



FINNISH ARMS EXPORTS IN 2011

In Focus: Human Rights

SaferGlobe Finland's report on Finnish arms exports in 2011 focuses on the connection between human rights abuses and the arms trade. 2011 was the year of the Arab Spring. In some cases, European weapons were used in violent crackdowns. In the case of Libya, looted arms stockpiles ended up in Mali's civil war. It is the purpose of an efficient arms exports control system to prevent conflicts and human rights violations. This year's report analyses three licensing decisions for Finnish arms exports, in which these goals have most likely not been achieved: deals with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kazakhstan. Additionally, SaferGlobe Finland has investigated whether or not Finland has implemented the EU ban on trade in instruments of torture.

Finnish Military Equipment Exports on the Rise

In 2011, Finnish arms exports increased to 103.1 million euro. The total worth of licences granted in 2011 was 184.4 million euro. This figure is almost three times as high as 2010's figure, 61.22 million euro. In the case of Finland, where the overall arms export volume is relatively small, a single arms deal may significantly impact one year's total export value.

During the five-year period from 2007 to 2011, Finnish arms exports increased by 29 percent compared to the years 2002-2007. The share of arms transfers to EU countries dropped below half of the total transfers, to 43 percent.

The Arab Spring did not yet have a significant effect on Finnish arms exports in 2011. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not cancel any export licences granted; however, it approached the export companies with letters requesting them to refrain from the exports. Subsequent export licence procedures were halted for the time being.

Dual-Use Technology and Commercial Firearms

For dual-use technology, altogether 286 export licences were granted, seven licences fewer than in

Suomen asevientä 2011: Teemana ihmisoikeudet

Jarmo Pykälä, Timmy Trümpler, Elli Kytömäki, Mikko Autti & Paavo J. Teittinen (eds). SaferGlobe Finland, Helsinki 2013. 32 pages.

Please always cite.

Downloadable in Finnish at www.saferglobe.fi.

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SaferGlobe Finland is an independent peace and security research center. This report on Finnish arms exports is the fourth successive report. It is a part of the research programme on arms-based security.

the previous year. The total value of these exports is not known due to deficiencies in the public authorities' reporting.

The amount of licences granted for commercial firearms – i.e. civilian firearms – decreased significantly compared to 2010. Altogether, licences for 66,900 weapons were granted, the figure being only a third of 2010's 192,000. Most of these licences were granted to EU countries. For civilian firearms' ammunition, export licences were granted for 108 million cartridges. Some of these might also be suitable for military use.

Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses

This year's report's focus is on the connection between human rights abuses and arms exports. In 2011, Finland exported arms to several countries with grave human rights violations. These countries include Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kazakhstan.

In January 2011, in the wake of the Arab Spring, a large arms shipment left Finland for Bahrain. It included 205 Sako sniper rifles and ammunition worth more than 810,000 euros. Additionally, Finnish customs statistics reveal that at the same time weapon components worth almost one million euro left for Bahrain as well. Of the latter, the licensing authorities were not aware and they presume them to be licence-free components. The exact composition of this load is not known.

Altogether, the charges to Bahrain were worth more than 2.6 million euro. The arms shipment to Bahrain reveals deficiencies in the Finnish licensing system. The export licences were granted by two ministries during different years. Consequently, the licensing authorities were not aware of the big picture. The timing of these transports leads us to suspect that they were intended for the Bahrainian government preparing to respond to emerging unrest.

Among other countries to which Finland granted export licences for sniper rifles in 2011 were Mexico and Kazakhstan. The former is fighting a deadly and controversial war against drug trafficking organisations (DTO). The human rights situation in Mexico has deteriorated in the course of this war, the perpetrators

belonging both to the state security forces and DTOs. In Kazakhstan, a deadly crackdown of a demonstration occurred in 2011.

Economic Considerations Affect Licensing

The largest arms deal licensed by the Finnish government in 2011 was the export of 36 advanced Patria Nemo mortar systems and ammunition to Saudi Arabia. The sale is part of the U.S. government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. After the Nemo deal, Saudi Arabia became the third largest export destination for Finnish arms systems in the 2000s.

In the Nemo licensing decision, an imbalance between economic and human rights considerations seems to have taken place for the benefit of economic factors. In the face of a worsening economic situation in 2011, it would have been hard for the Finnish government to turn down a deal worth about 95 million euro. Other considerations may have included access to further sales within the FMS programme. Economic considerations in arms transfers to countries, such as Saudi Arabia are partially in contradiction with the Finnish foreign policy, which strives to be value-driven and to promote democracy.

Deficiencies in Implementing the EU Ban on Trade in Instruments of Torture

SaferGlobe Finland's investigative journalism revealed deficiencies in the implementation of the EU ban on trade in instruments of torture, regulation 1236/2005. The licensing authority was changed due to restructuring of the Finnish police administration in 2010. However, neither the National Police Board nor the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior were able to name the proper authority for two weeks. Eventually, the Ministry of the Interior responded to us, announcing that no licensing decisions had been made. Nevertheless, SGF's researches revealed that licences to export pepper sprays, which are also included in regulation, had been granted to third party countries by the National Police Board, probably disregarding the obligation to make an assessment according to the regulation.

Figures

Figure 1. Military Equipment Exports Share per Category

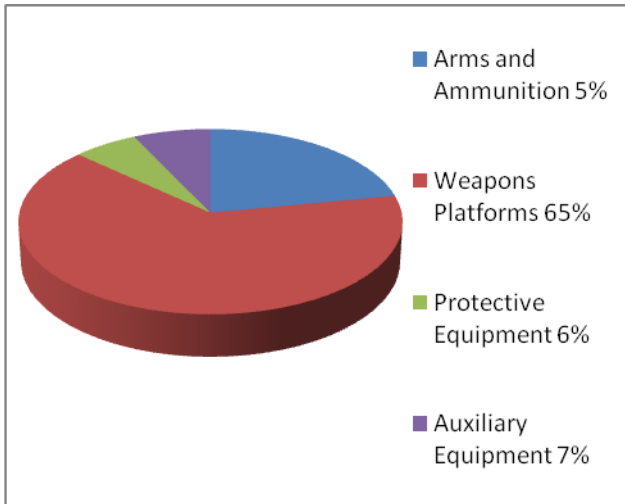


Figure 2. Military Equipment Exports Share per Region

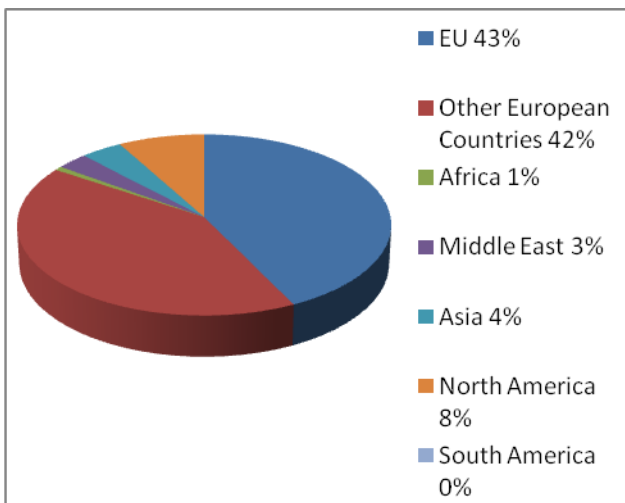


Figure 3. Dual-Use Technology Licences Share per Region

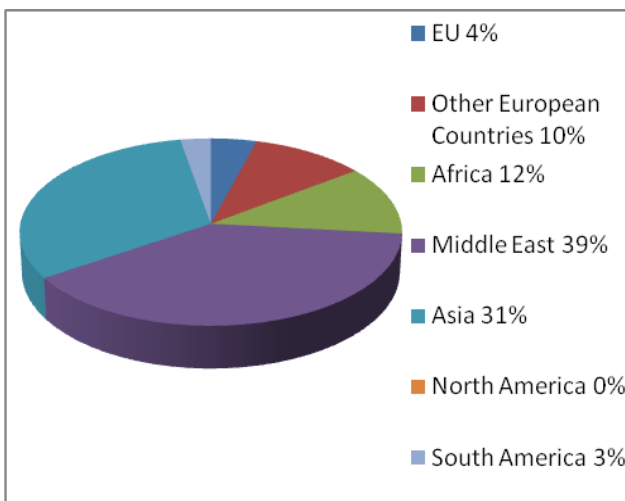


Figure 4. Commercial Weapons's Export Licences per Region

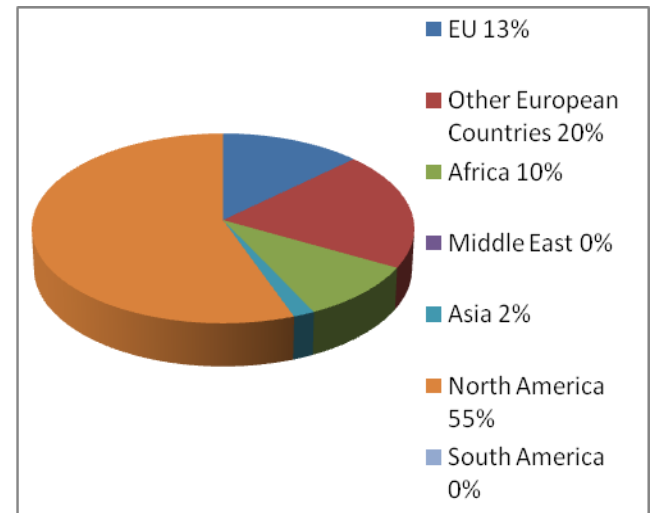


Figure 5. Commercial Ammunition Licences Share per Region

