b>	<b>32,052</b>	

<sup>535</sup> Interviews, International official, 21 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official, 28 April 2005; international official, 22 April 2005. See also: 'Italian Ambassador Criticizes Vlore Anti-trafficking Center', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 5–11 March 2005. Source: Shekulli, 9 March 2005.

<sup>536</sup> International assistance with regard to ammunition destruction is discussed in section 6.1.3.

<sup>537</sup> 'Small Arms/Light Weapons Destruction in Albania memorandum', Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State, <[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)>. See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

EOD Solutions Ltd were required to destroy a wide variety of SALW, ranging from pistols and assault rifles to recoilless rifles, heavy calibre machine guns and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launchers.<sup>538</sup> In addition to the two EOD Solutions Ltd British technical experts, nine Albanians were employed and trained to demilitarise the surplus SALW to meet the contract's local capacity-building component. The preferred method for demilitarising the SALW was to cut the weapons through the barrel, the working parts and/or the trigger mechanism. If a bayonet was fitted to the SALW, this was also cut. This contract also included the further development of the demilitarisation site at Mengel military base near Elbasan.

In 2004 the AAF and EOD Solutions undertook a further project to destroy first 12,500 SALW, with funds from the UK Government via its embassy in Tirana, and then 12,500 more with funding from the US Government.<sup>539</sup> The same methods and personnel employed in the 2001 projects were again utilised, although refresher training was also included in this package. Again the types of SALW destroyed varied from pistols to heavy machine guns. However, a number of weapons that were supposed to be destroyed were actually saved from the cutting process due to their significant historical value. According to EOD Solutions Ltd, due to the discovery of a number of historically significant weapons amongst those destined for destruction, a special commission was established to assess the preserved weapons for displaying in the Albanian military museum.<sup>540</sup>

However, officials from the US Embassy also informed the research team of outstanding concerns relating to Albanian SALW destruction. In early 2005, the Albanian Government approached the OSCE for funds to destroy 10,000 surplus SALW.<sup>541</sup> The OSCE approached a number of its members for funding in this area, including the USA. The USA could not understand where the figure of 10,000 SALW had come from however, as previous documents submitted to the OSCE and other international organisations did not reveal their existence. Furthermore, earlier requests to the Albanian MOD for SALW to be destroyed had been met with a response that surplus stocks had been exhausted. There still appears to be a degree of confusion on this point at the time of writing.

Surplus ammunition also poses a significant problem. In 2000 the Albanian armed forces calculated that their stores contained an excess of 117,476 tonnes of ammunition. This figure was reduced to 85,424 by the end of 2004 as a result of destruction activities carried out by the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF), EOD Solutions Ltd, NAMSA and the National Demilitarisation Centre (NDC).<sup>542</sup> In 2004 NDC repackaged 900 tonnes of loose ammunition for incineration by NAMSA.<sup>543</sup> The organisation has also provided verification and auditing services for NAMSA during destruction of MoD ammunition stocks. Work has also been undertaken to improve the MoD's capacity to deal with surplus ammunition. In 2003 the US funded EOD Solutions to provide technical assistance to ammunition experts within the Albanian MOD. NATO has also provided \$2.5 million to install an incinerator at the weapons destruction facility in Elbasan, which after initial delays, is to start operating in late 2005.<sup>544</sup>

In 2004 the MOD developed a strategy for disposing of ammunition surpluses that specifies destruction priorities, methods and costs, and identifies particular stores for destruction. Although the strategy is awaiting formal approval and is not fully funded, it is already being used to guide work in this field.<sup>545</sup> Ammunition destruction is,

<sup>538</sup> Interview, international official, 23 July 2005; See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

<sup>539</sup> Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOD officials, 17 March 2005; international official, 19 April 2005.

<sup>540</sup> Interview, international official, 23 July 2005; See also the website of EOD Solutions Ltd. <<http://www.eod-solutions.com>>.

<sup>541</sup> Interview with MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

<sup>542</sup> According to statistics provided by the Albanian MoD, in the period 2001–2004, AAF destroyed 26,473 tonnes of ammunition (11,404 in 2004), NAMSA destroyed 2874 tonnes of anti-personnel mines and 1,475 tonnes of ammunition (1,440 in 2004) and EOD Solutions Ltd destroyed 1,229 tonnes of ammunition (330 in 2004).

<sup>543</sup> Interview, international official, 18 March 2005.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid; interview with MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

however, gradually becoming more difficult since many of the easiest and cheapest items have already been dealt with, leaving increasing stocks of more technically challenging rounds (e.g. medium artillery and mortar rounds). With cost per item rising, donor interest in SALW destruction is also dropping off.<sup>546</sup> At the same time, other surplus military hardware is considered a higher priority for destruction. For example, the US is now highlighting destruction programmes for chemical weapons, sea mines and torpedoes.

The challenges faced by the Albanian military regarding the safe stockpiling of its active and surplus SALW and ammunition are documented elsewhere in this report (see section 5.1.1.2). Over recent years there had been some international assistance to support stockpile management and safety programmes in Albania. However this support has not been commensurate with either the size or scale of the problem, due to historically poor stockpile management compounded by additional storage needs driven by recent and ongoing military downsizing. The Albanian military has received assistance from the international community in adapting its storage system to achieve NATO-compatibility. The UK contractor EOD Solutions advised the MoD in the process of moving the old system closer to the NATO-based structure of ammunition management planning. This was achieved using NATO guidelines on ammunition storage, combined with the current Albanian system, as a stepping-stone to full integration with NATO systems. The company also 'licensed' six storage sites in accordance with NATO and UK guidelines in order to assist the Albanian MOD in planning the future storage of ammunition. These sites will not, however, conform fully to NATO/UK standards until the backlog of surplus ammunition is reduced and additional space becomes available. The Albanian armed forces have also received bilateral support in this area. During 2004 the US funded a project to increase security of MANPAD stockpiles, and three fences now surround the storage site in question with five keys needed to enter the facility.<sup>547</sup> While a great deal of goodwill and commitment to improving practices exists, it seems clear that much additional support from the international community is still required

**Table 30: International assistance for enhancing SALW and ammunition stockpile management and security**

Project	Implementer	Donor
<b>Albania</b>		
Safe storage (explosives, SA ammunition) May 2002	NATO HQ	NATO
Safe storage (explosives, SA ammunition) ongoing	EOD Solutions Ltd	US

## 5.2.2 International assistance: border management and anti-trafficking

In early 2002, an initiative was launched to improve the coordination of international donor assistance to Albania in fields relating to border management and trafficking. An 'International Consortium' of the main international donors and Albanian partner agencies was established, which apparently meets regularly to inform each other of current and planned projects, explore opportunities to combine funds and avoid duplication of projects and provision of training.<sup>548</sup> In 2004, a large number of donations, programmes and training projects were undertaken by international partners with the then MOPO which involved €4,117,921 in international assistance.

<sup>546</sup> Interview, international official, 18 March 2005.

<sup>547</sup> Interview, MoD officials, 17 March 2005.

<sup>548</sup> The partners in the international consortium include: Albanian General Directorate of Customs, Albanian Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation, Albanian Ministry of Public Order, Albanian State Police, CAM-A, Council of Europe, Embassy of France, Embassy of Germany, Embassy of Greece, Embassy of Italy, Embassy of Turkey, Embassy of the UK, Embassy of the USA, ICITAP, ICMPD, Interforze, IOM, OPDAT, OSCE Presence in Albania, PAMECA, Save the Children, UNDP, UNHCR, UNODC.

**Table 31: Value of international assistance to MOPO in 2004<sup>549</sup>**

Donor	Value (€)
ICITAP mission	1,300,000 (US\$1,620,000)
EU PHARE project	1,455,764
EU CARDS program	550,000
OSCE	120,000
Italian Government	570,000
French Interpol	72,157
German Government	50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,117,921</b>

The following activities were undertaken in 2004 with the co-operation of the Directorate for Border Police and Migration. They give an indication of the variety of interested parties and the range of their activities.<sup>550</sup>

- The IOM and Albanian police academy trained 175 personnel of middle rank from Border and Migration Police on anti-trafficking issues;
- Two training courses were carried out with Interforze on the use of radar;
- The EU Delegation to Albania provided a number of border crossing points with inspection equipment;
- The OSCE Presence in Albania donated a radio communication network and supplementary equipment for the Border Police (est. value €120,000).

### 5.2.2.1 ICITAP

ICITAP started work in Albania in 1998 and in 2000 the programme began to operate from a base within Albania. It has used around US\$8 million for various projects focusing upon anti-trafficking measures and border security.<sup>551</sup> The main projects thus far are:

- The ‘Three Port Strategy’ (see below)
- TIMS (Total Information Management System)
- Technical assistance on the anti-trafficking and organised crime strategies

The ‘Three Port Strategy’ is being implemented in collaboration with other members of the international consortium. ICITAP is advising on ways to improve security and anti-trafficking measures at Rinas airport and the Durrës and Vlorë sea ports. The main emphasis has been on providing equipment and training to personnel, including training dogs for detecting drugs and explosives. With the privatisation of Rinas airport and the World Bank’s assistance programme for enabling container traffic to pass through the port of Durrës, the security needs of Albania’s ports are changing and each security at each port will need to be enhanced to meet new demands in this sphere. Apparent delays in the delivery of some of the projects that comprise this Strategy appear to be in part at least due to a lack of priority afforded to implementation by Government officials.

TIMS is a computerised data system that consists of four elements:

- Border control information system – i.e. keeping records of border crossings
- Case management
- Criminal intelligence
- Criminal databases

TIMS is being installed at all Albania’s border crossing points and a number of police stations – in total in 64 sites across Albania. The project is being co-funded by the EU

<sup>549</sup> Op cit MOPO, p. 93.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid, pp. 77–8.

<sup>551</sup> Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 32.

CARDS programme and ICITAP has so far provided US\$1,500,000 towards the installation of the necessary equipment. It is hoped that once it is fully operational, TIMS will significantly reduce opportunities for corruption and enable central authorities to analyse trafficking and organised crime data far more quickly and efficiently than at present.

In addition ICITAP has one adviser in the office of the Prime Minister, tasked with assisting Albania implement its anti-trafficking strategy and one adviser placed with the organised crime unit. The former has been tasked with improving the co-ordination of efforts to tackle trafficking, organised crime, corruption and other issues in this sphere. The latter adviser has been working with the Task Force on organised crime to improve anti-organised crime and trafficking measures in the priority areas of Durrës, Fier, Shkodër, Tirana and Vlorë.

### 5.2.2.2 The EU

In the recent past, the EU appears to have prioritised funding on issues relating to Justice and Home Affairs in Albania, with missions on improving customs (CAM-A) and police (PAMECA) capabilities providing various training programmes and equipment for Albania's border security and law enforcement agencies accounting for a large proportion of EU funding in Albania.<sup>552</sup> The EU's CARDS programme for Albania for the period 2001–6 has focused on the following:

- CARDS 2001: €1.5 million spent on projects designed to improve the equipment, training and inspection equipment of border police through various twinning projects; in addition, a project for defining Albania's blue border requirements was called for;
- CARDS 2002: €400,000 for vehicle inspection equipment for border crossing points;
- CARDS 2003: €1 million for border police document examination equipment, for all border crossing points that required such equipment, surveillance equipment, patrol vehicles, mobile border crossing point equipment; €4 million for the construction and provisioning of a joint border crossing point between Albania and Montenegro (equipment to be delivered in the autumn of 2005).<sup>553</sup>

In 2005, the implementation phase of the CARDS 2002 program will begin and focus on:<sup>554</sup>

- The establishment of a data transmission network (project initiated by TIMS);
- The partial refurbishment of 47 commissariats and border crossing points;
- The refurbishment of Arbana hotel for use as the new State Police General Directorate Headquarters;
- The implementation of the National Border Strategy.

There are currently two European Commission missions in Albania that focus upon improving the organisational and operational capabilities of Albania's border security and law enforcement agencies. These missions are:

- CAM-A (Customs Assistance Mission – Albania)
- PAMECA (Police Assistance Mission of the European Commission to Albania)

#### CAM-A

CAM-A was established in 1997 following a request made by the Albanian Government to the EC to assist Albania in the reorganisation of its customs directorate. Since then, CAM-A has worked on a number of projects with Albania's nascent customs service, including:

<sup>552</sup> Op cit Bumçi, Ymeri and Dakli, p. 13.

<sup>553</sup> Interviews, international official, 28 April 2005; international official 28 April 2005.

<sup>554</sup> Op cit MOPO, p. 49.

- Improving customs legislation and its implementation, with a view to meeting EU and WTO standards;
- The establishment of anti-smuggling teams;
- The installation and training on the use of the ASYCUDA++ customs programme;
- Deploying CAM-A staff alongside Albanian staff at customs posts;
- The Organised Crime Initiative (OCI).<sup>555</sup>

It has also recently helped with the installation and training for EU-funded passport detection equipment, and with ICITAP, EXPAS (US), the UK embassy and Swedish customs agents on improving the exchange of information and border security.

CAM-A acts as a clearing house for international agencies and donors in relation to supporting Albania's requirements in enhancing its customs service in order to try to avoid duplication of donations and training programmes.

Members of the CAM-A OCI team work with Albanian colleagues at border crossing points throughout Albania. The fact that CAM-A border and customs staff work 'in the field' with Albanian colleagues, carrying out physical checks in all weathers with the Albanians, has helped to gain the respect and trust of many Albanian border and customs personnel. The CAM-A OCI teams have worked on the borders with Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, the ports of Durrës and Vlorë, and also at Rinas airport. These teams have spent the past two years demonstrating best practice in vehicle inspections, people crossing, checking shipments, and facilitating inter-agency co-operation through joint training and everyday working practices with border and customs guards.

According to one senior member of the CAM-A team, one of their main aims is to help customs and border guards to work together at different levels. Therefore, CAM-A has taken the initiative of establishing a mechanism for CBC meetings to take place at border crossing points at least once a month and at certain border crossing points each week. In these instances, meeting places have been alternated between the two sides, with the respective border and customs guards on each side exchanging information and intelligence on organised crime and trafficking issues.

#### PAMECA

PAMECA started operating in Albania in December 2002, under the 2001 CARDS programme. Its initial brief was scheduled for 2002–4, but has been extended for the period 2005–7.<sup>556</sup> For the 2005–2007 work programme, €10.8 million have been allocated to fund training, workshops, seminars, the preparation of studies and strategies, computerisation of MOI and police, and provision of other equipment ranging from telecommunications to detection devices.<sup>557</sup>

PAMECA's objectives include:

- Assisting MOI to develop a 'comprehensive long-term Governmental strategy';
- Improving the 'response and investigative capacities' of the Albanian state police on public order and security, border management, organised crime and terrorism;
- Increasing levels of professionalism, effectiveness, organisational capability;
- Strengthening co-operation with other elements in the criminal justice system;
- Developing information exchange capabilities;
- Increasing the efficient use of donor funds;

<sup>555</sup> Interview, international official, 27 April 2005.

<sup>556</sup> PAMECA continues some of the duties established by Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE), which was led by the Western European Union (WEU), and was based in Albania from May 1997 until June 2001. In September 2001, the EC launched a bridging PHARE-funded EC Police Assistance Mission (ECPA), which ran until PAMECA was established. Interview, International official, 21 April 2005. See also: PAMECA, Work Programme Proposal 2005, p. 8.

<sup>557</sup> Op cit PAMECA, pp. 28–44.

■ Restoring public confidence in the police.<sup>558</sup>

Although PAMECA is based in Tirana, PAMECA officials stressed that they undertake outreach activities throughout Albania, with training programmes provided in a number of fields in different areas of the country, including: supporting the border police in implementing Albania's Integrated Border Management Strategy and improving legislation and operational methods for combating organised crime.<sup>559</sup> As with ICITAP, PAMECA has advisors in the offices of the Minister of Public Order and the head of the State police.<sup>560</sup>

One example of the work being undertaken by PAMECA officials is a twelve month twinning project focusing upon leadership and management training with the directors of all commissariats, which is currently running under Greek direction.<sup>561</sup> There are planned joint training sessions for the border police and customs on integrated border management issues, and the project also includes a training of trainer's component to support roll-out to others. It is envisioned that this latter element of the project will help train around two-thirds of Albania's border police officers in basic integrated border management. It is expected that this project will assist with detection methods on altered documents, training for equipment at the eight main border crossing points, the production of a senior border police officer's handbook, a handbook for basic level staff, and provide materials for the police academy's training curriculum, which currently lacks dedicated training programmes for border police officers.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>559</sup> Interview, International official, 21 April 2005.

<sup>560</sup> Interview, International official, 21 April 2005.

<sup>561</sup> This project is being funded by CARDS 2001.