

# News Brief

## Ghana Begins Marking SA/LW

In March 2014, the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NACSA) began marking Ghanaian national security forces' small arms. As of 19 March, 1,000 military weapons received unique identification numbers, which will be used to create a database of state-owned arms.<sup>1</sup> Marking will soon commence on police and Custom Excise and Preventive Service weapons, among others.

According to Small Arms Survey, weapons marking is an often overlooked component of arms control, and "legislation and practical measures concerning the marking of firearms...are weak in a majority of African countries."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, adequate marking improves arms tracing capabilities, which can reduce the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) throughout countries.

In 2004, an estimated 56.8 percent of civilian-owned guns in Ghana were illicit (125,000 illicit small arms out of 220,000).<sup>3</sup> In 2005, however, NACSA unofficially estimated that 400,000 or more illicit SA/LW could be in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> Craft-production guns, part of traditional Ghanaian blacksmithing, remain prevalent throughout the country;

in 2005 Ghana had the potential "to produce... 200,000 illicit [craft-production guns] annually."<sup>5</sup>

NACSA Executive Secretary Jones Applerh said NACSA plans to mark all civilian and security force SA/LW and also hopes to develop a computerized data-management system to replace the current "laborious and unreliable" paper record-keeping system.<sup>1</sup> Applerh stated that "the marking exercise was the first of its kind in the West African sub-region."<sup>1</sup>

Ghana is one of several Economic Community of West African States member countries receiving support for arms marking.<sup>6</sup> The European Union is funding this project, which is coordinated by the African Union and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA), through July 2016.<sup>7</sup> RECSA hosted NACSA representatives during an arms marking study trip in June 2011 and provided Ghana two weapons-marking machines in 2012.<sup>8,1</sup> ©

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See endnotes page 51*