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Destroying Surplus Weapons

An Assessment of Experience in South Africa and Lesotho

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FOREWORD

It can be said that small arms are the scourge of Africa. They find their way into various parts of the continent raising levels of fear and violence. They move from countries that experience conflict and war into other countries, that are at peace but where there is a market for them. One of the key features for these small weapons is the ease with which they can be bought and sold at low cost. The increased levels of firearms related crime has become untenable for African security forces and requires clear government action.

It is also of some concern that a culture is developing with the use of guns, glamorized by Hollywood, and associated with what is considered cool and macho.

The new political dispensation in South Africa has had far reaching effects. The AK-47, once referred to by the South African freedom fighters as "the liberator", now had to be taken off the streets. The new dispensation is committed to destroying illegal weapons and surplus small arms. South Africa's first democratic government took the political decision to destroy surplus small arms despite the financial gains that would have accrued by marketing them in other countries.

The first democratic South African Government set up the National Conventional Arms Control Committee to regulate and control, amongst other things, the circulation of small arms. Under the direction of the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the first and second Minister of Defence, worked to regulate the arms manufacturing and distribution agencies as well as working closely with the police agencies.

The commitment by South Africa to destroy small arms was reflected by the adoption of international agreements signed since 1994. It renounced chemical and biological weapons and adopted a programme to stop the production and use of landmines. South Africa has been at the forefront of these destruction programmes and have been supported by commitments of the United Nations, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

It has been recognised that there is a close relationship between illegal weapons and legal weapons. This has forced us to look at the question of small arms holistically. Thus the Minister for Safety and Security has incorporated many of the elements contained in SADC's Protocol on Firearms in South Africa's Firearms Control Act that regulates the civilian possession of firearms in South Africa.

We have also recognized that we cannot operate as an island. Small arms are coming into South Africa from regional civil wars. They travel through countries and are smuggled across borders, backwards and forwards on the continent. It is therefore crucial that we act collectively in SADC and on the continent. There has to be regional and continental co-operation in relation to customs and border control, in the exchange of information, in the creation of firearms registers with the aim of containing and reducing both brokerage and trafficking. The destruction of small arms and light weapons lies at the core of the Peace and Security agenda for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that promotes the long-term conditions necessary for Africa's development and security.

This present volume is unique in that it provides an in-depth account and assessment of a policy and programme for the destruction of surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated small arms. The book's account of Lesotho's experience in destroying surplus weapons provides an added dispensation of how one country can assist another not only in making Southern Africa a sub-region where the promise of a better life for all can be made a reality, but how one country's knowledge base and experience can be successfully transferred and used by another.

South Africa's objective in allowing independent bodies such as the United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Small Arms Survey (SAS) access to all our documented procedures and policy statements and formal contact with those who meticulously planned and carried out the actual operations, was to obtain an independent assessment of how our policy intentions were successfully translated into practical measures.

As the book shows we have destroyed a significant amount of surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated small arms.

I would like to express our deep appreciation to both the government of the Kingdom of Norway and the United States of America for the financial assistance they provided to carry out the destruction processes. This study makes it clear that while such destruction programmes are relatively inexpensive exercises, the donor community can play an invaluable role especially in the context of developing and post-conflict societies.

All our efforts have been motivated by the need to combat the proliferation and availability of illicit firearms and provide for the safety and security of South Africa's peoples.

Mosiuo Lekota
Minister of Defence
South Africa

PREFACE

In the world of arms control and disarmament there have been far too few success stories lately and so it is with great pleasure that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Small Arms Survey (SAS) are able to produce this evaluation of the experiences of South Africa and Lesotho in destroying surplus small arms and light weapons and the responsible management of their stockpiles.

In the period following the end of Apartheid, the South African Government quickly learned—the hard way—how weapons that had previously been used in conflict situations could become the tools of choice of violent criminals. The response of South Africa was to first understand the depth and scope of the problem and then to act nationally, regionally and internationally. The recommendations of the 1994-95 Cameron Commission became the cornerstone of the new Government's responsible and ethical policy on arms exports.

Since 1995, South Africa and Mozambique have cooperated in finding and destroying arms left over from Mozambique's long and bloody civil war. In addition South Africa has destroyed thousands of domestically sized illicit weapons, established controls on government stockpiles, reviewed and revised its domestic firearms legislation, and assisted Lesotho in the destruction of its surplus small arms and light weapons.

Destroying Surplus Weapons: An Assessment of Experiences in South Africa and Lesotho reviews and evaluates the experiences of South Africa and Lesotho. The aim of the book is to highlight the lessons from South Africa and Lesotho, and thereby encourage other governments to carry out similar programmes if they have not already begun to do so. In particular the body of experience from Mozambique, Lesotho and South Africa has practical relevance for other countries in southern Africa and in other parts of Africa. However it must be stressed that the intent is not to prescribe but to inspire. Each State, each situation has its own peculiarities and would have to adapt the lessons contained in this book. However the approach used by South Africa and Lesotho is adaptable and most certainly adoptable. It is cost-effective and can benefit societies in terms of security,

development and economics if governments emulate the work evaluated in this book.

We are most grateful to Sarah Meek and Noel Stott for their hard work and dedication in carrying out this study. We would also like to thank the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, South Africa for their excellent cooperation on this project. Our special thanks to Nick Sendall for all of his help with this book, and for his commitment to the issue of stockpile management and the destruction of surplus weapons

The South African Minister of Defence, Mr M. Lekota, who wrote the foreword to this work, and the National Commissioner of the South African Police Service, Mr J. Selebi gave the authors unprecedented cooperation and assistance, for which we are truly grateful. Many others in the South African Department of Defence, the South African National Defence Force, the South African Police Service, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, the Lesotho Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Lesotho Defence Force assisted the research and are gratefully acknowledged by the authors.

At UNIDIR and SAS, we thank Elli Kytömäki for all her work in editing the book, to Steve Tulliu for his editing work and Anita Blétry for laying out the book and bringing it to publication.

Finally we thank the Government of Norway for their generous funding, without which this work could never have been carried out and those in Norway and South Africa who encouraged us to undertake the project in the first place.

It is our hope that this book will inspire other governments in Africa and elsewhere to consider similar attempts to destroy small arms and light weapons that are surplus to national requirements and to put in place stockpile management regimes that minimize the leakage of weapons into the illicit trade and their possible use in violent crime and armed conflict. As South Africa and Lesotho have realised—to do otherwise is sheer folly.

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The errors that may remain are ours alone.

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ACRONYMS

APLA	Azanian Peoples Liberation Army
ARMSCOR	Armaments Corporation of South Africa
AU	African Union
BTWC	Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction
CCW	Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CWC	Convention on Chemical Weapons
DCAC	Directorate Conventional Arms Control
DoD	Department of Defence
DRC	The Democratic Republic of Congo
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NCACC	National Conventional Arms Control Committee
NPC	South African Non-Proliferation Council for Weapons of Mass Destruction
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OAU	Organization for African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDSC	Plenary Defence Staff Council
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADF	South African Defence Force
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
SAPS	South African Police Service
SAS	Small Arms Survey
TSD	Technical Supply Depot

TVBL states Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei
UNIDIR United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

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INTRODUCTION

Countries in Southern Africa have moved from associating AK-47s with liberation to seeing them as a cause of insecurity, violence and death. During the wars of liberation in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s a clenched fist and raised weapon signalled the power of the fighters over the domination of the colonial powers. By the 1990s, as the political dynamics in Southern Africa changed and wars subsided in Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, the guns left over from the conflicts started to pose a new threat to the countries emerging from conflict.

South Africa was one of the first, and hardest, hit by the negative impact that weapons could have on those same people who had used them to fight the apartheid past. Although political violence subsided in the wake of the political settlement, crime and violence, often with guns used as the weapons of choice, spiralled seemingly out of control.

A few factors were quickly identified by the South African government that were contributing to the spread of weapons in the country. These were clustered into three categories: weapons being trafficked into the country from neighbouring states (initially primarily from Mozambique), the internal circulation of weapons left over from the apartheid past, and the loss or theft of weapons from the hands of licensed owners, or paramilitary and state security forces.¹ The combination of these factors was creating a situation in which small arms normally seen only on battlefields were being used for cash robberies, hijackings and taxi murders.

South Africa's initial response was introspective—identifying the problem from a national perspective and identifying a national response. However as international concern about the impact of small arms on societies grew, South Africa and her neighbours also recognized both the regional dimensions of arms trafficking, as well as the need for a more coordinated sub-regional response to the problems posed by arms trafficking.

At the same time, South Africa was coming to terms with some of the more difficult parts of its earlier policies on arms transfers. In 1994, then

President Nelson Mandela appointed a Commission headed by Judge Edwin Cameron to investigate illegal arms dealing and particularly the sale of weapons to Yemen. The work of this Cameron Commission brought to light details of shady dealings and murky lines of accountability, and its recommendations became the foundation of South Africa's new approach to arms transfers.

This marked a watershed in South Africa's view of its relationship with the outside world. President Mandela echoed this in his opening address at the Defence Exposition of South Africa in November 1994, when he said *"Our morality as a democratic government dictates that we have to act in accordance with internationally acceptable norms and standard... In our approach to the sale of arms, we are resolved to act responsibly. Arms are for the purpose of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country; not to undermine any considerations of humanity nor to suppress the legitimate aspirations of any community."*²

The report of the Cameron Commission, which was published in June 1995, concluded that numerous acts of commission and omission by officials from the Armaments Corporation of South Africa (ARMSCOR) had contributed to the debacle. However, the most significant cause was a general, institutional lack of responsibility regarding the end destination of South African arms exports. This lack of responsibility was evident at the policy, operational and organizational levels on the part of the previous Cabinet, Defence Foreign Policy Committee and ARMSCOR.³

In August 1995, shortly after the publication of the Commission's report, the Cabinet appointed an interdepartmental Cabinet committee, the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) to study defence industry reforms, take charge of conventional arms control mechanisms, and ensure political oversight of the industry and arms exports.⁴

The NCACC formalized a more responsible approach to the arms trade by South Africa and provided a forum for the government to discuss and develop policies that would address not only South Africa's manufacture and trade in arms, but also steps that could be taken to reduce the possible negative impact of weapons on the sub-region and internationally, for example through exacerbating regional instability.

These efforts coincided with growing recognition in other parts of Africa, Europe, America and Asia that the uncontrolled spread of small arms was affecting the ability of the state to govern. They led to the establishment in 1995 of the first United Nations panel of governmental experts who were tasked with preparing a report on small arms for the United Nations General Assembly.⁵ This first panel was the springboard needed to launch a series of regional and international efforts to raise the profile of small arms as an issue with a devastating impact on humans, one that needs coordinated, international response in order to achieve results.

South Africa has been an active participant in these initiatives and has participated in the United Nations panels on small arms, sub-regional and regional small arms initiatives in Africa, in addition to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001.⁶ Simultaneously with these international efforts, South Africa has continued to take practical steps nationally and in cooperation with its neighbours to strengthen legal controls, and to reduce the number of surplus and illicit weapons through weapons collection and destruction efforts.

These weapons destruction programmes have reduced the number of weapons in circulation in the region. Since 1995, South Africa and Mozambique have cooperated to identify and destroy arms caches in Mozambique left over from Mozambique's civil war. By August 2002, more than 32,000 small arms and light weapons, 3,100 anti-personnel landmines, and nine million rounds of ammunition had been destroyed in Mozambique.⁷ Notably, the trafficking of firearms from Mozambique into South Africa has dried up to almost nothing, despite of having once been a principal source of illicit small arms into South Africa.

While the initiatives in Mozambique, known as Operation Rachel, are well known, South Africa has also, more quietly, been engaged in a process of rationalizing its own stocks of small arms and ammunition and destroying them. It has also destroyed thousands of seized illicit weapons that were in police custody. More recently, in 2001, South Africa extended its experience in this form of weapons storage and destruction to its landlocked neighbour at the request of Lesotho.

The experiences gained from these efforts, the destruction of more than 260,000 weapons by the South African National Defence Force

(SANDF), and 75,000 weapons by the South African Police Service (SAPS) since 1999, are the focus of this report.

The aim of this report is to review South Africa's experience with the destruction of surplus state-owned small arms. The report starts with an overview of South Africa's security and defence policies, including the role South Africa has played on the African continent regarding small arms control efforts. Chapter 2 reviews South Africa's approach to controlling small arms. Chapter 3 presents case studies of three weapons destruction programmes run by South Africa (one in partnership with neighbouring Lesotho) while Chapter 4 evaluates these programmes in an effort to gauge the success of their implementation and any impact they may have on weapons proliferation in South and Southern Africa. The final Chapter of the report looks at lessons that have been learned from the weapons destruction programmes in South Africa and Lesotho, and draws some conclusions as to how this approach could be adopted by other countries in Africa and in other regions.

CHAPTER 1

SOUTH AFRICA'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICIES

The current shape of South Africa's security and defence policies reflect the unique changes that have taken place in the country since 1994. At the visible level, these changes are most reflected in the reorientation of the functions of the South African defence and police forces since the end of apartheid. However, these changes are also visible in South Africa's role as an arms producer and exporter, as well as in its commitments at the international, regional and sub-regional levels to disarmament and arms control measures.

SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY FORCES

Despite a pronounced militarization of other southern African countries in the 1970s and 1980s, the South African Defence Force (SADF) was often regarded as more powerful than the combined forces of all its neighbours.⁸ In addition, by the mid-1970s, South Africa already "had a powerful and significant arms industry",⁹ and by the mid-1980s almost 20 per cent of the government's total annual budget was devoted to defence.

Historically, the South African military has a range of combat experience. From 1966 to 1974, South Africa provided "policing services" and military support to neighbouring white colonial governments in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Mozambique and Angola and, engaged in a number of low intensity military deployments, incursions and cross-border raids against these and other Front Line States on a regular basis from 1975 to 1989. During the 1980s, the South African military also took on increasing responsibility for internal security matters, providing the South African Police (SAP) with considerable support in their attempt to crush anti-apartheid resistance.

On the eve of the 1994 first democratic general election, the South Africa National Defence Force (SANDF) replaced the SADF, as a result of the decision to integrate the non-statutory forces of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress) and the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA) with the SADF and the small defence forces of the four "independent" homelands of Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei (the TVBC states). Since then, and while undergoing complex processes of transformation, restructuring and downsizing, the military has been involved in a range of security issues. In both the 1994 and 1999 elections, for example, the SANDF assisted the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in the registration and voting processes. It was also deployed in high-risk areas around the country to reduce tensions between members of the various political parties and to provide the necessary security on voting days.

The military has performed a central role also in assisting the post-1994 South African Police Service in crime-combating operations (both internal and cross-border), and is deeply involved in the rural protection plan for farming communities that have increasingly come under criminal attacks since the early 1990s. The continuing high crime rate has resulted in calls for military involvement to be expanded, but military leaders have thus far resisted this move.¹⁰ "The SANDF is not an institution for fighting crime... but, we do deploy members of the SANDF in the battle against crime because the Constitution, and Parliament have declared that it is our secondary duty to assist and stabilise our society. Generally speaking we must not see combating crime as the primary duty of the SANDF."¹¹

Externally, the new South African military has been, or presently is, involved in a number of operations. The SANDF is cautiously engaged in peacekeeping missions in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The former deployment, which is officially called the South African Protection Support Detachment, is South Africa's "biggest and most expensive and riskiest military mission since 1994".¹² Prior to this, in September 1998, under the auspices of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the South African and Botswana defence forces launched Operation Boleas to quell an army rebellion in Lesotho.

In addition, there has been substantial progress on many of the internal policy goals of the SANDF. Its civilian control mechanism is well established. Its emergency relief operations have been widely acclaimed—especially

those provided as part of emergency relief to flood-stricken Mozambique in 1999-2000.

The South African Police Service has undergone a significant transformation in the nine years since 1994, especially in terms of demilitarising the police force and changing its orientation towards service delivery and crime prevention. The SAPS currently has more than 125,000 members (on par with countries such as the United States, Australia or Canada) and a constitutional mandate to “prevent, combat and investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and to uphold and enforce the law.”¹³

This is in stark contrast to the South African Police of the 1970s, when “a disproportionate amount of police time was spent on enforcing the race laws, including a good deal of public order work and even counter-terrorist enforcement abroad.”¹⁴

The SAPS falls under the Department of Safety and Security, and came into being after the amalgamation of the 11 independent policing agencies that existed prior to 1994. In addition to its constitutional mandate, the policies governing the SAPS are set out in the National Crime Prevention Strategy (1996), the White Paper on Safety and Security (1998) and the National Crime Combating Strategy (2000). Within this, the SAPS have four identified priority areas: combat organized crime; address serious and violent crime; reduce crimes against women and children; and improve service delivery.¹⁵

Even with new policies and practices, the legacy of South Africa’s past is not completely removed for the SAPS. South Africa has suffered a surge in crime and specifically in gun-related crime. While analyzing the rise of crime in periods of political transition is complex—do dramatic transitions lead to the more visible appearance of older forms of criminal activity in new guises or does transition itself give rise to new forms of criminal activity—the SAPS have had to respond to crime while trying to implement policies that will reduce current crime levels and prevent future crime waves.

This process has been complicated by the availability of weapons in the country: in the licensed possession of civilians, in the illegal pool of weapons available for use in criminal activity, as well as the weapons used

by the security forces and those produced as part of South Africa's arms industry.

The SAPS have instituted a five-pillar approach to managing firearms, (a Firearms Programme) as part of its strategy to handle firearms in the country (see SAPS case study in Chapter 3).

SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY

South Africa has the largest and most diversified arms production facilities in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a significant producer of small arms, light weapons and related ammunition, as well as increasingly technologically advanced components and weapons systems.

South Africa's domestic defence industry was built up under the impetus of the 1977 United Nations mandatory arms embargo. Between 1990 and 2000 the local industry was forced to downsize, rationalize and consolidate as a result of the significant cuts in country's defence budget, particularly the procurement resources.¹⁶ The processes of defence industrial downsizing and restructuring have had an impact on South Africa's local SALW and SALW ammunition producers, which were previously reliant on the SANDF as their main client.

This trend seems to be changing, as companies such as Denel (a state-owned defence company, which controls approximately 55 per cent of South Africa's total arms exports), have shown year-on-year increases in exports since 2000. In 2002, Denel's gross revenue (for all categories of weapons) was up nine per cent and export revenues were up five per cent.¹⁷ This is attributed, in part, to opportunities created by the South African government's defence acquisition programme that has brought international defence companies to South Africa and led to collaboration and licensed production agreements. A notable exception to the overall growth at Denel, however, has been small arms, the demand for which has shown "a constant decline".¹⁸

South Africa has a number of local small arms producers. These include, inter alia, Vektor, PMP, and Naschem that are all divisions of Denel. Private sector companies include Hausler Scientific Instruments, Milkor, Neostead, Republic Arms, Reutech Defence Industries, and Truvelo

Armoury Division. In recent years a number of small arms producers have closed down, including the private company Aram, which ceased operations in 1999.¹⁹

The Armament Corporation of South Africa (ARMSCOR) is responsible for the acquisition of weapons and associated equipment for South Africa's security forces and for promoting and facilitating the marketing efforts of the wider defence industry.²⁰

SOUTH AFRICA'S SECURITY POLICIES

South Africa is today a full and equal member of the international community, with policies that are well respected and often are at the cutting edge of defence, disarmament, arms control, demilitarisation and humanitarian concerns. South Africa's transition during the early 1990s coincided with considerable international change, including the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new focus on multilateralism, including in the security field. Within a short time after 1994, South Africa had re-engaged fully in the international arena, rejoining, among others, United Nations agencies, joining the African Union and SADC and retaking its seat at the United Nations. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfred Nzo, summed the views of the new South Africa up when he stated "the Government's foreign policy objectives in the multilateral field are to ensure that South Africa plays a role commensurate with its status and abilities in respect of the global issues which preoccupy the world today and which are at the same time of major national concern".²¹

In the disarmament field, South Africa is best known for its unilateral decision to renounce its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programmes that had been developed under the apartheid regime. As stated in the 1996 Foreign Policy Discussion Paper, "the Government has committed itself to a policy of non-proliferation and arms control which covers all weapons of mass destruction and extends to concerns relating to the proliferation of conventional weapons. A primary goal of this policy is to reinforce and promote South Africa as a responsible producer, possessor and trader of advanced technologies in the nuclear, biological, chemical and conventional arms fields. To this end, a new conventional arms control system has been established... and positions which publicly support the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have been adopted."²²

The country's policy development reflects these commitments. South Africa acceded to a number of international agreements, including:

- Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW);
- Convention on Chemical Weapons (CWC);
- Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction (BTWC); and the
- Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

South Africa was the third country to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Treaty or Mine Ban Treaty) in December 1997, and she ratified the convention in 1998. South Africa takes pride in having destroyed its stockpiles far ahead of the four-year period provided for in the Mine Ban Treaty, and in being a leader in the development of mine-clearance equipment. National enabling implementation legislation is currently before the National Assembly for adoption.

In addition, in the direct aftermath of 1994, the country started to participate in a number of forums designed to promote multilateral approaches to arms control and disarmament, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee.

In order to concretize these policies and commitments, South Africa has established a number of structures and procedures to regulate its participation in nuclear, biological, chemical and conventional arms issues:

- The National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) is a committee of Ministers appointed by Cabinet to carry out South African Government policy on arms control and to ensure political oversight over all arms transfers;
- The Directorate Conventional Arms Control (DCAC) is the secretariat to the NCACC. The DCAC is based in the Department of Defence (Defence Secretariat). The DCAC administers the following Acts and

their associated regulations: Armaments Development and Production Act and the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act;

- The South African Non-Proliferation Council for Weapons of Mass Destruction (NPC) is statutory body that controls the transfer of weapons of mass destruction and dual-use goods according to South Africa's responsibilities with respect to the MTCR, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. The NPC secretariat is based in the Department of Trade and Industry. The NPC administers the Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act and its associated regulations;
- The South African Police Service have developed a comprehensive Firearms Programme that includes the implementation of the 2000 Firearms Control Act (Act 60 of 2000), combating illicit firearms trafficking and reducing the use of firearms in crime (see Chapter 3).

The National Conventional Arms Control Committee

The NCACC assesses all applications for arms transfers on a case-by-case basis and regulates the trade in conventional arms by taking into account political factors concerning a recipient country:

- The respect the country shows for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The NCACC determines this from an evaluation based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights;
- The internal and regional security situation of the country;
- Their record of compliance with international arms control agreements and treaties;
- The nature and cost of the arms to be transferred in relation to prevailing circumstances, including justified security and defence needs and the objective of the least diversion of human and economic resources for armaments;
- Whether such arms sales support South Africa's national and foreign interests.²³

In addition, a product categorization system has been developed. Weapons exports are grouped into the following categories:

Category A: Sensitive Major Significant Equipment: This category comprises conventional implements of war such as explosives, large calibre arms and automatic weapons, guns, missiles, bombs and grenades, tanks, fighter aircraft, attack helicopters and naval vessels that could cause severe casualties and/or major damage and destruction.

Category B: Sensitive Significant Equipment: This category comprises all types of infantry hand held and portable assault weapons and associated ammunition of a calibre smaller than 12,7 millimetres.

Category C: Non-Sensitive Equipment: This is a general category and comprises all support equipment usually employed in the direct support of combat systems or operations, but cannot kill or to destruct. Included are all forms of electronic equipment, radio and communication equipment; systems such as flight control, tactical observation, propulsion, missile tracking and guidance, weapon-firing sights; transport equipment for logistical support and various other miscellaneous equipment.

Category D: Non-Lethal Equipment: This category is limited to purposely designed demining, mine clearing and mine detecting equipment, and all non-lethal pyrotechnical and riot control products.

Category E: Not For Sale: This category comprises all defence or related products that are not for sale, for example, all landmines.

Category G: General Services: General services include any service of whatever nature or form to any institution of a foreign country that has a relevance to rendering aid, advice, or assistance or training in relation to conventional arms but excluding contractual after sales and warranty services.

COMMITMENTS MADE BY AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE

South Africa's policies should also be seen in the context of commitments made by African Heads of State and Government in recent years at the Organization for African Unity (OAU, now African Union, AU).

In relation to small arms controls, African governments have become increasingly motivated to find ways of addressing the negative impact the proliferation and illicit trade of these weapons have on their countries.

In December 2000, the OAU adopted the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Bamako Declaration became an important negotiating tool during the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001, but is also significant in its own right.

To address the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, African Heads of State agreed to a series of measures designed to curb the illicit proliferation of small arms. At the national level Heads of State recommended the following:²⁴

- to put in place, where they do not yet exist, national coordination agencies or bodies and the appropriate institutional infrastructure responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring on all aspects of small arms and light weapons proliferation, control, circulation, trafficking and reduction;
- enhance the capacity of national law enforcement and security agencies and officials to deal with all aspects of the arms problem, including appropriate training on investigative procedures, border control and specialized actions, and upgrading of equipment and resources;
- adopt the necessary legislative and other measures to establish as a criminal offence under national law, the illicit manufacturing of, trafficking in, and illegal possession and use of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and other related materials;
- develop and implement national programmes for responsible management of licit arms; voluntary surrender of illicit small arms and light weapons; identification and the destruction by competent national authorities and where necessary, of surplus, obsolete and seized stocks in possession of the state, with, as appropriate, international financial and technical support; and reintegration of demobilized youth and those who possess small arms and light weapons illegally;

- develop and implement public awareness programmes on the problem of the proliferation and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons;
- encourage the adoption of appropriate national legislation or regulations to prevent the breaching of international arms embargoes, as decided by the United Nations Security Council;
- take appropriate measures to control arms transfers by manufacturers, suppliers, traders, brokers, as well as shipping and transit agents, in a transparent fashion;
- encourage, where appropriate, the active involvement of civil society in the formulation and implementation of a national action plan to deal with the problem; and
- enter into binding bilateral agreements, on a voluntary basis with neighbouring countries, so as to put in place an effective common system of control, including the recording, licensing and collection of small arms and light weapons, within common frontier zones.

Heads of State recommended the following actions at the regional level:²⁵

- put in place, where they do not exist, mechanisms to coordinate and harmonize efforts to address the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons;
- encourage the codification and harmonization of legislation governing the manufacture, trading, brokering, possession and use of small arms and ammunition. Common standards should include, but not be limited to, marking, record-keeping and control governing imports, exports and the illicit trade;
- strengthen regional and continental cooperation among police, customs and border control services to address the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. These efforts should include, but not be limited to, training, the exchange of information to support common action to contain and reduce illicit small arms and light weapons trafficking across borders, and the conclusion of the necessary agreements in this regard; and
- ensure that the manufacturers and suppliers of illicit small arms and light weapons, who violate global or continental regulations on the issue, shall be sanctioned. Known brokers and states, which act as suppliers of illicitly acquired arms and weapons to combatants in

member states, should equally be sanctioned by the international community.

South Africa played an important role during the negotiations of the Bamako Declaration, building a coalition that could balance the concerns of sub-Saharan countries with the security concerns of North African countries.

South Africa has also been hard at work in the Southern African sub-region to promote better practice at small arms controls. The country supported the adoption of the 1998 Southern Africa Regional Action Programme on Light Arms and Illicit Trafficking,²⁶ and the process to develop a legally binding protocol on small arms. In August 2001, the Southern African Development Community adopted the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region. The SADC Protocol bears resemblance to the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Vienna Protocol), which supplements the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. The SADC Firearms Protocol is the first legally binding measure on small arms in Africa and is currently being ratified by the 14 SADC members.

Importantly, with regard to this report, article 10 of the SADC Protocol on the Disposal of State-Owned Firearms states that:

1. State Parties undertake to identify and adopt effective programmes for the collection, safe-storage, destruction and responsible disposal of firearms rendered surplus, redundant or obsolete, through, inter alia: peace agreements; demobilisation or reintegration of ex-combatants; and re-equipment, or restructuring of armed forces or other armed state bodies.
2. State Parties shall pursuant to paragraph 1 of the article consider: encouraging full participation for, and implementation of the collection, safe-storage, destruction or responsible disposal of firearms as part of the implementation of peace agreements; establishing and implementing guidelines and procedures for ensuring that firearms, ammunition and other related materials rendered surplus, redundant or obsolete through the re-equipment or re-organisation of armed forces or other state bodies are securely stored, destroyed or disposed of in a way that prevents them entering

the illegal firearm market or flowing into regions in conflict or any other destination that is not fully consistent with agreed criteria for restraint; and destroying surplus, redundant or obsolete state-owned firearms, ammunition or other related material.

Both South Africa and Lesotho have framed their destruction programmes around the commitments of the United Nations, the AU and SADC. This becomes an indicator of the role that normative or treaty requirements have on countries on small arms issues. South Africa has incorporated many of the elements contained in the Protocol in the country's Firearms Control Act that regulates the civilian possession of firearms.

CHAPTER 2

SOUTH AFRICA'S APPROACH TO SMALL ARMS

South Africa, as a major African arms producer has shown remarkable sensitivity to small arms proliferation in the region. The White Paper on Defence announced that "South Africa is committed to the international goals of arms control and disarmament... it shall participate in, and seek to strengthen, international and regional efforts to contain and prevent the proliferation of small arms, conventional armaments and weapons of mass destruction."²⁷

As such, South Africa has publicly added its voice to international concerns about small arms proliferation and is increasingly aware of the need to take definite and progressive steps to curb the international proliferation.

In the area of small arms, South Africa has been an active participant in the two United Nations expert groups on small arms, in developing the agenda of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its implementation, as well as in other expert panels, such as the ones on ammunition and explosives, and marking and tracing. Thus, when the United Nations report on small arms of 1997 recommended that states should exercise restraint in the transfer of surplus small arms manufactured solely for the possession and use of militaries and police forces, as well as all consider the possibility of destroying such surplus weapons,²⁸ the National Conventional Arms Control Committee took the decision to dispose of all state-held redundant, obsolete, unserviceable and confiscated semi-automatic and automatic weapons of a calibre smaller than 12.7 millimetres by destruction. This decision subsequently was ratified by the South African Cabinet and has since been official South African policy.²⁹

South Africa's policy on small arms further evolved when in July 1999, it announced its intention to destroy 262,667 "redundant, obsolete,

unserviceable and confiscated semi-automatic and automatic weapons of a calibre smaller than 12.7mm” rather than sell or export them.³⁰ In November 1999, at the time of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Durban, Deputy Defence Minister, Nosizwe Madlala Routledge called on Commonwealth countries to act responsibly in the trade of small arms and pledged that South Africa would continue to destroy seized illegal weapons and surplus small arms.³¹ In relation to small arms and light weapons, the South African government, and in particular the Department of Defence and Police Service, has publicly expressed concern about the impact of small arms on civil-societies in Southern Africa and their devastating effect in the region and sub-region on socio-economic development and reconstruction. South Africa is further cognizant that the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons relates closely to incidents of internal conflict and high levels of crime and violence. South Africa has also expressed its belief that addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be viewed from an inclusive perspective of arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peace-building, conflict prevention and socio-economic development. Through the co-ordination of these approaches, a holistic strategy should be developed that will assess and identify priorities and determine achievable steps to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The decision by the NCACC in 1999 represented a significant change from its original policy. On announcing the decision on destruction in February 1999, the chairman of the NCACC, Dr Kader Asmal, said “all surplus small arms owned by government and its various departments would be destroyed in the future rather than sold by tender as before, after Cabinet ministers serving on the NCACC expressed grave concern about the proliferation of small arms, which they said was having a devastating effect on the socio-economic development and reconstruction of civil society in Southern Africa”.³²

However, the decision fitted with South Africa’s adoption of a four-prong approach to dealing with conventional weapons, including small arms. The four elements that were identified for action were:

- tighter controls over legally owned firearms;
- preventing the possession and transfer of illicit weapons;
- strengthening of arms control mechanisms;

- tighter control over and destruction of surplus state-owned weapons.³³

Each of these areas has been subject to various responses, including the drafting of a new Firearms Control Act (adopted in 2000), support to the Mozambican police service for the identification and destruction of arms caches (Operation Rachel), new legislation on the arms trade, including the National Conventional Arms Control Act (2002) and the decision to destroy surplus state-owned weapons in the possession of both the SANDF and the SAPS.

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO WEAPONS DESTRUCTION

In August 1997, the SANDF announced that it would sell off or donate to southern African countries billions of rands worth of battle-proven surplus equipment, including ammunition and a variety of armoured vehicles as a means to “obtain much-needed funding for the SANDF at a time when it is struggling to make ends meet as a result of severe defence budgetary cuts”. This was also described by the Department of Defence as “an inventory clean-up”. The SANDF had for several years been stockpiling major equipment such as tanks, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft weapons systems, and armoured vehicles near Bloemfontein, and ammunition at De Aar and Naboomspruit. The De Aar depot was said to be the largest in the world outside Russia and China.³⁴

This policy was in line with the Department of the Treasury’s guidelines on the disposal of state property, which had to be discarded of “for the advantage of the state”. However, by this time South Africa was taking an increasingly high profile as a responsible arms exporter and concerns were voiced within government that the decision to sell the weapons would go against the spirit of South Africa’s overall position on arms control.

During the same period of time, the South African Police Service applied to the NCACC to resell surplus police small arms. However, at the time of submitting the application, the SAPS presented to the NCACC the possibility of destroying the weapons instead of reselling them. The South African Department of Foreign Affairs (which is represented in the NCACC) supported the principle of destruction. The SAPS then turned to the Treasury Department, requesting that the Treasury regulation on the sale of state assets be amended to permit the destruction of the small arms. The

Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, agreed to the modification and police were given permission to destroy surplus and confiscated firearms.

When ARMSCOR, acting for the Department of Defence, approached the NCACC with its application to sell surplus weapons, the Department of Foreign Affairs suggested that the principle of destruction be implemented as government policy, over the resale of surplus weapons. The Chairman of the NCACC, Dr Kader Asmal, agreed with this idea and suggested that the South African cabinet take a decision on the issue. In 1998, the cabinet published its decision to destroy all surplus small arms below 12.7 millimetres calibre. This was mainly in response to the surplus R1 rifles in the possession of the Department of Defence (199,832 of which were eventually destroyed).

The decision was not supported by all actors. ARMSCOR and the Department of Trade and Industry initially opposed the decision to favour destruction over other disposal methods, in large part because of the loss of revenue from the sale of the weapons. While the destruction of SAPS surplus weapons went ahead, ARMSCOR was given the opportunity to attempt to resell some of the surplus defence stocks, within an agreed timeframe (see Operation Mouflon case study for more detail). When this failed to generate much response, ARMSCOR asked to be permitted to find purchasers for spare parts and components. The NCACC opposed this request and insisted that the weapons be destroyed.

When confronted with the cost of destroying almost 200,000 weapons, the Department of Defence stated that their budget could not support the cost. While this was probably true (although resources were later made available), it also represented reticence within the department about destroying the weaponry. The then-Ambassador of South Africa to the United Nations in Geneva, Mr Jackie Selebi (now National Commissioner of the South African Police Service) indicated that he would be able to find donor countries willing to sponsor the cost of the destruction, thwarting efforts to keep the surplus weapons on the resale market. Norway indicated willingness to support the project and later provided funds to both the SANDF and the SAPS (see Operation Mouflon and SAPS case studies).

The importance of external interest in South Africa's developing position on the destruction of small arms also played a role in shoring political support within the country. In 1999, the United Nations Secretary-

General, Kofi Annan, wrote to President Mbeki, congratulating him on South Africa's decision to destroy surplus small arms. By this time, South Africa was heavily involved in United Nations efforts on small arms, participating in the United Nations Group of Experts on Small Arms and promoting the idea of the first United Nations conference on small arms.

For a country struggling to meet large developmental needs, including housing, health care, education and social services, for the millions of people who had been disenfranchised under apartheid, the decision to forgo income for a political determination of what was right is significant. Although the overall costs of operations in South Africa and Lesotho have not been exorbitant, they have meant the allocation of funds from other line items. Similarly the SAPS's destruction of their surplus weapons and the arms caches in Mozambique has also placed a burden on their budget. Although the costs have been subsidized through donor assistance, and in some instances through the sale of scrap metal, both departments have ultimately shown their political support for the destruction through allocating the funds to make it a reality.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDIES

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE—OPERATION MOUFLON

As early as 1998, the Department of Defence (DoD) had considered the need to destroy surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated small arms in its possession.³⁵ The stocks to be destroyed were mainly surplus R1 rifles that ARMSCOR had earlier tried—unsuccessfully—to sell. However, following the NCACC decision, the DoD decided to include other weapons, such as AK-47s and AKMs and confiscated small calibre weapons up to 12.7 millimetres in the destruction process.

The planning for the operation, named Operation Mouflon, started in late 1998, with the identification of approximately 260,000 weapons earmarked for destruction. At that time, the SANDF was in the process of rationalizing its armaments stock, and the inventorying of weapons that were to be retained, as well as destroyed, was an important element of the stockpile management exercise.

Methods of Destruction

Early on, the main concern of the DoD was to ensure that the destruction programme was carried out in a transparent manner with paramount importance accorded to the safety and security of the process. For this, rigorous standards of verification and accountability were implemented to ensure that no weapons earmarked for destruction could be removed. In addition, it was important to find a cost-effective way of destroying the weapons safely with minimal environmental impact.

Based on these criteria, the DoD identified six possible methods of destruction that were available in South Africa:

KROB cutting: A device that cuts the weapons into pieces. This method was however considered too labour-intensive for the amount of weaponry slated for destruction.

Baling: This method was deemed effective for discarding of light metals but unsuitable for the destruction of weapons.

Press machine: Weapons are stamped at strategic places to render them useless. The method was dismissed since the weapon, as a whole, does not become unusable, as certain parts can be stripped for further use.



Photo 1: South African National Defence Force officials (from left to right Maj Gen T. Durr, Lt Gen T.T. Matanzima and Brig Gen M.P. Zondagh) at Operation Mouflon press conference, 26 May 2001. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

Smelting: Smelting at the local Yskor steel plant was estimated to be able to destroy 600 kilograms of weapons at a time. However, the process would have required that all non-metallic parts be removed prior to smelting and the destruction be scheduled into the company's production schedule, resulting in considerable delays.

Fragmentizer: Weapons are destroyed by cutting and pressing the metal into small parts. A single machine can handle 20 tons of metal per hour and automatically separates metal and non-metal parts. The scrap metal is sold to the contractor for a fixed price per kilogram.

Explosion: Explosives were deemed incompatible with the principles of auditability, verification, transparency and security. Also, once the weapons had been destroyed by an explosive charge, the scrap metal would still need to be collected and disposed of.³⁶

In October 1998, the Plenary Defence Staff Council (PDSC) of the South African Department of Defence approved the recommendation to destroy the small arms with a fragmentizer, based on certain conditions, including:

- the negotiation of open-ended contracts, which would pay the DoD for the scrap metal;
- the income generated by the sale of scrap would be used to offset the costs of the exercise; and
- a communication plan would be drafted to give publicity to the destruction programme.

Ultimately, the DoD approved bids from two South African companies to do the destruction. The first one, a Johannesburg-based company, was used also in the destruction of weapons by the Lesotho Defence Force. The second company was located in Port Elizabeth, closer to the site of the largest stock of weapons, in Grahamstown.

Planning and Implementing Operation Mouflon

The DoD developed a comprehensive plan to orchestrate Operation Mouflon. The operation used two broad phases that stretched from January 1999 to the eventual completion of the destruction in May 2001.

The first phase of Operation Mouflon was the contracting and preparation phase. This included a series of steps:

- contracting;
- tender procedures for destruction of small arms, transportation by road and rail;
- preparation;
- financing;
- communication with media;
- operational security;
- physical safety;

- transport;
- accounting and auditing.



Photo 2: Homemade weapons seized by the South African Police Service and destroyed in July 2002. Photo credit: Institute for Security Studies.

The most serious concerns, in addition to finding adequate resources, were about safeguarding the weapons before the destruction. At a time of escalating gun-crime, planners were rightly concerned that “internal and external” criminal elements could threaten the planning and execution of the operation.³⁷

The second phase of the operation incorporated the execution of the operation, namely:

- the transportation, preparation and counting of 50,000 weapons reserved for possible donation to foreign governments;
- verification of each weapon to be destroyed by military personnel and representatives from the Auditor-General's office;
- reporting back to Chief Logistics on a regular basis about progress; and
- final wrap-up arrangements and auditing on completion of the operation.

Regarding the possible withholding of 50,000 R1 rifles for donation to a foreign government, a time limit was established stipulating that this had to be achieved by 30 June 1999. After that deadline the weapons would be

destroyed with the rest. As no donation was made by the time limit, the rifles were eventually destroyed.

Responsibility for the overall planning and implementation of Operation Mouflon rested with the Chief Logistics, who had to coordinate the operation with the weapons depots. The initial locations were:

Pretoria

- 10 Air Depot
- DoD Main Ordnance Depot

Grahamstown

- 84 Technical Supply Depot (TSD)

Naboomspruit

- DoD Ammunition Sub-depot

The preparation phase of Operation Mouflon involved extensive planning between the three locations and the DoD, with detailed concept of operation documents being drawn up and implementation plans prepared. However, in the early stages of the operation it had not yet been established, where the funding for the operation would come from. Therefore, while all the planning proceeded, it was without a designated start or end date. This made planning for commanders at the three sites complicated, as they were required to factor staffing and equipment requirements while not knowing when personnel and materials would need to be dedicated to implementing Operation Mouflon.

Inventory and Verification

By April 2000, a comprehensive verification plan had been developed to ensure that the weapons earmarked for disposal were destroyed. The verification process for Operation Mouflon was only started once the Norwegian funding commitment (see below) and financial authorization from the DoD had been secured.

During the verification process, every weapon went through the same procedure:

Data capturer: receives weapon serial number from weapon reader and enters it into computer.

Weapons experts: identify specific weapon, separate the breach block from the weapon and place in a container, confirm correct type of weapon, hand weapon to reader 1.

Weapon reader 1: receives weapon from weapons expert, checks that the breach is removed from weapon, reads serial number to data capturer, passes weapon to weapon marker 1.

Weapon marker 1: receives weapon, marks weapon on the hull in red, hands weapon to weapon reader 2.

Weapon reader 2: receives weapon from marker 1, reads serial number to data verifier, hands weapon to weapon marker 2.

Data verifier: confirms bundle number after ten weapon serial numbers,³⁸ makes bundle number available to weapon strappers, supplies print-out of bundle number with weapon serial numbers for filing.

Weapon marker 2: receives weapon from weapon reader 2, marks hull of weapon in yellow after confirmation from data verifier that weapon serial number has been confirmed in the system, passes weapon to weapon strappers.

Weapon strappers: receive weapons from weapon marker 2, ensure that every bundle has ten weapons and that is strapped and tagged, hands bundle to the loading team.

Loading team: receive weapons from weapon strappers, stack weapons and load onto forklifts, load weapons in containers (a maximum of 2,000 weapons were loaded in each container).

Disposal officer: takes receipt of loaded containers, is physically present during off-loading process and destruction of weapons, and certifies the disposal certificate.

Various problems were encountered during the verification process. Some weapons, especially those that had been confiscated, had no serial number and had to be issued a temporary serial number that was tagged on the weapon and then entered into the computer system. Also, especially in the case of foreign firearms, such as the AK-47s, many weapons had duplicate serial numbers. This meant that the duplicates had to be marked as duplicates and inventoried with their serial number and duplicate tag (e.g. serial number plus dup1 or dup2 if more than one duplicate was found). While not complicated, these deviations from standard practice did result in delays in the verification process.

By the end of the verification process, the total number of weapons earmarked for destruction at the three sites was 271,867.



Photo 3: Assorted assault rifles bundled as part of the verification process. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

Table 1: Location of SANDF small arms³⁹

	Grahamstown	Pretoria	Naboomspruit	Total
Quantity	196,700	17,694	56,473	271,867

Table 2: Small arms destroyed in Operation Mouflon⁴⁰

Description	Final number	Estimate
7.62 R1 rifle	198,506	198,506
7.62 R1 rifle (paratrooper)	1,326	1,326
7.62 M1 rifle	3,708	3,708
7.62 R1 heavy barrel	2,914	2,914
Bren light machine-gun	3,637	3,637
Vickers machine-gun	2,256	2,256
R2 rifle	12,237	12,237
Uzi submachine-gun	1,259	1,259
12.7 Browning	412	412
AK-47	Not listed	6,000
PPSH submachine gun	Not listed	1,200
AKM	Not listed	2,000
Other small calibre weapons (confiscated)	36,412	36,412
Total	262,667	271,867

Timelines

From the initial authorization by the PDSC in October 1998 through to the completion of the destruction in May 2001, more than 30 months passed. During this time, much of the planning was taking place while final authorization for financing was being processed, transportation details negotiated and preparations made at the three verification sites.

However, from 12 February 2000, when the financial agreement between Norway and South Africa was signed to the destruction of the final weapons in Port Elizabeth, the process speeded up.

By May 2000, the contracts had been signed with the two scrap metal companies and the verification planning processes was being implemented. The first verification process ran at Naboomspruit in June 2000. The process

was completed and the weapons were moved to Johannesburg, where they were destroyed between 1 to 6 July 2000.



Photo 4: Lt Gen G Ramano symbolically destroying the first weapon at the start of Operation Mouflon. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

This was quickly followed by the verification process at the Main Ordnance Depot in Pretoria, whose weapons were destroyed from 22 to 29 July 2000.

Although transported by both road and rail, these two processes ran smoothly and resulted in the destruction of 287,000 kilograms of weapons from Naboomspruit and 232,000 kilograms from Pretoria. These weights became the basis upon which the contractor made payment to the Department of Defence for the scrap metal.

The process in Grahamstown took longer due to several factors. Firstly, the quantity of weapons was much greater than in Pretoria or Naboomspruit. This meant that the process of verification simply took longer and was more subject to delays due to equipment breaking down or personnel not being available.⁴¹ Moreover, since the number of weapons for destruction was greater, the number of containers that had to be secured was larger and the transportation arrangements more complicated. The more complicated logistics meant that the shipments for destruction had to be spaced out over several months, which had a bearing on the overall cost of the exercise. A severe constraint for the destruction of the Grahamstown weapons was that the contractor in Port Elizabeth could only make its fragmentizer available on Saturdays.⁴²

Finally, locating and verifying the huge quantities of weapons in Grahamstown delayed the operation. Each weapon had to be listed for

disposal (on disposal boards), located, verified and bundled. A large number of duplicate serial numbers and weapons lacking any clear marking slowed the process, as did locating the storage bins for some weapons cleared for disposal. At one stage, 187,326 weapons could not be located.⁴³ However, it is important to remember that this operation was occurring at a time when the SANDF was improving its overall stockpile management, and many of these problems would have been subsequently resolved.

However, by 31 July 2000, a trial run was completed at the scrap company in Port Elizabeth during which spares were destroyed. The full verification process started on 28 August 2000 with the first shipment for destruction arriving in Port Elizabeth on 30 September 2000. The initial duration for the destruction from Grahamstown was 32 weeks, with seven containers being destroyed a week. This would have taken the process to April 2001, which had implications for the planned closing of the TSD at Grahamstown, to be completed by 31 March 2001.⁴⁴

By September 2000, the 84 TSD delays had been largely resolved, and by the end of the month, a total 349,656 kilograms of weapons and spares had been destroyed.⁴⁵ An additional 12,560 weapons and 115,818 tons of spares (totalling 164,802 tons) were destroyed on 14 October 2000.⁴⁶ Further destructions were planned for 18 November 2000 and January 2001, with the destruction process completed by 26 May 2001 and the administrative details expected to be completed by March 2003.⁴⁷

Table 3: Estimated quantity of weapons destroyed (kilograms)

	Grahamstown	Pretoria	Naboomspruit	Total
Quantity	866,000	232,000	287,000	1,385,000

Funding and Costs

The budgeted cost for Operation Mouflon was R 1.9 million (US\$ 190,000). Of this, the majority was spent on transportation costs to the destruction site and allowances for SANDF personnel travelling with the operation. The Department of Defence Chief of Finance approved a total budget of R 1.98 million (US\$ 198,000) in May 2000.

The budget included:

Media and communication expenses	R 15,000	US\$ 1,500
Rail freight	R 539,120	US\$ 53,912
S&T	R 970,095	US\$ 97,010
Communication equipment	R 27,000	US\$ 2,700
Primary and rechargeable batteries	R 9,423	US\$ 942
Rations	R 72,732	US\$ 7,273
Petrol, oil and lubricants	R 217,387	US\$ 21,739
Cranes and trenching equipment	R 40,000	US\$ 4,000
Computer service—development	R 22,596	US\$ 2,260
Computer service—operation	R 16,000	US\$ 1,600
Computer service—hardware maintenance	R 10,000	US\$ 1,000
Total	R 1,939,353	US\$ 193,936

The government of Norway made a significant contribution to Operation Mouflon, providing R 403,000 (520,000 Norwegian krone or US\$ 40,300).⁴⁸ The support from Norway was identified as “a clear indication of the Norwegian Government’s commitment to the Southern African region”.⁴⁹ The Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell Magne Bondevik, signed “An Arrangement Concerning Norwegian Support for the Destruction of Surplus and Redundant Small Arms of the SA National Defence Force” at a ceremony in February 2000.⁵⁰

Although additional funding was originally sought for Operation Mouflon from the United States, the US could not support the operation because the US Department of Defense opposed the destruction of serviceable weapons, which they believed could be used for African peacekeeping efforts (e.g. the Africa Crisis Response Initiative that the US government was seeking support for at the time). When the US Embassy supported Operation Qeto in Lesotho (see next case study), the Lesotho Defence Forces had to state that the weapons to be destroyed were unserviceable.

In addition, the South African DoD estimated that it would recover R 450,000 (US\$ 45,000) from the sale of the scrap metal to the contractors. The remainder of the costs, approximately US\$ 113,000, were allocated from the Department of Defence's budget for the 2000 fiscal year.



Photo 5: Lt. General G Ramano, Chief of South African Army. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

Publicity

One of the conditions imposed by the PDSC for the implementation of the weapons destruction was that the DoD establish an effective communications plan to generate public awareness about Operation Mouflon.

In October 1999, the advocacy organization Gun-free South Africa approached the Minister of Defence to request a symbolic weapons destruction event during the 1999 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Durban, South Africa. The Minister and his counterparts in the ministries of foreign affairs and safety and security endorsed the suggestion and a small "bonfire" of confiscated weapons was

conducted in November 1999. The Deputy Minister of Defence and the then Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, were the keynote speakers and the event generated positive media coverage for South Africa's policies on the destruction of weapons.



Photo 6: Bundled weapons at destruction site as part of Operation Mouflon. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

Balancing the need to maintain a secure operation against building public interest in the process meant that controls had to be placed on the amount and type of information made public. However, representatives from the media and dignitaries were present at a symbolic destruction on 6 June 2000 and periodic updates on progress were subsequently sent to the press.

Lessons from Mouflon

As a first effort by the South African DoD to destroy small arms on such a large scale, the generally smooth implementation of Operation Mouflon is a credit to the professionalism of the armed forces and the large amount of support generated for the operation. Although not the focus of this case study, the political determination that resulted in the critical decision by the NCACC to reverse its earlier position on the sale of surplus weapons was the

positive start from which the success of the operation grew. The Secretary-General of the United Nations wrote to President Mbeki in 1999 applauding South Africa for spearheading efforts to destroy surplus small arms.



Photo 7: Bundled weapons in grapple prior to destruction. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

The sheer scale of the operation was daunting. Although 260,000 weapons may not sound like much, the sight of their equivalent, 130 shipping containers, or the equivalent weight of three fully laden 747 aircraft puts the operation in perspective. However, it must also be remembered that militaries around the world are trained for precisely this type of operation—not, perhaps, the destruction of weapons, but the ability to move large amounts of material and people across long distances in a smooth and coordinated way.

The planning for Operation Mouflon dated back to 1998 and at the stage of implementation in mid-2000 the plans of two years earlier were still accurate and provided the basis for the operation. These plans were later used in 2001 as the basis of technical assistance to the Lesotho Defence Force in the destruction of their excess and obsolete stocks (see next case study).



Photo 8: The remains of the weapons destroyed as part of Operation Mouflon after being processed through the shredding machine. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

However, a few problems did plague Operation Mouflon. These ranged from mechanical (equipment breaking) to procedural. The most significant breach of procedure occurred in Grahamstown where for a period of time accurate documentation was not being kept and the DoD realized that it lacked proof from 84 TSD that weapons were properly sealed at their arrival at the destruction site, that all the containers arrived at the destruction site, and that all the firearms listed on the schedule of bundle numbers were destroyed.⁵¹

The most complicated element of the operation was arranging the road and rail transport of the weapons from their inventory bases to the destruction sites. The size and weight of the weapons meant that these were the only two viable options for transport and the decision to use contractors in Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg was driven by the cost-per-running-kilometre of transporting the weapons to the destruction site.

The DoD also spent considerable effort in verifying and auditing the entire destruction process. This was done to ensure that the destruction of each weapon, spare part and accessory could be certified. This process was personnel-intensive, and as was seen in Grahamstown, the lack of adequate

personnel sometimes delayed the process. In addition, personnel had to be available to escort the containers to the destruction site and guard it during the destruction process. This all resulted in significant increases in costs for travel allowances, accommodation and meals.

In addition, the level of security during the loading, transport and destruction of the weapons meant that various personnel within the DoD had to be called upon. This included intelligence, joint operations, finance, protection and others, in addition to the central role played by logistics.

OPERATION QETO: DESTROYING EXCESS AND REDUNDANT SMALL ARMS IN LESOTHO

Lesotho is a mountainous kingdom encircled by South Africa. She received independence in 1966, having previously been a colony of Great Britain. Since then, Lesotho has suffered a series of attempted and completed coups and was also the focus of aggression by apartheid South Africa, which was seeking South African exiles in Lesotho. By the time of the 1998 elections, there were wide divisions among political parties in the country, which were exacerbated by claims of polling fraud. This caused civil unrest and criminal behaviour resulting in an apparent coup by junior officers within the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF).

In response, the Southern African Development Community sent a task force to the country at the request of the government, to help restore tranquillity. South African and Botswana troops were used to gain control and disarm the LDF troops contributing to the unrest but the capital city, Maseru, was badly looted. A SADC team from South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe remained in Lesotho until 1999, latterly assisting in training the LDF.

The SADC intervention led to the development of an Agreement on Defence Issues between the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of South Africa and Botswana. This agreement, although it has never been signed by South Africa, has become a framework for cooperation between the three countries and was the first instrument used by the government of Lesotho to request the assistance of South Africa in the destruction of excess and redundant small arms. On 6 November 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

in Lesotho sent a *note verbale* to South Africa requesting assistance to “check and advise on destruction of firearms”.⁵² This was followed with a second request in January 2001 during the South Africa-Lesotho Senior Officials’ Meeting for technical assistance with weapons destruction. These weapons were unserviceable or non-standard weapons that Lesotho had collected since the 1998 SADC intervention and presented a clear opportunity to give practical effect to the SADC declaration on small arms of June 2000.⁵³



Photo 9: Operation Qeto: Centrifugal and electromagnetic machine that separates ferrous and non-ferrous or non-metallic scrap. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

The request by Lesotho was discussed during a South African Department of Defence Logistics Staff Council meeting in February 2001. The meeting responded positively to the request of Lesotho but was firm in suggesting that involvement be limited to the South African National Defence Force Logistics Formation assisting the LDF with the planning of the weapons destruction to enable it to manage and execute the destruction by themselves.

At this stage, the South African government send a *note verbale* to Lesotho requesting additional information on the types, quantities and

location of weapons involved so that they could come back with a considered response.

During the same period, South Africa and Lesotho were building stronger cooperation ties that resulted in April 2001, in the establishment of a Joint Bilateral Commission for Cooperation Agreement. The purpose of this agreement is to develop a strategic partnership that will assist Lesotho to move from least developed country status within a five-year period. There are eleven core areas of cooperation between the two countries, grouped in clusters on stability, economic, social and good governance issues.

During the 19 April 2001 meeting between South African president, Thabo Mbeki, and the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisili, the issue of South Africa's assistance to destroy the weapons was raised again. At this time, President Mbeki gave a critical political endorsement of the suggestion, which led to its planning and eventual execution in November 2001.

At this early stage, two proposals were suggested. The first was a model that would follow that of Operation Mouflon in South Africa with the cooperation of the SANDF where the weapons would be transported to a secure site for destruction. The second option put forward was to consider using a model similar to Operation Rachel in Mozambique that would have the SAPS provide technical assistance to destroy the arms *in situ*.

Ultimately the decision was taken to continue to foster cooperation between the two defence forces and for the SANDF to provide assistance to the LDF. This decision was apparently driven by the fact that the South African DoD had already considered what its support to the operation could be, as well as the fact that the weapons were eventually collected at a single site in Maseru, allowing them to be easily inventoried and secured for transport to South Africa. Another powerful consideration was the fact that the United States was prepared to support the weapons destruction with a donation of US\$ 15,000, provided that the weapons were unserviceable and not fit for use.

By 4 June 2001, the Plenary Defence Staff Council, chaired by the chief of the SANDF, Gen S. Nyanda, approved a phased approach to assist the LDF with the destruction of excess and redundant weapons, and

ministerial approval to this was granted on 13 August 2001. In October, a team of eight people from the SANDF travelled to Lesotho to assess the situation and provide assistance to the LDF with planning for the destruction of 3,843 small arms and light weapons (see Table 4). An inventory of all the weapons, with serial numbers, was supplied to the SANDF in June 2001 by the Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, who confirmed that the weapons were in a single location and were not serviceable.



Photo 10: Operation Qeto: Lesotho Military Police officer observing the separated non-ferrous scrape. Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

The planning and implementation of the Lesotho weapons destruction—codenamed Operation Qeto by the LDF and Operation Sardien by the SANDF, followed closely the model developed by the SANDF for Operation Mouflon in South Africa. The key difference in the Lesotho case was that the responsibility for implementing the operation always rested with the LDF. South Africa repeatedly emphasized that Operation Qeto must be led by the LDF with the assistance of South Africa and not be seen as South Africa stepping in to destroy Lesotho's weapons.

As with Operation Mouflon, Operation Qeto followed a six-phase approach. During the planning visit in October, a plan for the entire operation was developed and approved by the Commander of the LDF. This plan set out in precise detail the phases of the operation and the individual steps that would be followed.

Table 4: Weapons inventoried for destruction

Assorted Rifles and Shotguns	
0.22	62
.303 rifles	41
AK-47	3,108
Commando weapons	6
Pump action shotguns	52
7.65 rifles	179
Galiel rifles	2
Self-loading rifles	3
G3 rifles	1
Sub-total	3,454
Mortars	
60mm	31
81mm	13
Sub-total	44
Revolvers and pistols	
.38 special revolvers	241
9mm pistols	79
Sub-total	320
Assorted spares	
Barrels	23
Shotgun triggers	2
Sub-total	26
Total items	3,844

The paramount concerns were identified as:

- ensuring the integrity of the storage site in Maseru between the time of the collection of the weapons at a central site and the inventorying and storage phase;
- ensuring that the weapons inventory was accurate;
- ensuring that no weapons inventoried for destruction would resurface;
- ensuring the physical security of the weapons as they were prepared for transport and moved by road from Lesotho to the eastern edge of Johannesburg (a distance of approximately 400 km) for destruction.

The six phases of Operation Qeto were identified as follows:

Phase One: Pre-Administration

Apply for permits and negotiate contracts with transport companies and the scrap metal company in Johannesburg.

Phase Two: Verification, Accounting and Storage

Weapons checked, accounted for, verified and packed at Makoanyane Base in Maseru (4 days scheduled).

Phase Three: Operational Movement

Weapons stored in containers and moved by road to the scrap metal company under escort by LDF and SANDF members (1 day scheduled).

Phase Four: Destruction of Weapons

Destruction of weapons using a fragmentation and cutting process (1 day scheduled).

Phase Five: Post-Destruction

Return of SANDF and LDF forces to home bases and completion of reports.

Phase Six: Reconciliation

Costs reconciled and submitted to the US Embassy for payment.
De-brief on operation.

For each of the phases, responsibility for implementation was allocated to SANDF and LDF representatives, with LDF officers generally responsible for implementation with assistance from the SANDF officials. For those

portions of the operation that took place in South Africa (e.g. the transport of the weapons, import certification and storage while in South Africa prior to destruction), the SANDF clearly assisted the LDF to the greatest degree possible and took responsibility, for example, in obtaining the import certificate from the NCACC, while the LDF received the necessary export permits from Lesotho.



Photo 11: Operation Qeto: South African and Lesotho security personnel observing separated ferrous scrape.
Photo credit: South African Department of Defence.

Because the decision was taken to destroy the weapons in South Africa (Lesotho lacked a scrap metal facility that could be used) several obstacles faced Operation Qeto that had not been not relevant to Operation Mouflon.

The first of these was getting authorization by the South African NCACC to import the Lesotho weapons into South Africa for destruction. The capacity to meet certain conditions, including providing a certified list of the weapons to be destroyed with the serial numbers (or equivalent marking where no serial numbers were available), having border and civilian police present at the sealing of the containers, safeguarding the weapons and providing a certificate of destruction to the NCACC meant

that the NCACC was able to issue a permit for the import of the weapons into South Africa within a week (considerably less than the average six-week approval process).

The second challenge was the transport of the weapons from Lesotho to Johannesburg by road. To reduce complications, a joint team of SANDF and LDF forces escorted the weapons from Maseru Bridge border post to Johannesburg. Once at the destruction site, it was estimated that the weapons would have to remain overnight under guard before the destruction took place. As will be seen, the best planning failed to consider other problems, and the actual destruction was delayed by two weeks, during which time the weapons were stored at the Main Ordnance Depot in Pretoria. The delay was caused by breakdown of equipment at the scrap company, meaning that the machinery could not be used to destroy the weapons on the designated day (2 November 2001).

On 1 November the process of inventorying, tagging and packing the weapons was complete and the weapons were moved by road to South Africa. When it was realized that the scrap metal company could not process the destruction on the following day, the weapons were driven to Pretoria and stored until the destruction took place on 16 November 2001.

A communication plan had been developed by the LDF and SANDF to ensure that the destruction of the weapons was done transparently. A small symbolic destruction took place, overseen by Lesotho's High Commissioner to South Africa, Mr Mosuo Moteane, and the then Deputy Director General of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Welile Nhlapo of South Africa. A press conference was held and media coverage resulted in Lesotho and South Africa, although it was noted that for both countries, the media needed to be encouraged to attend and cover the destruction event.

All the weapons of less than 12.7 millimetres were destroyed by fragmentation, while so-called support arms (e.g. mortars) were cut up with oxy-acetylene torches. The entire destruction process took forty minutes, and 10,800 kilograms of weapons were destroyed. After the weapons were destroyed, the company presented the LDF with a printout of the weight of the destroyed items, which became the baseline for payment of the scrap metal obtained. The total amount paid came to R 1,512 (US\$ 150). The final number of weapons and components destroyed totalled 4,240,

including components not captured in the initial estimate of 3,843 weapons for destruction.

Additional costs for the operation for both South Africa and Lesotho were subsidized through a US\$15,000 grant from the US Embassy. This funding came from the US Department of State's Small Arms and Light Weapons Destruction Programme.



Photo 12: Weapons destroyed by the South African Police Service after the shredding process. Photo credit: Institute for Security Studies.

The collaboration between South Africa and Lesotho in the destruction of Lesotho's excess and redundant weapons is the first of its kind in Southern Africa. Based on a partnership with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the LDF and the SANDF were able to work together towards a mutual objective. Certain key principles clearly emerge from the success of Operation Qeto:

The first is ownership. From the outset, it was clear that the drive for this initiative came from the government of Lesotho. The request to South Africa for technical assistance was seen as part of the emerging cooperation framework between the two countries, which has the larger goal of removing Lesotho from its least developed country status. All the operational documents were signed either solely by a representative of the LDF or co-signed with a SANDF counterpart, including the contracts

between the US Embassy and the government of Lesotho and the scrap metal company. While the reality is that South Africa, with its larger military and greater experience could have simply completed the weapons destruction for Lesotho, this was never put forward as an option.

The second key principle that emerges is on the issue of accountability. Throughout the process, each stage had a clearly identified person or group of people who were responsible for ensuring the successful completion of that phase. This precise allocation of responsibility was important because it discouraged any flagrant oversights during the operation. As with Operation Mouflon, it was extremely important to both the LDF and the SANDF that no weapon inventoried as part of Operation Qeto would ever be found in a usable condition. If that were to happen, trust in the respective defence forces would be compromised and possible future destruction programmes would be jeopardised.

Thirdly, Operation Qeto was conducted in a transparent manner, initially between the governments of Lesotho and South Africa and, once the weapons were secured, with respect to the general public. For Lesotho, this represented an important closing of a destructive period in its recent history since many of the weapons destroyed dated back to the 1998 uprising. For South Africa it was an opportunity to reaffirm its determination to implement measures to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the SADC region and its commitments made to the African Union and the United Nations.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

The SAPS was the first government department in the world to develop a policy of destruction for redundant, obsolete, seized or any other firearms that could not be classified as standard (including homemade weapons). It began destroying weapons in 1999. Although implemented separately, there is a strong commonality between the approaches used in Operations Mouflon and Qeto and those adopted by the SAPS. The policy of destroying these weapons, rather than selling them on the second-hand market, has been in recognition of the devastating impact that small arms/firearms are having on South African society. In 2000, the Minister for Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, approved the Ministerial Policy on Firearms Control, which made the existing practice of weapons destruction SAPS

policy and led to an increase in the frequency and size of weapons destruction efforts.

The SAPS have instituted a five-pillar approach to managing firearms in the country, a Firearms Programme, as part of its strategy to manage firearms in the country. The first pillar focuses on firearm-related regulators, including the Firearms Control Act of 2000 (which currently only has two provisions in force) and the Southern African Development Community Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials. The second pillar is called “The Development and Maintenance of Effective Control Processes and Procedures for Firearms” and incorporates the implementation of the Firearms Control Act, including a new Firearms Control System that will manage the processes of firearms from acquisition to export or destruction.⁵⁴ Currently the SAPS are conducting an audit of all firearms under the control of government departments to reconcile records and identify obsolete or redundant firearms that can be destroyed.

Pillar three of the Firearms Programme focuses on the reduction and eradication of the illegal pool and criminal use of firearms. This pillar focuses on the criminal side of firearm possession and includes illicit trafficking, organized crime, cross-border efforts and other measures. The fourth pillar focuses on the prevention of crime and violence through awareness raising and social crime prevention partnerships. South Africa has initiated a series of pilot Firearms Free Zones in schools, with plans to expand these to taverns and other public areas.

The fifth, and newest pillar, is entitled Regional Firearms Interventions. Its intent is to ensure coordinated planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of firearm initiatives aimed at reducing the proliferation of firearms for use in crime and violence in the Southern African region by:

- Managing all regional policy implementation on firearms (e.g. the SADC Firearms Protocol) and operational interventions;
- Managing regional requests for assistance by countries or agencies in Southern Africa, where the SAPS is the initiating or implementing agency.

Through this fifth pillar, the SAPS will be involved in policy issues such as the SADC Protocol and the United Nations Programme of Action, as well

as operational matters such as cooperation with Mozambique through Operation Rachel or cross border firearm operations.

Table 5: SAPS Firearm Programme⁵⁵

Pillar 1	Development and maintenance of appropriate firearm-related regulators
Pillar 2	Development and maintenance of effective control processes and procedures for firearms
Pillar 3	Reduction and eradication of the illegal pool and criminal use of firearms
Pillar 4	Prevention of crime and violence through awareness raising and social crime prevention partnership
Pillar 5	Regional firearm interventions

In terms of its policy on the destruction of firearms, the SAPS are clear that the priority is equally on the destruction of obsolete and redundant arms as it is on illegal or confiscated weapons. For example, at a weapons destruction in August 2001, more obsolete/redundant weapons were destroyed than seized weapons.

The current SAPS is the result of the amalgamation of eleven police agencies into one service since 1994. In addition to the South African Police (as it was known before 1994), the SAPS incorporated the homeland police agencies. The process of transformation that has followed has seen the police move from being feared and reviled to being perceived as important partners in building the new non-racial and democratic South Africa.

However, the legacy of South Africa's past is not completely removed for the SAPS. South Africa has suffered a surge in crime and specifically in gun-related crime. This surge has certainly been compounded by the availability of weapons in the country: in the licensed possession of civilians, in the illegal pool of criminal activity, owned by the state and the security forces and produced as part of South Africa's arms industry. An audit of state-owned firearms being conducted by the SAPS has found that 173 national and provincial state institutions participating in the audit had a total of 1,106,754 firearms under their control. An additional 856 local

government departments are currently being audited, which will probably increase the total.

As part of its standardization policy, the SAPS are removing weapons from their stores that are redundant (e.g. surplus to requirements) or obsolete (no longer in service).

Prior to the adoption of the Ministerial Policy on Firearms Control, the SAPS undertook the decision to destroy firearms based on the findings and recommendations of the Goldstone Commission (the Goldstone Commission was set up, in part, to hear evidence on ways of curbing the illegal import of automatic weapons and their use in political violence).⁵⁶ For the purposes of the police, weapons that are destroyed fall into four categories:

- redundant;
- obsolete;
- seized/forfeited;
- non-standard for use by the SAPS.

The SAPS is implementing a firearm standardization plan. According to the National Police Commissioner's Office, "firearms which are not classified as standard firearms for use by the Service [SAPS] will be destroyed. Functional members only use specified firearms and special units are issued with special firearms, according to their fields of work".⁵⁷ Since 1999, more than 45,000 redundant state firearms (totalling 20 tons) have been destroyed with nine tons of obsolete/outdated ammunition.⁵⁸ The two main reasons given by the police for the standardization process are to ensure more effective training of members in the use of firearms (by limiting the number they need to be trained to use) therefore reducing the risk of accidents and to make the maintenance of firearms more cost-effective. Often fully operational firearms are destroyed rather than being sold either on South Africa's domestic market or to other countries.

In October 1997, the police destroyed 20 tons of firearms by melting them down. This included 4,504 seized or confiscated firearms, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns and homemade weapons. The commercial value of the firearms destroyed was estimated at R 2 million (US\$ 200,000). This destruction was seen as evidence of the seriousness with which both the government and the police regarded the problem of

firearms, and their intention to gain control over both illegal and legal firearms in South Africa. "The circulation of illegal firearms, and the high number of violent crimes involving the use of firearms, forced the SAPS to focus strategically on firearms within South Africa... and to eliminate the number of firearms in circulation."⁵⁹

Between 1999 and 2000, SAPS destroyed nearly 22,000 confiscated firearms, totalling 10 tons, in addition to 11 tons of confiscated ammunition and the obsolete/redundant state firearms noted above (see Table 6).⁶⁰ In July 2001, the SAPS destroyed more than 13,000 small arms, including surplus, obsolete and confiscated weapons worth more than R 7.5 million (US\$ 750,000). The event took place to mark a global Small Arms Destruction Day designed to coincide with the opening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects that was being held in New York. By the end of 2001, the SAPS had destroyed 30,023 weapons with a total value of R 16.8 million (US\$ 1.6 million) (see Table 7).

Table 6: Firearms destroyed by the SAPS in 1999/2000 financial year⁶¹

Redundant/obsolete official firearms	Quantity	Value in R	Value in US\$
Pistols	38	66,469.54	6,646.95
Rifles	3,263	3,314,764.10	331,476.40
Shotguns	25	30,623.70	3,062.37
Submachine-guns	4	240	24
Machine-guns	2	6,000	600
Revolvers	14	10,541.34	1,054.13
Sub-total	3,346	3,428,638.68	342,863.85
Forfeited firearms			
Pistols	196	107,800	10,780
Revolvers & pistols	5,744	3,026,300	302,630
Rifles	2,641	1,343,150	134,315
Shotguns	489	2,497,050	249,705
Sub-total	9,070	6,974,300	697,430
Total	12,416	10,402,938.68	1,040,293.85

By the end of 2001, the destruction of weapons had become a regular function of the Logistics Division of the SAPS. As weapons are received for destruction they are tagged and stored until a sufficient number are available to make the destruction process worthwhile (see subsequent Chapter on costs).

In 2002, the SAPS continued its destruction of redundant, obsolete and confiscated firearms. By September 2002, three destruction sessions had been completed, destroying a total of 33,474 firearms and equipment (see Table 8).

Table 7: Firearms destroyed by the SAPS in 2001

Redundant/obsolete official firearms	Quantity	Value in ZAR	Value in US\$
Pistols	4,463	5,167,044	516,704
Rifles	6,946	7,241,729	724,173
Shotguns	1,518	1,854,645	185,465
Submachine-guns/Machine-guns	745	132,586	13,259
Revolvers	133	68,038	6,804
Equipment	12,889	289,902	28,990
Launchers	1	775	77.5
Sub-total	26,695	14,754,722	1,475,472.5
Confiscated firearms			
Firearms and equipment	910	601,496	60,150
Revolvers & pistols	2,291	1,374,644	137,464
Rifles	127	76,203	7,620
Sub-total	3,328	2,052,344	205,234
Total	30,023	16,807,067	16,80,706.5

Table 8: Firearms destroyed by the SAPS January-August 2002⁶²

Redundant/obsolete official firearms	Quantity
Pistols	3,881
Rifles	4,683
Shotguns	1,775
Submachine-guns/Machine-guns	436
Revolvers	76
Equipment	13,351
Launchers	1
Sub-total	24,202
Confiscated firearms	
Firearms and equipment	9,271
Sub-total	9,271
Total	33,473

Destruction Process

The SAPS initially destroyed the firearms and equipment by melting but this was abandoned for the more cost efficient method of “shredding” or “fragmentising” the weapons and equipment at a scrap metal company in Johannesburg (the same company later used by the South African National Defence Force for the destruction of their surplus and obsolete weapons). The company is a commercial scrap yard that shreds old cars, equipment and any metal on a payment-per ton basis.

The Logistics Division under the supervision of the Divisional Commissioner runs the destruction process for the SAPS. Once the weapons are collected at a central location (normally at police headquarters in Pretoria), a five-stage process for destruction is implemented:

1. Draw up the disposal schedule:

- Removing firearms for destruction from storage;
- Inventorying the weapons and placing them in locked containers;

- Printing a computerized disposal schedule (which lists the serial numbers/markings of the weapons to be destroyed).

2. Check the disposal schedule:

- Unlocking the containers;
- Verifying the serial numbers/markings on the firearms against the disposal schedule;
- Rendering the firearms safe (checking that they are unloaded, etc.);
- Sealing the containers.

3. Confirm disposal schedule:

- Disposal schedule is approved and confirmed within SAPS.

4. Transport:

- Escorting the sealed containers to the company performing the destruction. The Logistics Division, with the cooperation of the Special Task Force and Radio Control, is responsible for the safe transportation of the firearms.

5. Destruction/disposal:

- Upon arrival at the destruction company, SAPS members break the seals on the containers. Destruction of firearms begins. SAPS personnel remain on the premises during the entire destruction process and check the shredded material to ensure that no fragments are in a functional or repairable condition (if any are, they are put back through the shredding machine).

The SAPS have a contract with the Johannesburg company to destroy the firearms on a regular basis. A suitable time is agreed between the company and the SAPS to ensure that the weapons are destroyed quickly on arrival. The SAPS secure the boundaries of the company's premises and supervise the entire destruction process. The SAPS is paid for the scrap metal based on tonnage at the end of the destruction process and does not pay the contractor any money for destroying the weapons.

In July 2001, Norway signed an agreement with the SAPS for the destruction of 85,000 handguns and the destruction of nearly 9 million rounds of ammunition. The agreement was signed by the Norwegian ambassador to South Africa, Per Grimstad, and South African National

Police Commissioner, Jackie Selebi to mark the United Nations-declared World Small Arms Destruction Day. According to the agreement, 11,057 confiscated firearms valued at R 4 million (US\$ 400,000) and 713,814 official firearms valued at R 25 million (US\$ 2.5 million) were to have been destroyed. More than 8,265,000 rounds of confiscated ammunition and official ammunition valued at R 10.5 million (US\$ 1 million) were also to be destroyed.⁶³

Transparency is an important part of the destruction process. While for security reasons, future dates of destruction projects are not announced, the SAPS does invite the media, non-governmental organizations and other members of the public to a pre-destruction press conference and to the destruction site. Advocacy organizations, such as Gun-Free South Africa, have welcomed the police's destruction policy and regularly attend destruction events.

The SAPS' approach to redundant, obsolete and confiscated weapons is focused primarily on preventing these weapons from entering (or re-entering) the illegal market in either South Africa or other countries. Likewise, the police have declined the option of trying to resell redundant weapons to other countries, either commercially or through government transfers. This approach, while not unique, seems, in terms of its scale and duration to be one of the most comprehensive undertaken. The South African police destruction efforts are distinguished from those in Australia or the United Kingdom in that the South African destruction efforts take place as part of the country's stockpile management of firearms and related equipment. In the high profile weapons buy-back and destruction programmes in Australia and the United Kingdom, the focus was on removing weapons that had become illegal due to changes in licensing of civilian-owned weapons.

The SAPS are unwilling to speculate on how many weapons remain to be destroyed. They refer to the current numbers being destroyed as an indication of the stocks that remain in the country, and it seems safe to assume that this process of destruction will continue for some time.

A question mark for the future lies in the implementation of the new Firearms Control Act of 2000. The new Act, once it is in force, has a five-year grace period for current firearm owners to reduce the number of firearms licensed to each person. Under the existing Arms and Ammunition

Act, there are no limits on the number of weapons an individual may possess. In the new Act, with the exception of certified hunters or collectors, each person may only possess one handgun or one shotgun for self-defence and no more than a total of four firearms, including the one handgun.⁶⁴ Although exact figures are not available, the police expect that current owners will sell a sizable number of firearms on the second-hand firearms market. While the police realize that running a state-sponsored buy-back programme would be too expensive, given the priority placed on destroying firearms currently, it would seem that a destruction programme on the lines of those conducted in Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as in other countries, could be considered.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF WEAPONS DESTRUCTION EFFORTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO

South Africa has joined a small group of countries that have taken seriously the recommendation of the 1997 United Nations Panel of Experts on Small Arms to implement programmes to destroy surplus state-owned small arms.⁶⁵ Its efforts have been motivated by the need to combat the proliferation and availability of illicit firearms and provide safety and security for its people. This Chapter evaluates the three case studies, using a standard conceptual framework. The key questions for each case study will be:

- Did the destruction programme meet its stated aim or objectives?
- Was the programme implemented in a transparent manner that balanced the concerns of safety and security?
- What role did public support/opposition to the destructions programmes play in their planning and execution?
- Was it cost-effective and were resources effectively utilized?
- Was the necessary financial support available to implement the programmes as planned?
- Was the necessary political support given to effectively plan and implement the programmes?

Two final questions will encapsulate all three case studies, namely:

- Have the destruction programmes had any impact of weapons proliferation in South Africa?
- What has the impact of the destruction programmes been on political support for small arms initiatives in South and Southern Africa?

OPERATION MOUFLON

Meeting its Aim

Operation Mouflon is the largest destruction of surplus state-owned small arms in sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of the operation in May 2001, more than 260,000 weapons had been destroyed and sold for scrap metal.

The stated aim of Operation Mouflon was to destroy all surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated weapons in the possession of the SANDF. Based on the information provided, a total of 271,867 weapons were identified for destruction and by the completion of the operation in May 2001, 262,667 weapons had been destroyed. In general, however, Operation Mouflon did achieve its aim. (On the basis of the initial contract signed between the scrap company in Port Elizabeth and the SANDF, subsequent destruction operations have been conducted on a regular basis. This has included small arms, including surplus stocks from the South African Navy, as well as larger conventional weapons. These follow-up operations are not considered part of Operation Mouflon.)

The initial planning for Operation Mouflon focused on the destruction of surplus R1 rifles. Latterly the decision was taken to expand the effort to include other redundant, surplus or confiscated weapons up to the calibre of 12.7mm. Of the R1 rifles in the possession of the DoD, it appears that all were destroyed, save for 5,000 (4,000 serviceable and 1,000 spares) which were kept for general training purposes and for the use of the South African Navy, which still uses the R1 as a service weapon.

A request by one of the depots to keep back a few R1 rifles to make "trophies" for those who had worked on Operation Mouflon was denied. The reason for the denial was that "the request to withdraw firearms from Operation Mouflon for trophies has to be approved by NCCAC, Treasury and/or Secretary of Defence... Similar requests in the past have been turned down."⁶⁶

The only apparent modification of the NCACC decision to destroy all surplus weapons was mooted by then-Minister of Defence J. Modise. He requested that one example of each weapon be preserved and installed at the South African National Museum of Military History and two additional examples retained for loan to other museums and/or international

museums.⁶⁷ In addition, 99 historically significant 1896 Lee Enfield rifles, which were used during the Anglo Boer War (registered in South Africa as a Legacy Project), were held back from destruction until the completion of the centenary celebration of the war in 1999, after which 96 were destroyed and three preserved in line with the Minister of Defence's request.

Programme Implementation

The planning documents for Operation Mouflon repeatedly emphasize the need for the operation to be conducted in a transparent manner with utmost attention to the safety and security of the personnel involved and of the weapons themselves.

The focus on transparency was necessary to ensure that the coordination of the operation in three separate locations could be achieved. It appears that overall communication channels were kept open and regular information updates were provided from the three verification sites (Naboomspruit, Pretoria and Grahamstown) to the coordinator's office in the Logistics Division. From his office, regular progress reports were provided to the PDSC, chaired by the Secretary of Defence, and the Minister of Defence.

Communication between the various divisions within the Department of Defence also seemed to be good, with regular information circulated to the relevant participants. The only apparent hitches in communication were between the DoD and the Grahamstown-based 84 TSD. As noted in the case study, delays hampered the start of Operation Mouflon there, some of which were simply due to the long geographic distance between the DoD in Pretoria and Grahamstown. The Naboomspruit and Pretoria verification sites perhaps benefited from being in closer proximity to the planning hub of Operation Mouflon (and of course the scale of operations in those locations was much smaller than in Grahamstown).

The planning for Operation Mouflon also recognized the need for a communication strategy to the public. In this regard, efforts were made to keep the public informed of the destruction process through press releases and journal articles⁶⁸ and the media were invited to view the first destruction of surplus weapons in July 2000.

The DoD also took recognition of the fact that the South African public was watching their actions. It was noted that Gun-free South Africa had written to the Minister of Defence in support of the destruction effort and this was presented as a justification for pursuing the destruction programme. Interestingly, no correspondence from the pro-firearms lobby in South Africa, which was very vocal during the drafting of the Firearms Control Act (which occurred during the same time as Operation Mouflon was being implemented) is recorded in the files of Operation Mouflon.

Those requests that were made to the planners of Operation Mouflon were generally carefully considered and, if found to be appropriate, approved. This included delaying the destruction of the 1896 Lee Enfield rifles, a request by Gun-free South Africa to stage a symbolic weapons destruction during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Durban in November 1999 and the decision to keep back three examples of each weapon for museum use.

As far as can be determined, the safety and security concerns of the planners were well recognized by all involved and the orders set in this regard generally followed carefully. The focus put on the verification of each weapon for destruction was deemed critical to ensure that no questions could be raised as to whether a weapon was in fact destroyed. The process of verification also improved systems of stockpile management that were being implemented across DoD armouries during this same period. The focus on quality control brought to light several examples of earlier discrepancies in serial numbers, bin locations and data entry errors that would have complicated the keeping of accurate records of national weapons stockpiles.⁶⁹

Operation Mouflon took considerably longer to complete than initially planned. The documents prepared in 1998 and early 1999 estimated that the project would take a total of 270 days (approximately 22.5 months). With budgetary approval on 26 May 2000, the implementation of Operation Mouflon began. The target end-date was February 2002. However, due to the considerable amount of time it has taken to destroy the weapons in Grahamstown (started in September 2000 and completed on 26 May 2002), final accounting of the project and administrative details remain incomplete. The estimated completion date of March 2003 will mean that the operation ran 13 months beyond schedule. Rather than a reflection of mismanagement or poor planning, it may be that logistical

factors, including the sheer volume of weaponry and the limited availability of the destruction site meant that the original time estimates were too optimistic. In particular, it was noted that when contracting with commercial ventures, existing contractual commitments and additional costs for extra shifts for employees may need to be factored into the timeframe.

Resource Utilization

The total budget for Operation Mouflon was R 1.9 million (approximately US\$ 190,000) for an operation that ran over two years. The reason that the budget could be kept relatively low was that the personnel cost for the planning, verification process and security during the transport and destruction of the weapons were covered under the annual DoD budget. Thus, operation costs related to the additional elements that were specific to Mouflon (e.g. contracting rail transport, specialist equipment, etc.) were the only real additional costs. The operation appears to have been implemented with careful consideration to costs and, excepting the costs of unplanned equipment breakdowns, stayed generally within its budget. A final audit of the operation has not yet been completed as the 84 TSD paperwork is still being finalized.

The DoD received a contribution of R 403,000 (US\$ 40,300) from the Norwegian government. During 1999, suggestions were made to identify other sources of funding. The US Department of State was approached, but for reasons noted above the solicitation was unsuccessful. Eventually it was decided that with the support of Norway and the income from the sale of the scrap metal, the DoD could meet the costs of the operation (approximately US\$ 20,000 was paid for 1,385,000 kilograms of scrap metal).

The Chief of Finance of the DoD gave early approval of the budget and this allowed the planning and eventual implementation of Mouflon to move forward. To all appearances, adequate financial support was available to the operation that meant it could be implemented without compromising the operation in any way.

Political Support

All of South Africa's weapons destruction efforts have benefited from strong political support within the government and externally. From 1994,

with the start of the democratic process in the country, South Africa has taken a principled stand on issues related to arms control, striving to be seen as a responsible manufacturer and user of conventional weapons. The perception is that Presidents Mandela and Mbeki have driven this process but important political support has also been present in the South African cabinet and the ministries of foreign affairs, defence and safety and security. In the case of Operation Mouflon, two successive ministers of defence, Joe Modise and Mosiuoa Lekota, supported the programme, initially in the face of opposition from within ARMSCOR and the Department of Trade and Industry who wanted the opportunity to sell the surplus weapons (see earlier Chapter).

Once Operation Mouflon had received financial approval and the verification and destruction processes were underway there was no visible wavering of political support. Arguably, given the success of the operation, politicians in South Africa would be proud of the DoD for its implementation of the operation. This could be gauged, for example, by the fact that President Mbeki suggested an Operation Mouflon-style process for the Lesotho Defence Force in June 2001.

LESOTHO—OPERATION QETO

Meeting its Aim

The aim of Operation Qeto for the Lesotho Defence Force was to destroy excess and redundant weapons in their stores. The SANDF provided technical assistance to the LDF and helped facilitate the South Africa-based elements of the operation, including escorting the shipment from the border with Lesotho to Johannesburg, obtaining the necessary import certificates and working with the US Embassy in Pretoria to secure funding for the operation.

All 3,843 weapons inventoried at LDF headquarters in Maseru (and the additional components that gave a destruction total of 4,240) were destroyed on 16 November 2001 in the presence of representatives of the LDF and SANDF. From that perspective, Operation Qeto can be gauged a success.

In addition to the aim of destroying weapons, Operation Qeto was also important for two additional reasons. Firstly, it was a practical illustration of two countries—Lesotho and South Africa—working together for the benefit of both countries. This image is similar to that of the South African Police Service's joint efforts with the Mozambican police in the identification and destruction of illicit arms caches in Mozambique. Both Lesotho and Mozambique are countries that in the past faced a hostile and aggressive South Africa that today are working in partnership to build safer, more secure communities.

A second important additional element of Operation Qeto is that it illustrated that the model used for Operation Mouflon in South Africa could be replicated on a different scale in another country. This was an important test of the planning process, especially the intensive verification and audit of weapons for disposal.

Programme Implementation

The political endorsement by President Mbeki in April 2001 of assisting the LDF in destroying weapons led to the finalization of the operation by 16 November 2001. After the scale of the operation in South Africa (which during this period was still under way) the relatively small number of weapons for destruction in Lesotho seemed manageable. Planning in advance meant that the technical assistance team was in Maseru by mid-October and the verification of the weapons and their transport to South Africa was completed by 1 November 2001.

The need to coordinate between the two governments, through the Departments of Foreign Affairs, complicated Operation Qeto but does not appear to have caused any delays or required any changes to the original planning.

The additional challenge of Operation Qeto was importing the weapons into South Africa from Lesotho. In this regard, all the requirements of South Africa and Lesotho's arms control policies were met and the requisite export and import permits secured for the weapons.

The Lesotho Defence Force entered into the contracts with the transportation company and the scrap metal contractor for the operation. The LDF received the payment from the scrap metal company.

Resource Utilization

The funding from the US Department of State allowed Operation Qeto to take place. The total payment of US\$ 15,000, offset the transportation costs of the operation as well petrol and travel allowances for both LDF and SANDF members. The LDF received the income for the scrap metal.

In terms of the use of personnel time and equipment, this proceeded smoothly. The smaller quantity of weapons meant that the verification and packing could be completed quickly. The most inefficient part of the exercise was when the fragmenting machine at the contractor's yard broke, resulting in a two-week delay of the actual destruction. This increased the cost of the operation, as LDF and SANDF personnel had to travel back and forth and a security detail had to be maintained at the Pretoria Main Ordnance Depot to guard the containers.

Political Support

Within Lesotho, the proposed destruction of excess and obsolete weapons had strong support, signified by the fact that the Prime Minister of Lesotho raised the issue with South Africa's President Mbeki. Within South Africa, although the assistance request had been discussed within the DoD, it was only after President Mbeki gave South Africa's support to the programme that planning moved ahead more rapidly.

SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE IN SURPLUS SALW DESTRUCTION

Meeting its Aim

The vision of the SAPS is to create a safe and secure environment for all South Africans. Within its focus on firearms, the SAPS have decided to "eliminate the number of firearms in circulation in the country and to prevent firearms entering the country".⁷⁰ The destruction of redundant and obsolete as well as confiscated weapons fits within this framework.

Given that no estimates exist for the number of state-owned weapons (see reference to national audit currently taking place) let alone for illegal firearms in circulation, it is impossible to quantify the total number of weapons that will need to be destroyed by the SAPS. In this regard, the task

of the SANDF in Operation Mouflon was more straightforward as they were working with weapons already in their keep. The SAPS, on the contrary, receive confiscated weapons for destruction on a daily basis.⁷¹

Thus, as opposed to considering a final evaluation of the SAPS weapons destruction process, in this instance a more general evaluation of the process that is being carried out will be presented.

Programme Implementation

After more than four years of experience, the SAPS logistics division has established a streamlined process for destroying weapons. Each programme is planned on an ad hoc basis, when enough weapons are available to make it worthwhile.

Following a standard process ensures that verification and auditability of the process is sustained.⁷²

Resource Utilization

The SAPS do not calculate a budget for each destruction programme as most of the work is done during regular duty hours for members of the service, although expenses are incurred in terms of supplies, commercial transport of the weapons to the destruction site, travel and meal allowances and hospitality costs for press conferences, as well as media material. The experience gained over the years means that planning can be done efficiently and with minimal wastage of resources. While the SAPS present a gross value for all weapons destroyed, this does not correspond to the price received for the scrap metal.

The financial support of the government of Norway is welcomed by the SAPS as it takes pressure off of the SAPS to find the resources within in its regular budget.

Political Support

After the initial high-level political support that the NCACC showed for the weapons destruction initiative of the SAPS, political support for the SAPS weapons destruction programmes has remained strong.

In addition to political support, public and media support has also been quite strong. Although each destruction effort does not generate enormous levels of media coverage, media representatives are invited to, and attend, each destruction. Likewise, representatives of the public and non-governmental organizations are also invited to observe the destruction events.

The on-going support for the weapons destruction programmes means that they are planned to continue for the foreseeable future.

IMPACT ON WEAPONS PROLIFERATION

Probably the most interesting question—and the most difficult to answer—is whether or not the process of weapons destruction within South Africa and Lesotho has had any impact on weapons proliferation in the two countries.

At the policy level, South Africa's decision to stop re-exporting surplus state-owned weapons has clearly had a positive impact on weapons proliferation. The implementation of the policy has meant that more than 315,000 redundant or obsolete serviceable weapons that could, perhaps, have been resold have been destroyed instead.

Within crime-plagued South Africa, the question is more often whether or not the destruction of weapons has reduced the number of illegal weapons in the country. This is a much more difficult question to answer. Some of the ways in which a tentative reply could be formulated include:

- Information on the trends in thefts from state armouries: Has there been a decline in overall theft (due to improved security and stockpile management)? Has there been a decline in the types of weapons that were destroyed being lost or stolen?
- Disaggregating police statistics on recovered illegal weapons over time to determine: Whether previously state-owned weapons are more or less prevalent in the illegal pool; changes in the types of illegal weapons being confiscated, especially regarding the types of weapons (R1 rifles, for example) that were destroyed; and monitoring recovered illicit weapons to ensure that no weapons recorded as destroyed appear.

However this would only yield a partial answer, as many other variables are influencing weapons proliferation in South Africa. These include the loss and theft of civilian-owned weapons and thefts from commercial dealers, the illegal trafficking of weapons into South Africa from other countries and the theft of newly manufactured weapons from commercial manufacturers. This is one reason that the South Africa Police Service has focused on a five-pillar approach to firearms. The five-pillar approach recognizes that a holistic view must be taken, because analysis of only one angle will not generate a complete answer.

An important outcome from the debate on weapons destruction and analysis of firearm crime statistics has been a greater awareness by the security forces that stolen and lost state-owned weapons are used for criminal activity in South Africa. This has given impetus to improving stockpile management processes, including improving inventory control, securing armouries and, of course, destroying surplus weaponry.

IMPACT ON SUPPORT FOR SMALL ARMS INITIATIVES

Another area of evaluation is the impact that the weapons destruction efforts have had on support for small arms initiatives generally. In the case of South Africa, many of the national, regional and international small arms processes were occurring simultaneously. This makes it difficult to determine which process influenced another. However, one clear contribution that South Africa has made to support for small arms initiatives is the demonstration that the destruction of surplus stocks of redundant and obsolete small arms can be implemented as government policy and their destruction completed in a safe, verifiable and cost efficient manner.⁷³ (The final Chapter of this report looks at what lessons have been learned from South Africa and Lesotho's experiences and judge how these models could be of value in other countries.)

In Lesotho, the destruction of excess and redundant stocks has also given practical expertise to the LDF that will be of benefit to it and perhaps that it can share with others. Lesotho has also been able to show that it is implementing its regional and international commitments with respect to small arms control. This is an important achievement for a country that is facing large developmental challenges.

Both Lesotho and South Africa have also illustrated to the donor community that funding for the destruction of surplus state-owned weapons can be done professionally, competently and cost-effectively. This should assist other countries in securing assistance for eventual projects, as well as ensure future support for any follow-on destruction programmes by the SANDF and the LDF.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEARNED AND THE FUTURE OF SURPLUS WEAPONS DESTRUCTION EFFORTS

The experiences of South Africa and Lesotho in the destruction of surplus state-owned weapons provide an important example for future efforts both within those countries and in others. The lessons that have been drawn from the development of South Africa's national policy on destruction, as well as the individual experiences of the three case studies have been clustered into three issue areas: political, contextual and technical.

POLITICAL

Political leadership played an extremely important role in gaining support for the weapons destruction efforts in both South Africa and Lesotho. Political leadership occurs at different levels, and in the case of South Africa ranged from the successive presidents of the country, Presidents Mandela and Mbeki, to committed individuals within the departments of foreign affairs, defence and safety and security. Although the presidents gave the sweeping endorsement, a strong reason for the actual implementation of these destruction programmes was the support by ministers of affected departments, such as Defence, Safety and Security, Foreign Affairs and Treasury, which signalled internal support for the decisions. The importance of political leadership should be recognized as a determining factor in any effort to initiate a weapons destruction programme. However in the case of destroying state-owned stocks, which runs counter to the intuition of militaries and departments of treasury around the world, leadership providing the motivation and support becomes even more important.

For South Africa, its political history was an important determinant in its decision to destroy its stocks of surplus state-owned weapons. Although

not explicitly stated in any policy document, the post-1994 government has clearly been motivated by a desire to show through its actions as well as its policies that it has shed its image of the past and considers itself playing a positive and responsible role in disarmament and arms control efforts. This applies not only to small arms controls, but also in the field of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and anti-personnel landmines.

South Africa adopted an arms control policy, which, in principle, took account of moral and ethical considerations and gave cognizance to the role of the country as an exporter of arms. The policy paid attention to ways in which its arms export policy could be as sensitive as possible in deciding foreign sales based on criteria that included analysis of the development, human rights, humanitarian and conflict impact of any weapons transfer.

A lesson from both Lesotho and South Africa is the benefit of conducting such weapons destruction programmes in a transparent and accountable manner, so that questions that may arise can be answered clearly and without confusion. The adoption of communication strategies is valuable in this regard as these can be used to build public support and interest in the government's initiatives.

Finally, the important role of international support cannot be overlooked. Working within the framework of existing international and regional commitments gave both South Africa and Lesotho political leverage for their programmes in the face of internal opposition. Additionally, the experiences of other countries, such as Mali, helped to illustrate that South Africa could embark on a similar exercise and receive positive external support.

If other countries look to adopt destruction programmes along the same lines as South Africa and Lesotho, hopefully these countries can use the experience already gained to build their own internal support, where needed.

CONTEXTUAL

The context within which the destruction programmes in South Africa and Lesotho were run is also important. Both countries view themselves as engaged in the transition from post-conflict to peace-building. Although to

outward appearances South Africa may not appear to be a post-conflict country, it still bears scars of its divisive past that are still healing. For Lesotho, the memory of the 1998 uprising was still fresh in 2001 and the weapons destruction was seen as an important stage in moving forward towards a more positive future.

However neither South Africa nor Lesotho were emerging from a civil war on the scale of Mozambique or Sierra Leone and benefited from the infrastructure that was available to ensure the effective implementation of the destruction programmes.

For South Africa, as has been illustrated, another overriding concern was the impact small arms were having on the country and its neighbours in Southern Africa. The increasing levels of firearms-related crime had become untenable for the security forces and required clear government action. Within the South African government's framework of arms control and firearms control measures, the decision to destroy weapons came naturally.⁷⁴

A final contextual factor in both South Africa and Lesotho was that the decision to destroy the weapons occurred during a phase of standardizing and professionalizing the security forces of both countries. Therefore, as stockpile management of armouries was evaluated and strengthened, the option of destroying surplus weapons came about perhaps naturally.

With stockpile management procedures in place, the regular destruction of small arms is standardized in both the South African police and defence forces. In Lesotho, the situation was different, as the weapons were declared unserviceable and therefore were not technically surplus to requirements. However it is hoped that Lesotho will sustain its practice and as it has redundant equipment have this destroyed rather than stored or resold.

TECHNICAL

The technical aspects of the weapons destruction process followed by the SANDF and the LDF are valuable in the models that they provide to other countries that may consider similar programmes.

However in terms of this assessment, other lessons can also be drawn:

Firstly, the weapons destruction model adopted by the SANDF, LDF and SAPS is notable for several reasons. These include the relative low cost of the operation and the low technological requirements. The benefits of using a scrap metal contractor (even if it means transporting the weapons rather than destroying *in situ*) include being able to recover some of the costs associated with the destruction, the permanence of the destruction method and the removal of the scrap metal. The fragmentizer method has another benefit in that it accepts both metal and non-metal material and automatically separates the two. This spares the labour intensive process of stripping all non-metal parts off the small arms before they are destroyed.

The fragmentizer method is also efficient in terms of scale—large amounts can be destroyed at once. The result is also permanent, since the weapons become totally unusable.

The need for a verifiable, transparent process is paramount. As the case studies have illustrated, planners must be certain that all weapons identified for destruction are destroyed and do not reappear on the illegal market. The time and effort spent on checking inventories and verifying serial numbers is labour intensive but critical if good stockpile management practice is to be instituted. The process needs to be transparent to those who are participating in it, those who may be supporting it financially and to those who it is meant to benefit.

In order to be verifiable and transparent, the process must be well planned. Hopefully the information presented gives a sense of the detail of planning required (and which is expanded upon in the guidelines). Security forces are well schooled in operations planning and their skills are well suited to developing the concept of operations and standard operating procedures needed for a weapons destruction programme of this nature.

A final technical consideration relates to security. Weapons are viewed by many as a commodity that can be re-sold and re-used. Therefore, when planning a weapons destruction event, the need for tight security cannot be over-emphasized. In South Africa's situation, heightened fears of crime meant that the threat of the weapons being stolen while in transport or at the destruction site was a real and valid concern. Strict safety procedures

prevented any security breach and would need to be considered for any other weapons destruction effort.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

For any country considering the destruction of state-owned surplus small arms, the evaluation of options will present both benefits and challenges. In the case of South Africa and Lesotho, these can be summarised as follows:

Benefits

A clear benefit of the weapons destruction effort has been in reducing the stock of weapons under the control of the SANDF and the LDF. This has streamlined stockpile management and has meant that the number of weapons in armouries is more closely aligned with the needs of the respective defence forces. This has significant cost-saving implications.

Also, it has meant that those weapons that have been destroyed can never re-enter the supply chain particularly in illicit markets either in South Africa or other countries.

The joint operation with Lesotho benefited both countries by increasing regional cooperation, as has the SAPS joint operation with Mozambique. It also illustrated cooperative government/donor/private sector engagement, a benefit that was recognized by the contractors, as well as by the governments involved.

Another benefit of the approaches reviewed in this report is that they are all sustainable. With the assets already existing, such destruction programmes can be replicated easily and at reasonable cost when needed. This has been illustrated by the SAPS who have held seven destructions between 2001 and 2002.

Challenges

There are of course considerable challenges for any country contemplating similar programmes. Firstly, as was the case in South Africa, existing polices or regulations may have to be amended to permit the

destruction of state-owned goods. Secondly, the internal and external political support needs to be mobilized to ensure that such a programme can be implemented efficiently and effectively.

In some situations, the economic motivation for selling the weapons may be greater than the support for destruction. This would need to be overcome for the programme to succeed and may require compelling arguments both from those inside the country and from external sources.

Securing funding for these programmes can also be challenging. Although donors appear increasingly interested in funding these types of activities (Norway, the European Union and the United Kingdom, among others, have all supported weapons destruction programmes in Southern Africa) some may still have reservations about supporting programmes of security forces. Also, some donors may have conditions that make their support unsuitable for the contemplated programme. This was the case with the US supporting Operation Mouflon in South Africa, where the US requirements were that the weapons for destruction could only be unserviceable. However, against the challenges that many countries are facing when combating the proliferation of small arms, these challenges should be surmountable and should not deter initiating projects aimed at destroying surplus state-owned small arms.

The political, economic and technical challenges associated with the destruction of surplus weapons are relatively minor compared to the range of challenges associated with the widespread and uncontrolled proliferation and availability of small arms that confront many countries in Africa and elsewhere. Thus countries, particularly those faced with such problems, should not be deterred from initiating projects to improve stockpile management and destroy surplus, obsolete or redundant small arms.

Notes

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- 4 Department of Defence, *White Paper on Defence*, Chapter 8, paragraphs 1 and 9, www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/defencewp.html.
- 5 *Report of the Secretary-General on General and Complete Disarmament: Small Arms*, United Nations document A/52/298, 27 August 1997.
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- 9 P. Frankel, *Soldiers in a Storm: The Armed Forces in South Africa's Democratic Transition*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000, pp. 149-50. See also C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*, London: The Scarecrow Press, 1983, p. 111.
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- ¹⁶ P. Batchelor and Dunn as quoted in the *Small Arms Survey 2001*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- ¹⁷ Denel, Annual Report 2002, Pretoria, 2002.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁹ The closure of *ARAM* was linked to financial problems and the results of a police investigation, which revealed that the company was operating outside the conditions of their licence.
- ²⁰ For an overview of the history and transformation of the South African defence forces and arms industry see, for example, P. Batchelor and S. Willet, *Disarmament and Defence Industrial Adjustment in South Africa*, Uppsala: SIPRI, 1998; P. Batchelor, "South Africa's Arms Industry: Prospects for Conversion", in J. Cock and P. Mckenzie (eds), *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip; G. Shelton, D. Monyue, A. Pullinger, M. Simmonds and R. Williams, *Demobilisation and its Aftermath I: A profile of South Africa's demobilised military personnel*, ISS Monograph Series, No. 59, Pretoria: ISS, August 2001; I. Liebenberg and M. Roelfs, *Demobilisation and its Aftermath II: Economic Reinsertion of South Africa's demobilised military personnel*, ISS Monograph Series, No. 61, Pretoria: ISS, August 2001; M. Shaw, "Negotiating Defence for a New South Africa", in J. Cilliers and M. Reichardt (eds), *About Turn: The Transformation of the South African Military and Intelligence*, Halfway House: Institute for Defence Policy, 1995. Department of Defence, *Defence in a Democracy: White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa*, Pretoria: Department of Defence, 1996; Department of Defence, *Annual Report, 2000-2001*, Pretoria: Department of Defence, 2001.
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