

US demand for handguns driving world gun trade

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GENEVA — American demand for handguns has fueled a 28 percent jump this decade in world exports of pistols, rifles, shotguns and other small arms, a global report said Thursday.

The 2009 Small Arms Survey reported that the United States alone was responsible for about half of the worldwide increase in legal international gun sales between 2000 and 2006. The U.S. now accounts for over half of the world's imports of pistols and revolvers and 45 percent of shotguns, it said.

"No other country imports more than 4 percent of the global total," the 344-page report found.

It illustrated how U.S. purchases of hand guns — which averaged \$173 million annually — have driven a sharp rise in exports from a number of countries.

Austria remained the world's largest seller of pistols and revolvers with a 25 percent jump since 2000. Seventy-five percent of its exports go to the United States. Croatian exports soared almost 24 times in value since the start of the decade. The U.S. accounted for 98 percent of its 2006 sales of \$27 million.

Gunmakers in Brazil and Italy also have been helped by booming American demand for small arms.

"A country can become a major global player just by developing an export market in the United States," the report said.

The report, published by Geneva's Graduate Institute, uses customs data and other information supplied by 53 nations. It estimated legal trade in firearms at nearly \$1.6 billion in 2006, with the actual value of all small arms, light weapons, parts, accessories and ammunition exceeding \$4 billion.

"Current data shows that the global trade in small arms and light weapons is robust and even expanding, and handguns are driving it," said Keith Krause, the survey's director. "We don't know whether these weapons are destined for civilians, police or military forces."

The report found that trade in light military weapons has decreased by almost 30 percent over the same period. In that category, the U.S. dominates as the world's major supplier, with \$228.5 million in exports. That amounts to 54 percent of the world total.

The study also examined the lasting effects of weapons trade on countries, even after armed conflicts end. It said disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies in Indonesia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and elsewhere have met with mixed success.

For some countries, accurate export information was particularly hard to obtain. The report said Switzerland, Britain, Germany, Netherlands, Serbia and the United States were among the more transparent nations. Iran, North Korea, South Africa, Russia, Israel and Taiwan were cited as the least transparent.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090709/ap_on_re_us/un_un_gun_survey