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## In Self-Defence: Firearms Usage in Namibia

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Firearms have always played an important role in Namibia, a country that had to fight to win its independence. It is now often romantically viewed as a country of hunters, sportsmen and farmers who need weapons to protect their livestock and farmland. But upon examining the extent and usage of legal small arms in Namibia, the IPPR found that that self-defence is by far the biggest reason why Namibians choose to acquire firearms. This report shows that most recent gun licence applicants are based in urban centres (primarily in the Khomas Region) and that they are registering pistols and revolvers – not the shotguns and rifles more commonly needed for hunting and farming. When asked by the Namibian Police what the chief purpose is for owning a gun, 68.3% of successful gun licence applicants said self-defence. The IPPR estimates there to be less than 122,000 legal civilian guns, although the exact number is unknown, in a country of 1.8 million people. The police claim that these firearms are rarely used for crimes, at least not by the rightful owner. More worrying are the large number of illegal guns that have been imported into Namibia, primarily from Angola. Despite the availability of legal and illegal weapons, the police claims that a very small percent of murders involve firearms. A big question that stems from this research is why Namibians feel the need to defend themselves and on what factors their perceptions of crime and personal safety are based.

### Introduction

For well over a century, violence has been a fundamental characteristic of Namibia's history, and firearms have been the major instrument of this violence. Namibia and its indigenous inhabitants were subjected to repressive foreign occupation both by Germany and South Africa. There was armed resistance to foreign occupation by the Herero and Nama peoples in the early 1900s, and by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) from 1966 to 1989.

Namibia became independent in 1990. The post-independence period has been relatively peaceful, but firearms continue to play an important role in Namibian society. Hunting and sports shooting are popular and there is a demand for firearms for purposes of self-protection. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant number of small arms from Angola have been transported into northern Namibia.

This report considers the nature and extent of current firearms issues in Namibia, namely: firearms legislation; firearms ownership and the demand for firearms; the humanitarian impact of small arms; and the implementation of national, regional and international agreements that relate to small arms and light weapons.

### National Firearm Stockpiles

#### State-owned Firearms

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The details of state-owned firearms, such as those in the possession of the military and the police, are kept in separate databases. This information is not publicly accessible.

## **Civilian firearms**

Firearm legislation has been in place in Namibia since 1938.<sup>2</sup> The main law currently regulating firearm use is the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1996. The Act lays out the rules for licensing firearms to individuals, dealers, exporters and manufacturers and makes provisions for explosives, ammunition and the destruction of arms.

According to Section 3 of the Act, in order to own a firearm a person must be at least 18 years old and not be declared unfit by the police. The criteria for fitness are outlined in Sections 10-13. For example, a licence application can be rejected if the applicant has committed a violent crime, such as murder or rape; expressed the intention to injure someone; has an inclination to violence; a dependency on alcohol or drugs; has been declared mentally unfit; or handled a firearm in a reckless manner.

## **The application procedure**

Namibian firearm licence applications are eight pages in length, and include questions about the applicant's motivation for seeking to acquire a firearm. However, surprisingly, applicants are not required to stipulate their gender and age.

Applicants fill out the application form at a local police station, after which their fingerprints are taken. The form is then sent to national police headquarters in Windhoek. After the applicant's criminal record is checked, a decision is made by the national Fire Arms Division on whether to approve or reject the application. Decisions on the most controversial cases are made at higher levels. About 10% of all firearm licence applications are rejected for one of the reasons mentioned above.<sup>3</sup> The most important details of gun licence applications, whether accepted or not, are recorded into the National Database. Due to limited time and resources, the police enter very little of the information provided into the database.<sup>4</sup> But the original applications are stored near the computers, making it easy for police officers to consult an application if required.

The processing of the application can take up to three weeks, but licences can be approved in three days if the applicant's details are already on the database. Once approved, according to Section 5, the licence does not have to be renewed, and is valid until the death of the licence-holder, unless the police have a specific reason to declare the licence-holder unfit to possess a firearm.

## **Conditions placed on gun owners**

According to Section 7, no person may possess more than four arms unless "good cause" can be shown. Willie Brisley, the Namibian Police's Legal Officer and author of the 1996 Arms and Ammunition Act, explained at the 2002 Saferworld Conference in Windhoek why Namibians are allowed to own four firearms each. "Namibia is a hunting destination. This was done to make provision for a firearm to hunt small game, one to hunt bigger game, one to hunt (sic) and one hand weapon."<sup>5</sup> But the reality is that many people own more than four firearms, because firearms that were legal before the 1996 Act were automatically renewed.

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<sup>2</sup> SaferAfrica and Saferworld, Conference Report: First National Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Support of the Implementation of the SADC Protocol on Firearms and Ammunition Conference on Small Arms, South Africa, Safer Africa, 2002. Page 78.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Inspector Ignatius Nangombe, Fire Arms Division, Namibian Police. 15 October 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The database includes the name of the owner, contact details, the type, action, calibre and serial number of the gun.

<sup>5</sup> SaferAfrica and Saferworld. 2002. Page 78.



There is an active community of collectors who specialise in military collectibles. Colonel Des Radmore, President of the Militaria, Firearms & Ammunition Collectors Society of Namibia, says that the firearm collections of some of the members in his group run into the hundreds.<sup>6</sup> Collectors must be registered as such with the police and by law are prohibited from discharging any of the weapons from their collection.

Section 29 states that it is illegal to possess any automatic weapons. It is also illegal to own a cannon, recoilless gun or mortar, rocket launcher gun or machine rifles, projectile, rocket, grenade, bomb or missile unless a permit is issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In terms of Section 8, all applicants must prove to the police that they have a safe or strong room where the firearm can be safely stored. According to Section 36, firearms can only be transported in public if they are completely covered by clothing or carried in a handbag. No loaded firearm is allowed in public.

There are a variety of fines and sentences outlined in Section 38. Persons convicted of offences under the Act can face imprisonment of up to 25 years and fines of up to N\$40,000 depending upon the offence. Illegal possession of an automatic firearm, for example, will result in a prison sentence of 10 to 25 years.

According to a statement by the police at the First National Conference on small arms and light weapons in Windhoek on 7-9 October 2002, there were 95,280 firearms in the country, held by 38,407 licence holders. This meant that each licensed owner possessed an average of 2.49 firearms.<sup>7</sup>

On 1 January 2004, the Namibian Police National Database contained 97,262 firearm licences, divided into the following categories: Business, Embassy, Government, Private, Security Companies, Gunsmiths and Dealers. Of the private owners, the police estimate that 70% of all firearm owners are male, and 70% of owners are 30 years or older.<sup>8</sup> (See Table 1)

**Table 1: National database of firearm licences**

	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Total</b>
Business	217	458	646	326	437	229	2,313
Embassy	24	14	13	7	6	4	68
Government	13	44					57
Private	8,405	21,405	26,696	17,905	12,030	6,191	92,632
Security companies	206	277	467	466	428	322	2,166
Gunsmiths			5	2			7
Dealers			15	1	3		19
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,865</b>	<b>22,198</b>	<b>27,842</b>	<b>18,707</b>	<b>12,904</b>	<b>6,746</b>	<b>97,262</b>

Source: Namibian Police

The pre-1998 database recorded a total of 128,207 firearms. The police estimates that about 80% to 85% of these old database records have been re-registered into the new database. These figures imply that as many as 25,641 firearms have not yet been re-registered. If we add the 97,262 firearms in the 2004 database, this adds up to 122,900 separate firearm licences.

This estimate is too high for a number of reasons. First, the database includes the double counting of firearm licences that occur when a firearm changes hands legitimately. When this happens, the licence of the previous owner remains on the database while the new licence for the same firearm is added. Second, temporary firearm licences, which are issued to foreigners residing temporarily in Namibia, mainly visiting hunters, are not removed from the database when the person leaves the country, or when the licence becomes invalid.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Colonel Des Radmore, Military, Security and Explosives Consultant. 20 October 2003.

<sup>7</sup> SaferAfrica and Saferworld. 2002. Page 78.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Inspector Nangombe.



## Loss and theft

When a licensed firearm is lost, stolen or destroyed, this must be reported to the police within seven days. The police estimates that 184 firearms were stolen in 2001, 163 in 2002 and 193 in 2003, averaging 15 firearms per month.<sup>9</sup> The police claim a recovery rate of around 30% of lost of stolen firearms.<sup>10</sup>

According to Major General Ndeitunga of the Namibian Police “easy accessibility to firearms” is contributing to rising levels of crime, including robberies, murders and assaults.<sup>11</sup>

The police estimate that 25% of all firearms in the possession of civilians in Namibia are unlicensed and that approximately one-fifth of the illegal firearms in civilian possession are registered firearms that were lost or stolen.<sup>12</sup> They believe that the remaining four-fifths of these illegal firearms originate from neighbouring countries, particularly Angola.

According to the police, pistols and revolvers can be bought in Namibia’s northern border regions for as little as N\$250, compared to around N\$1,500 to N\$1,900 legally. Most of the firearms used in the secessionist Caprivi uprising of August 1999 were illegal.<sup>13</sup> Other sources, unwilling to speak on the record, say the number of illegal firearms far exceeds the number of legal ones, especially in the northern regions, but they provide no evidence to substantiate these claims.<sup>14</sup>

The police have, therefore, focused their resources on collecting illegal firearms and preventing firearms from entering the country, especially from Angola. The police have consequently stepped up border controls. Namibian Police legal advisor Willie Brisley states “We can’t physically control every inch of the border, but there is a border patrol and we do it as practically as we can.”<sup>15</sup>

## Assessing the demand for firearms

In November 2003, a research team from the Institute for Public Policy Research spent a week at the Namibian Police Firearms Unit analysing applications for firearm licences that were approved between 1 January 2003 and 31 October 2003. A sample of 4,389 licence applications was analysed, this amounted to 65% of the total number of applications in that period (6,746). (See Table 2).

**Table 2: Firearm licences 2003: sample**

	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Number of firearms</b>
Private	3,341	3,967
Business	111	144
Security	4	4
Embassy	30	274
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,486</b>	<b>4,389</b>

Source: Namibian Police

These figures are not representative of past firearm owners because they are drawn from the first ten months of 2003. However, the sample offers useful insights into current firearm ownership patterns in Namibia. Note that not all the information provided by applicants was verified by the police, and in some

<sup>9</sup> Email from Willie Brisley, Police Legal Advisor, Namibian Police, March 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Inspector Nangombe.

<sup>11</sup> Major-General S H Ndeitunga, first meeting of the Namibian National Focal Point, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Inspector Nangombe.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Inspector Nangombe.

<sup>14</sup> Two independent sources said they believed the amount of illegal weapons to far exceed the amount of legal ones.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Willie Brisley, Police Legal Advisor, Namibian Police. 29 September 2003.



cases it is possible that applicants may not have been entirely honest about their reasons for applying for a licence.

The 3,341 private firearm owners in the sample registered 3,967 firearms in the January-October 2003 period. Of these, 503 individuals indicated that they possessed one or more additional registered firearms, with one of these individuals claiming to own 52 registered firearms. Hence the total number of firearms is 5,586 for the period of review, which is an average of 1.7 firearms per owner.

As firearm licences are initially filed at local police stations (and this information is indicated on the application form), it was possible to determine the regional distribution of firearms ownership.

**Table 3: Private firearms by region, 2003**

<i>Region</i>	<i>No of firearms</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
Khomas	1,447	43.3%
Erongo	523	15.7%
Otjozondjupa	295	8.8%
Oshana	250	7.5%
Karas	166	5.0%
Hardap	119	3.6%
Caprivi	115	3.4%
Omaheke	87	2.6%
Omusati	85	2.5%
Kunene	83	2.5%
Ohangwena	70	2.1%
Kavango	59	1.8%
Oshikoto	41	1.2%
N/a	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,341</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Namibian Police*

Compared to other regions there were a disproportionate number of small arms in the Khomas Region (which includes the City of Windhoek). 43.3% of the firearms under review were licensed in this region. If one adds the firearms from businesses and security companies then 2,060 (or 46.9%), out of a total of 4,389 firearms are licensed in the Khomas Region.

There are two possible explanations for this. First, there may be a perception that violent crime is rife in the Khomas region, so people acquire firearms to protect themselves. Second, people working in Windhoek but living elsewhere may have registered their firearms in Windhoek in the belief that the process would be quicker in the capital city.

In the regions near the Angolan border – Kunene, Omusati, Ohangwena, Kavango and the Caprivi – a combined total of 12.3% of firearms licences were registered.

Within the sample of application forms, 52.4% of applicants indicated that they had bought their firearms from arms and ammunition dealers, while 34.9% stated that they had obtained their firearm from a private owner. The remainder acquired them through partnerships, associations or clubs. (See Table 4)



**Table 4: Owners of registered firearms**

	<b>Total owners</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Private	1,179	35.2%
Company (Firearm Shops)	1,364	40.8%
Closed Corporation	374	11.2%
Partnership	7	0.2%
Association	8	0.2%
Club	4	0.1%
Other	405	12.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,341</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Namibian Police

According to local firearm shop owners, new pistols, revolvers, rifles and shotguns mainly originate from China, the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, South Africa and the US. Inexpensive rifles from the Philippines and high-quality Italian shotguns are also available in firearm shops. Second-hand firearms tend to originate from Germany, South Africa or the US.

There is a common perception both inside and outside Namibia that it is a country of hunters and farmers. Many Namibians live in rural areas, and many of them use rifles and shotguns to shoot game and protect livestock from predators and thieves. According to Colonel Radmore, a military, security and explosives consultant in Windhoek, "Namibia is a gun country. A farmer will have at least two rifles or a shotgun and a rifle. He needs them to hunt, he needs them to feed his people."<sup>16</sup>

However, as this study reveals, current trends in firearms demand suggest that self-protection may be a stronger motivation for acquiring a firearm than hunting and protection of livestock and property. Table 5 analyses the reasons for needing a firearm as stated by the applicants.

**Table 5: Stated purpose for which firearm is required<sup>17</sup>**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>%</b>
Self Defence	2,282	68.3%	675	63.0%	1,600	70.8%
Hunting Professional	154	4.6%	76	7.1%	77	3.4%
Collector	77	2.3%	22	2.1%	55	2.4%
Heirloom	232	6.9%	70	6.5%	162	7.2%
Sports	110	3.3%	32	3.0%	78	3.5%
Replacement	10	0.3%	5	0.5%	5	0.2%
Securing Business	336	10.1%	170	15.9%	165	7.3%
Security Firm	6	0.2%	3	0.3%	3	0.1%
Hunting Non-Professional	211	6.3%	77	7.2%	133	5.9%
Other	161	4.8%	50	4.7%	109	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,579</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,387</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Namibian Police

More than 68% of the overall sample population indicated that they required a firearm for reasons of "self-defence" (70.8% urban and 63.0% rural). Many firearms acquired in the categories of "heirloom", "replacement of a disservice arm", "securing business", "security firm" and "other" may in reality have been

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Colonel Radmore.

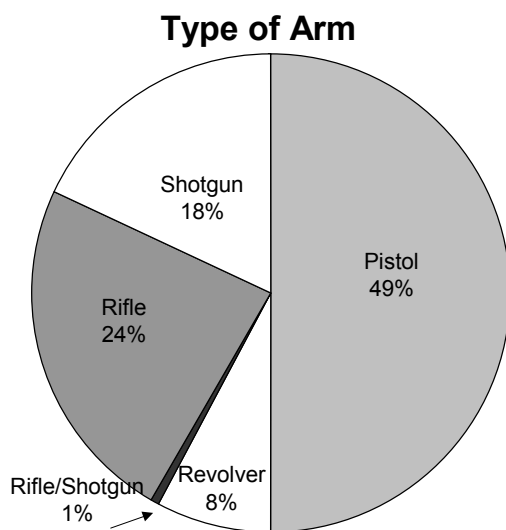
<sup>17</sup> The gun licence application form makes provision for the purpose for which the arm is required: "self-defence", "hunting professional", "collector", "heirloom", "sports", "replacement of a disservice arm", or "security firm". The research team added the categories of "hunting non-professional" and "other". Applicants are allowed to enter more than one reason for wanting a weapon.





acquired for self-defence purposes. Second, 57.9% of the registered firearms are pistols or revolvers rather than the shotguns and rifles more commonly used for hunting, farming or protection of livestock.

**Chart 1: Types of firearms in 2003 data set**



Source: Namibian Police

### Firearm Crime

Since independence, there has been a dramatic increase in crime in Namibia. John Grobler, in a report for the Institute for Security Studies, writes "...the newly acquired freedom of movement in the country and high, but unmet, expectations of the poor contributed to this increase."<sup>18</sup>

Although crime statistics are not published regularly in Namibia, the police was willing to make national crime statistics available to this project for the years 1995-2002. This data shows that the murder rate has fluctuated between 327 to 407 murders per year, with firearms used in a relatively small percentage of the crimes.

**Table 6: National Data Base of Firearm Licences**

	Murder with firearm	All murder	Firearms as % of total
1995	12	373	3.2%
1996	6	353	1.7%
1997	5	327	1.5%
1998	14	407	3.4%
1999	25	379	6.6%
2000	27	380	7.1%
2001	7	353	2.0%
2002	6	346	1.7%

Source: Namibian Police

The police say that the "vast majority" of firearm-related crimes are committed with illegal weapons or with firearms that are registered, but in the hands of unlawful users.<sup>19</sup> Mr Brisley says that "...in only a few instances" has a licensed firearm been used by its owner in a crime.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Grobler, John. 2003. "Namibia," in Peter Gastrow, Ed. *Penetrating State and Business Organised Crime in Southern Africa, Vol. 1*, South Africa, Institute for Security Studies, 2003. Page 21.



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The police has actively sought to patrol Namibia's borders and combat crime in general. However, according to Grobler, Namibia has a well-developed road and communications infrastructure, which makes it easier for organised criminal groups to operate. In addition, "...good relations between South Africa and Namibia facilitate easy cross-border movement for citizens, including criminals, some of whom also use Namibia to access Angola and other north western areas of Southern Africa."<sup>21</sup> Another problem, according to Clement Daniels, Director of the Legal Assistance Centre, is the lack of formal crime prevention initiatives in Namibia. "There is a bit of crime awareness but I do not see a national strategy."<sup>22</sup>

In the past, the Namibian Government has been criticised for the manner in which it distributes and employs its resources. For example, in the latest 2004/05 budget, combating of crime received an 11% increase to N\$361.6 million from N\$324.5 million in 2003/04 – almost entirely due to a N\$50 million increase in new vehicles. However, Robin Sherbourne of the Institute for Public Policy Research has pointed out that this allocation is similar to the combined expenditure on allocation to VIP Security (N\$34.6 million) and the Special Field Force (N\$267.4 million). There are also 2,419 constables employed to fight crime compared to 1,140 that protect VIPs. He adds, "This represents an extraordinarily high ratio of constables protecting VIPs compared to ordinary citizens."<sup>23</sup>

## **National, Regional and International Agreements**

Namibia is a signatory to a host of international and regional agreements. These include:

- The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) signed on July 2001 in New York.
- The African Union Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, signed December 2000 in Bamako, Mali.
- The Southern African Development Community Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, signed August 2001 in Blantyre, Malawi.
- The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Coordinating Organisation, Regional Plan of Action for implementing the SADC Protocol, signed September 2002 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

A National Conference was held in Windhoek from 7-9 October 2002 to lay the foundations for implementing these agreements, to raise public awareness about firearms, and to improve the international profile of Namibia as a country serious about reducing the traffic of illicit firearms.

One of the main decisions from this conference was to create a National Focal Point on Arms Management and Disarmament in order to prevent, combat and eradicate the spread of small arms and light weapons. The Focal Point was established in October 2003, and is headed by Commissioner V H Hifindaka of the Namibian Police. Two officials are represented from each of the following:

- The Namibian Police
- The Ministry of Defence, Namibian Defence Force
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Ministry of Finance, Customs Department
- The Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration Department
- The Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Wildlife
- The Attorney General's Office

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Inspector Nangombe.

<sup>20</sup> SaferAfrica and Saferworld. 2002. Page 80.

<sup>21</sup> Grobler, John. 2003. Page 19.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Clement Daniels, Director, Legal Assistance Centre. 27 January 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Sherbourne, Robin. 2004. "National Budget 2004/05: Election Fever?" Opinion No. 12, Institute for Public Policy Research (Windhoek, Namibia) March 2004. Page 5.





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- The Office of the President
  - The Namibia Non-Governmental Organisation Forum (NANGOF), representing civil society groups.

The Focal Point is in the process of compiling a five-year National Plan of Action. In 2004 it will begin hosting mapping workshops, planning meetings, law enforcement and civil society workshops, and a population survey. Regional Task Forces are being established in Namibia's 13 regions, each of which will be asked to implement the National Plan of Action at the regional level, conduct research and report back to the national Focal Point group. The South African-based non-governmental organisation, SaferAfrica will provide assistance in this regard.

According to Clement Daniels, who participates in the civil society meetings, "...civil society can play a serious role, create community awareness and do research but government needs to take the lead role." The police have made it clear that they want civil society involvement in this important issue. However, he says, "...the test will be how this Focal Point will operate in terms of levels of trust and information sharing."<sup>24</sup>

Namibia is striving to meet the commitments stipulated in the agreements it has signed, but faces two major challenges, namely a lack of resources to implement these agreements, and a porous border with Angola.<sup>25</sup> To date, Angola has not signed the SADC Protocol on Firearms, which is problematic for Namibia as there are large numbers of weapons from the Angolan civil war that have not been accounted for.

## **National Controls**

The Arms and Ammunition Act (1996) is thorough but was recently criticised by the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey in its 2003 Yearbook for not requiring applicants to undertake firearm competency tests, which "stems from a lack of money and personnel".<sup>26</sup>

Civilian firearm owners are required by law to register their firearms with the police. However, the total number of licensed firearms cannot be accurately determined, as an electronic database was created only in 1998, and was not reconciled with the manual database. This problem has largely been resolved through the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1996, which required all legal firearm owners to re-register their firearms with the police.

## **Weapons Collection and Destruction Programmes**

Many of the unregistered small arms in Namibia are the residue of the liberation struggle (1966-1989) and the civil wars in neighbouring Angola. Since 1992, the police, through a variety of campaigns, have sought to encourage members of the public to surrender unlicensed firearms. Generally, if an individual surrenders a firearm, then they will not be charged for the possession of an illegal firearm. However, these individuals are not provided with financial compensation.

The Namibian authorities destroy illegal weapons and ammunition. This is undertaken by the Namibian Defence Force, which since June 2003 has operated an ammunition destruction facility near Walvis Bay. Firearms themselves are destroyed through traditional methods like cutting.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mr Daniels.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Mr Brisley.

<sup>26</sup> Small Arms Survey. *Small Arms Survey 2003 - Development Denied*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 5 June 2003. Page 241.



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## Conclusion

Guns have played and continue to play a big role in Namibia. There is strong legislation in place that extensively covers firearms usage in Namibia. After having reviewed the process, it is the IPPR's determination that the police are careful in deciding which gun licence applications are approved or rejected. The fact that applicants are first investigated locally, must prove they have a safe and are then further investigated by the national police shows the process is thorough.

Although not all the information from the applications is compiled electronically, police officers are able to access the records quickly. But because approved licences are stored on different databases the exact number of legal firearms in Namibia is unknown. The police are committed to stamping out illegal gun usage but because resources are limited these firearms continue to pose a problem – how much so is also unclear.

In 2003, the vast majority of new gun licence registrations were issued to urbanites that say they want weapons for the reason of self-defence. This trend is underscored by the fact that the majority of guns registered were pistols and revolvers – not the rifles and shotguns more commonly used for hunting, sports and farming. But despite concerns over crime, the vast majority of murders are not committed with firearms.

This can beg the question as to why so many Namibians feel the need to defend themselves. More research should be done on Namibian conceptions of crime and personal safety. It may be that in reality these fears are overblown. On the other hand, depending on further research, it may prove that owning a firearm is good deterrence.

This report has to be considered a preliminary study, as much information and analysis concerning firearms demand, supply and transfer in Namibia is currently not available. That said, there are some tentative policy recommendations that can be made.

The recommendations are then as follows:

- The nature and extent of illegal firearms transfers from neighbouring countries, such as Angola need to be determined, so that appropriate policing and border control strategies can be devised.
- The full extent of firearm-related crime needs to be known. The police should seriously consider collecting and publishing reliable crime statistics on a regular basis, and in a more transparent manner. There is a possibility that negative perceptions of crime and policing among the general public would be reduced if such statistics were available for closer inspection.
- It is critical that the entire data set of successful applications for firearm licences is scrutinised, and that records in the pre-1996 database are reconciled with the current electronic National Database.

Crime is a significant problem in Namibia and it is necessary that more research be conducted into this important public policy area. The Institute for Public Policy Research intends to conduct further studies and hopes to be able to gauge where conceptions of crime, personal safety and the need for self-defence come from.

President Sam Nujoma regularly stresses the Government's commitment to fighting crime and maintaining the rule of law, peace and tranquillity in all parts of the country. With so many citizens worried about their self-defence, it is important that Government does more to make people feel safer, both through combating crime and through presenting a clearer picture of violent crimes in Namibia.

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