

Country Report 2008 – SWITZERLAND

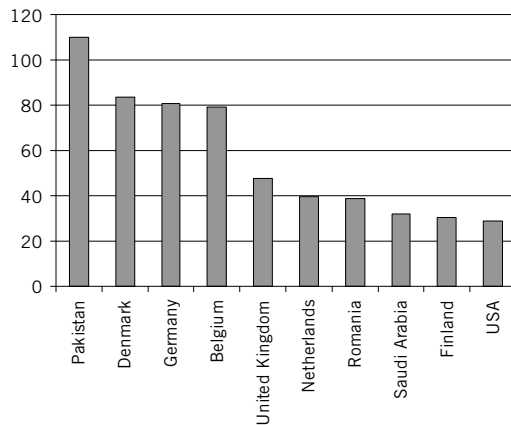
Compiled for the ENAAT annual meeting in Barcelona, 28-30th of May 2009

1. Swiss Arms Exports in 2008

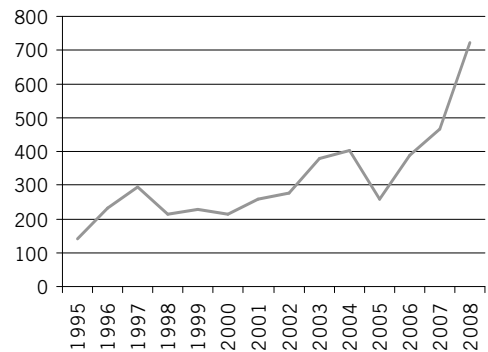
Swiss arms exports reached an all-time high in 2008, more than doubling the average figures of the previous years. According to SIPRI, Switzerland ranked as the 13th most important arms exporting country. Switzerland took the second place if arms export figures were weighted in relation to the population.

The increase of arms exports mainly is attributed to exports with destination Middle East:

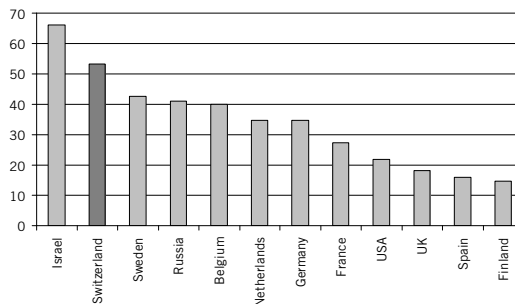
- *Rheinmetall Air Defence* profited from record deals with Pakistan and Saudi-Arabia.
- *MOWAG* sold large quantities of armored personnel carriers to several NATO countries in 2008. These vehicles will be deployed to Afghanistan soon or have already been shipped there.



Recipient countries of Swiss war materiel exports in 2008 (in Million CHF, 1 CHF ~ 0.65 Euro)



Swiss war materiel exports per annum (in Million CHF, 1 CHF ~ 0.65 Euro)



Arms exports per capita in 2008 according to SIPRI numbers.

2. Swiss Arms Industry

Although Switzerland has never been a major player in the overall arms equipment world market, there are some areas in which Swiss companies have a leading position, for example: Anti-aircraft artillery (*Oerlikon Contraves*), armored personnel carriers (*MOWAG*), “training” airplanes (*Pilatus*), small arms ammunition (*Ruag*), and special-forces rifles (*Swiss Arms / SIG*).

The Swiss arms industry traditionally focused on self-sufficiency and autarchy for national defense. With the end of the Cold War, the paradigm shifted swiftly to a more international approach. Most large Swiss arms manufacturers were either acquired by multinational corporations (*MOWAG* is now part of *General Dynamics*, the former *Oerlikon Contraves* belongs to *Rheinmetall DeTec*) or have become international players themselves: The state-owned *Ruag Holding* has bought scores of ammunition manufacturers all over Europe and the US during the past few years and has become one of Europe’s largest producer of ammunition for small arms.

3. Swiss Arms Export Legislation

Definitions

Swiss legislation contains two bodies of law that are concerned with arms equipment: The “Law on War Materiel” and the “Law on the Control of Goods”. The scope of application of both laws is based on the control lists of the Wassenaar Arrangement¹.

„Law on War Material“

Scope: Most equipment defined in the Munitions List of the Wassenaar Arrangement, i.e. guns, tanks, munition etc. However, one category of devices – called “special military goods” – is not treated in the Law on War Material, but in the Law on the Control of Goods. These “special military goods” include training simulators, special optical devices and – most importantly “training” airplanes.

Export restrictions until 2008: All exports of war material must be checked and approved by the state secretary of economy as well as the foreign ministry. If they don’t agree, the federal council (the Swiss government) has the final word. In the approval process, a number of conditions have “to be taken into account”: Human rights, regional stability, the goals of the Swiss foreign policy as well as “the interests of the Swiss export industry”. Of course, the economic interests always outweighed the humanitarian arguments.

New restrictions in 2008: In late 2008, the government changed the regulation on War Material, adding inter alia a phrase that states that all exports of war material to “countries involved in an international or internal armed conflict” were banned. It is not yet clear how the authorities will interpret this new regulation. At least all exports to Pakistan have been stopped for the moment.

The GSoA

The Group for Switzerland without an Army was founded in 1982, with the main goal of “civilizing” Swiss society by abolishing its army. While this may seem utopian, more than one third of the Swiss population supported this idea in a federal referendum held in 1989. Today, there are regional GSoA groups in all major Swiss cities, and around 20'000 members and supporters.

¹ <http://www.wassenaar.org/>

„Law on the Control of Goods“

Scope: All items of the Dual Use Lists of the Wassenaar Arrangement, as well as “special military goods”.

Export restrictions until 2008: No restrictions except for UN arms embargos.

New restrictions in 2008: In early 2008, Swiss TV reported that the Chadian army had used Pilatus “training” airplanes for attacks against refugee and/or rebel camps in Darfur. The public debate forced the Swiss government to slightly revise the regulations and add the option to stop deliveries of special military goods if they contradicted the “interests of the country”.

Transparency

Transparency rights with regard to arms trade are under-developed in Switzerland compared to other European countries. Even members of parliament only have access to very general statistics. One can obtain more information on Swiss arms exports from the Dutch custom transfer statistics than from the publications of the Swiss authorities.

3. Campaigning against Arms Trade

While there were various peaceful direct actions against arms companies in earlier years – especially at job fairs – most activities in 2008 concentrated on two federal popular initiatives. Popular initiatives are a direct democratic tool, which potentially can have a great impact. Even if the final referendum is lost, initiatives can help to raise awareness in the public and in the media.

Swiss Direct Democracy

A “popular initiative” is a proposal for an amendment to the federal constitution. If 100'000 signatures of Swiss citizens are submitted, a referendum is held. If the majority of the people and the federal states agree, the proposal becomes part of the Swiss constitution.

Initiative against Arms Exports

In September 2008, a coalition submitted well over 130'000 signatures in favor of the “popular initiative against arms exports”. While the popular initiative is supported by around 40 organisations (among them the Swiss social-democratic and Green parties), the GSoA contributed the majority of the signatures and will organise the public referendum campaign to a substantial part.

If accepted, the initiative would ban all exports of war materiel and special military goods as well as any arms trade from companies based in Switzerland. The referendum will be voted on presumably this November.

Initiative against the Purchase of New Fighter Jets

In early 2008, the Swiss government announced that it plans to purchase a new generation of fighter aircrafts. Immediately after this, the GSoA started an initiative that proposes a 10-year-moratorium for aircraft procurements. The collection of signatures was completed in May 2009. The vote will be scheduled in 2010 or 2011.