The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) has pledged to prevent, control and eradicate proliferation of illicit trade in line with the regional and international initiatives, standards and documents for control of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

For the purposes of organising efficient and effective response to countering illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has been consistently and fully implementing the commitments for prevention and control of firearms on the territory of North Macedonia. Therefore, it keeps making efforts for organised countering of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in terms of building the human, material and technical capacities so that it may be actively involved in the efforts of the international community for prevention and countering proliferation of illegal arms.

In order to coordinate all involved parties (state institutions, NGOs and other organisations), and take into account the majority of interrelated factors determining the type of intervention for arms control, the Government of the RNM in 2007 formed the National Commission of Small Arms and Light Weapons, headed by a president, and composed of a national focal point, members and secretary of the National Commission of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Considering that the proliferation and illicit trade in firearms and ammunition pose a constant threat to internal security, the Government of the RNM in March 2017 adopted the new 2017-2021 National Strategy and Action Plan for Control of Illicit Trade of SALW. The National Strategy represents a general framework of activities outlined in five (5) strategic goals, namely:

- Controlling the circulation and manufacturing of legal weapons and ammunition;
- Fighting illicit trade in weapons and prevention of armed incidents, proliferation, diversion and illegal possession;
- Cooperation and coordination at national, regional and international level;
- Building the capacities for countering illegal trade in arms;
- Reduction of supply, demand and misuse of firearms by awareness raising, education, information and lobbying.

This Strategy is a guide for promotion of the existing, as well as development of new measures, mechanisms and instruments for control, prevention and eradication of proliferation of SALW and its components, as well as ammunition.

During the EU and Western Balkan Summit held in London within the framework of the Berlin Process on 10 July 2018, the Western Balkan countries adopted the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024. The seven goals defined in the Roadmap were reflected as strategic goals of the National Strategy for Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the 2017-2021 Action Plan, revised in February 2019 for the purposes of harmonisation with the Roadmap.

For the purposes of harmonisation of the national legislation with the acquis, the RNM has implemented the Council Directive 91/477/EEC of the 18 June 1991 on control of the


With the intention of monitoring and further harmonisation with the acquis, a Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on Weapons was adopted in May 2018, which was aimed at alignment with the main postulates of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/2403 of 15 December 2015 establishing common guidelines on deactivation standards and techniques for ensuring that deactivated firearms are rendered irreversibly inoperable.

Furthermore, there is an ongoing process of harmonisation with the legal framework of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/337 of 5 March 2018 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/2403 of 15 December 2015. For full implementation of the Regulation there is ongoing drafting of a Rulebook for Technical Specifications for Deactivation of Firearms, the Outline and Content of the Form for Marking of Deactivated Firearms and the Outline and Content of the Certificate for Deactivation of a Firearm.

A new software solution is being developed for registration of licences for firearms of legal entities and natural persons. In addition to that, a computerised system is being set up for registration and online tracking of weapons on the territory of the RNM wherein will be included the weapons warehouses of legal entities. In other words, weapons will be registered since the moment they are transferred through the border crossing point and taken inside the country until they reach the end user – the buyer, pursuant to the Directive (EU) 2017/853.

With the cooperation and assistance by the UNDP, a new application for registration of weapons was developed, and it consists of components A and B. In order to launch it and thus improve the WRMS system functionality, i.e. for full implementation of the requirements of the abovementioned 2017 Directive, and along with it, the provisions of the Law on Weapons of the RNМ, it is necessary to develop an additional WRMS model, i.e. the B component. This component would enable the arms traders to keep a registry of firearms introduced or procured by another warehouse in the state and sold afterwards, which would enable tracking and identification of arms (category, manufacturer, model, calibre, and serial number and names and addresses of the persons who have bought and registered the weapons) at any given moment.

The establishment of Firearms Focal Points in the Ministry of Interior, i.e. full connection of relevant weapons databases for exchange and data collection, is one of the priority activities in the upcoming period.

Preventive activities for prevention of proliferation of illegal weapons and control of the legal weapons are aimed at developing our own expertise for work, development and implementation of practical methods for establishment and maintenance of efficient communication and cooperation between the police and the community in order to improve the efficiency and co-operability between the police and the citizens for prevention of armed violence.

In 2018, the Ministry of Interior carried out preventive activities regarding the use of firearms and pyrotechnic devices, which included several target groups such as business persons (owners of catering facilities, retail stores), private security agencies, representatives of local
self-governments, hunting associations, supporters’ groups and students from elementary and high schools. These preventive activities took various forms, such as:

- meetings of local prevention councils and of Citizen Advisory Groups,
- thematic meetings with citizens, topic-related participation in TV and radio shows,
- implementation of preventive projects, educational lectures, public fora accompanied with making of posters, flyers, brochures and leaflets,
- press releases and media announcements aimed at tackling the problem of use of weapons and pyrotechnic devices, especially during family and other celebrations, sports events and in the pre-New Year holiday period.

In order to raise awareness among citizens about the consequences of the use of firearms, firecrackers and other pyrotechnic devices during the New Year and Christmas holidays, the Ministry of Interior as a tradition, has conducted a campaign through its Sectors of Internal Affairs. As part of the campaign, the organisational units for prevention used posters with educational messages (400 posters in Macedonian and 200 posters in Macedonian and Albanian) designed by the Ministry of Interior, which were put up at the walls of the local self-government buildings, elementary and high schools, markets and other busy public spaces.

On 13 July 2018 on the occasion of the International Small Arms Destruction Day, 590 items of versatile, unusable and permanently damaged service weapons (semi-automatic, automatic rifles, pistols, etc.), which, due to technical malfunction are out of use of the MOI organisational units, were destroyed in the Feni Industry plants in Kavadarci.

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<th>Statistics on Illegal Trade of Firearms in 2018</th>
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<td>As part of the activities for prevention of illegal trade in weapons, a total of 188 (130) criminal acts of unauthorised manufacture, possession and trade in weapons or explosive materials were detected. In relation thereof, a total of 203 (140) perpetrators and two legal entities were reported, whereas two criminal acts were committed by unknown perpetrator. In addition, a total of 167 items of weapons were seized (86 guns, 22 hunting rifles, 12 grenades, 11 automatic rifles, seven revolvers, six hand grenades, four signaling guns (for auditory and light signalling), semiautomatic and air rifles and homemade guns – three of each, small-calibre rifles and hunting carbines – two of each and one item of the following: machine gun, handheld launcher, mine, service rifle, semiautomatic and gas pistol, as well as 5382 items of ammunition and 27545 firecrackers.</td>
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In terms of the type of seized arms, the tendency of seizure of guns continues, and after that follows the seizure of hunting weapons, whereas in 31% of the criminal acts, only ammunition has been seized.

The illicit trade and possession of illegal weapons is related with other types of criminal activities, which is confirmed by the fact that illegal weapons in ¼ of the cases was seized when clearing up criminal acts mostly in the area of violent and property crimes, as well as illegal drug trade.

A phenomenon of sale of signaling guns for light and auditory signaling has been identified („zoraki“ and „ekol tuna“ brands, originating from Turkey), which are then converted into firearms, and are procured from the Republic of Bulgaria, where no procurement license is necessary. There are indications that a part of the weapons remains in our country, and the other part is taken for conversion in Kosovo, wherefrom it is sold throughout the regional
countries and the EU Member States. Furthermore, there are indications that the money obtained from sale of such weapons in the Republic of Kosovo, are used by the perpetrators to procure automatic rifles which are then illegally imported in our country.

Apart from the criminal prosecution measures, 237 requests for initiation of a misdemeanour procedure were submitted against 241 persons, mostly on the grounds of procurement of weapons, illegal possession of ammunition, carrying weapons in violation of the provisions of the Law on Weapons. As part of these measures, a total of 72 items of weapons were seized (21 signalling guns for auditory and light signalling and 21 air rifles, 14 hunting rifles, 8 handguns, 2 gas pistols, 2 hunting carbines and 2 machine guns and 1 automatic rifle and small-calibre pistol, as well as 862 items of ammunition, 191 items of cold weapons, 33 sparklers, 42 electroshock weapons, 501 packages of pellets and one item of pistol imitation.