

Between organised crime and terrorism: Illicit firearms actors and market dynamics in Italy

FRANCESCO STRAZZARI AND FRANCESCA ZAMPAGNI

The illicit trade in firearms has been a key area of international concern since the late 1990s,¹ when large amounts of illicit firearms entered the European Union (EU) illicit firearms market after the end of the Cold War from stockpiles in neighbouring regions, especially the states of the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, since 2001 the threat of jihadist terrorism has been high on the EU agenda and with it the potential problem of arms trafficking to supply terrorist groups based in the EU. In a November 2012 speech Cecilia Malmström, the then-EU commissioner for home affairs, stated that the number of illicit firearms circulating in the EU exceeds the number of registered hunters and sports shooters, which total approximately 10 million.² More recently, the flaring up of armed conflicts close to the EU's borders, for example in Ukraine, the Middle East and North Africa, has raised concerns about the emergence of new sources of illicit firearms to supply the European market.

Italy was chosen as the subject of an in-depth study on illicit gun markets for several reasons. Firstly, the country plays a prominent role in the production of firearms in the EU and is considered a top global exporter of small arms and light weapons. According to TradeMap data, the volume of Italian firearms exports is increasing, with a value of US\$806 million in 2016.³ Secondly, Italy hosts a wide spectrum of organised criminal groups that have been a serious cause of concern to the authorities for some time. Criminal groups are generally considered to be the main drivers of the illicit firearms market in Europe. This market is also closely linked to other criminal activities, such as the trafficking of drugs, people, etc.⁴ Italian mafia organisations have long been considered the quintessential paradigm of organised crime: Europol still considers them 'unparalleled by any other European organised crime group' in terms of controlling territories and local administrations, and the

Calabria-based 'Ndrangheta is currently among the richest and most powerful organised crime groups in the world.⁵ Finally, Italy's geographical position makes it a strategic location for trafficking routes via the Mediterranean and the Balkans to continental Europe. The geographical proximity of Italy to areas of recent conflicts in the western Balkans has allowed Italian criminals to obtain weapons from former Yugoslavian states and other South-East European countries, and the country is also becoming an important transit route for the trafficking of illegal weapons to Northern Europe.⁶ It is important to point out that according to most estimates mafia-related firearms crimes have declined significantly since the 1990s, but firearms are nonetheless always found when the authorities uncover mafia storage facilities.⁷

This case study follows two main lines of inquiry. The first examines the illicit market for firearms in Italy, including its actors and dynamics. The second explores potential terrorist access to firearms in Italy, and possible connections between organised criminal groups and terrorists. Despite this two-pronged approach, it is nonetheless important to note that, as of this writing, no international terrorist attack has taken place in Italy since 1985, with the only partial exception being an attempted attack by a Libyan citizen in Milan in 2009. Other attacks attributed to the anarcho-insurrectionist movement, which, while claiming international connections, does not represent active internationally rooted groups, are mostly carried out with low-grade explosives and therefore do not involve firearms.

Box 1: Research design

Data were first collected through desk research covering primary sources and secondary literature. This early phase included the final reports of the European Commission-funded FIRE and EFFECT projects, as well as contacts with potential interviewees. We then moved on to an analysis of relevant press articles in Italian newspapers dealing with illicit firearms and arms seizures, mainly in the last three years (2015–2017). Based on our findings, we held informal discussions and/or semi-structured interviews with selected government officials, experts and journalists, with a continuous cross-feeding from media articles that led to more interviewees, as well as from interviewees' insights that led to further references to media sources. Finally, we attended events dealing with the topic of firearms and/or terrorism, such as the most important Italian firearms expo in Vicenza in February 2017 and other expert seminars.

Between March and May 2017 a total of 15 semi-structured interviews were held involving three categories of actors: nine representatives of national authorities that deal with organised crime and illicit trafficking; five experts on firearms and/or terrorism (including a practitioner, an academic, a lawyer, a firearms lobbyist and an NGO representative)⁸; and a journalist who followed media stories on firearms, organised crime and international terrorism in Italy. The interviews with government officials included representatives from relevant law enforcement agencies (e.g. national police services combating firearms trafficking and terrorism) and judicial agencies (e.g. the National Counter-mafia and Counter-terrorism Directorate, and prosecution offices), which were selected according to the extent of their involvement either in policy formulation and/or the fight against the illicit firearms market. One of the main challenges faced during the interview phase was the availability of public officials and police officers. These officials required authorisation from their superiors to take part in interviews, and the submission of formal requests via public relations or press offices proved to be extremely time-consuming. Overall, government officials were cooperative, with the clear understanding that we were not attempting to collect new data or examine sensitive/restricted information. A few officials were reluctant to share information due to the perceived sensitivity of the issues.

All the interviews were conducted in Italian, and different levels of confidentiality as to the identities of the sources were agreed with each respondent, ranging from full details, through partial details (the institution to which he/she was attached), to full anonymity. Only one respondent insisted on full anonymity. Table 1 lists the interviewees, together with their affiliations. To ensure their anonymity, the names are omitted and replaced by codes (using IT to identify Italy, and the number of the interview). The interviews were mostly conducted via phone, except with some national authorities, whose representatives were interviewed in their Rome headquarters. Informal conversations were also held with relevant respondents who were not available for an interview or who were asked for only a few insights in their areas of expertise.⁹

Consultation of the open-source Global Terrorism Database¹⁰ provided data on terrorist attacks in Italy. The database covers the period 1970–2015, with data disaggregated by year, type of attack, weapon(s) used and perpetrator(s). In order to investigate the terrorism-firearms nexus, we also examined judgments of the Corte Penale di Cassazione (the highest court of appeal in Italy) related to criminal association for the purposes of international terrorism (covering five sentences between 2013 and 2016). None of these cases referred to firearms.

Table 1: List of interviewees

Interview code	Interviewee	Date of the interview
IT-01	Prosecutor, Procura di Catania	06/03/2017
IT-02	Associazione Nazionale Produttori di Armi e Munizioni	09/03/2017
IT-03	Lawyer, <i>Armimagazine</i>	09/03/2017
IT-04	Researcher, University of Calabria	14/03/2017
IT-05	Professor, University of Calabria	15/03/2017
IT-06	Journalist, <i>La Stampa</i>	16/03/2017
IT-07	Head, Servizio Centrale Operativo, Polizia di Stato	23/03/2017
IT-08	Anonymous (government official)	23/03/2017
IT-09	Head, Arma dei Carabinieri	03/04/2017
IT-10	Rete Italiana Disarmo	04/04/2017
IT-11	Prosecutor, Direzione Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo	06/04/2017
IT-12	Prosecutor, Procura Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo	07/04/2017
IT-13	Servizio Centrale d'Investigazione sulla Criminalità Organizzata, Guardia di Finanza	18/05/2017
IT-14	Servizio Centrale Antiterrorismo, Dipartimento Centrale Polizia di Prevenzione	18/05/2017
IT-15	Prosecutor in charge of the SIDDA/SIDNA database, Direzione Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo	25/05/2017

The report is divided into three main sections. Section 1 presents the Italian legislative framework dealing with firearms, law enforcement agencies dealing with illicit firearms and counter-terrorism, and policies to deal these phenomena. Section 2 examines the characteristics of the Italian illicit firearms market, including its actors, the types and prices of firearms that were identified, and procurement methods. Finally, Section 3 examines the issue of terrorism, including internal terrorism in Italy since the 1970s, and the connections between organised criminal groups and terrorists in the recent past. The section concludes by examining Islamist terrorism and the terrorism-illicit firearms nexus in Italy (which is largely absent).

1. National policy to combat (terrorist access to) illicit firearms

1.1 Legislative context

1.1.1 Firearms-related laws

The Italian Constitution provides that the state has exclusive legislative powers in matters concerning state security: firearms, ammunition and explosives fall squarely within this category.¹¹ Our respondents consider the Italian system of firearms control to be the most stringent in Europe after that of Germany, by restricting the acquisition, possession and carrying of firearms through a licensing system. It bans fully automatic weapons and severely restricts the acquisition of other types of weapons. A constitutional right to bear arms is not part of the Italian legal tradition. Instead, the development of Italian gun-control law has mirrored the turbulent history of the country. The current licensing system dates back to Royal Decree 733, entitled *Testo unico delle leggi di pubblica sicurezza* (TULPS), of 18 June 1931 (art. 35). This decree was issued at the time of the fascist regime's consolidation of police powers, and precisely regulates state control of the activities of private individuals that could adversely affect public security. In the same period the Criminal Code of 1930 regulated the illegal possession of arms (e.g. art. 697).

The Italian legislative framework on firearms thus has deep historical roots; however, it is extremely fragmented due to the many amendments that have changed its nature. The following overview is therefore not comprehensive, but is rather meant to touch on key aspects. On 2 October 1967 Law 895 on the control of weapons of war entered into force. It was extended to common firearms by Law 497 of 14 October 1974, due to the emergence of political terrorism on the national scene in a phase that – quite tellingly – would be remembered as *anni di piombo* (the years of lead).

Law 110 of 18 April 1975, with further amendments, introduced new administrative and criminal rules that systematised the different types of firearms and weapons-related crimes. The TULPS and Law 110 of 1975 also regulate the weapons, ammunitions and explosives of the 'Armed Forces and the Armed Corps of the State': simply put, they state that proper authorisation is required to use them. These provisions exempt the police from the need to obtain authorisation to use weapons, weapons parts, ammunition and explosives in the exercise of their duties.¹²

Box 2: Classification of firearms in Italy: weapons of war and common firearms

Law 110 of 18 April 1975 (L.110/1975) distinguishes between weapons of war (*arma da guerra*) and common firearms (*arma comune da sparo*) (art. 2).

Weapons of war include weapons that are designed for use in war: bombs; chemical and radioactive agents; lethal combat devices of all kinds; and explosive shells. The same category includes firearms used in war. These are weapons that can be operated with the same ammunition as weapons of war, can be fired automatically, or have ballistic characteristics similar to weapons of war. In terms of firearms, their lethal potential is evaluated according to their degree of automation: thus, fully automatic firearms, firearms that can fire in bursts and some automatic firearms are classified as weapons of war or war-type firearms. Private individuals are forbidden to access such weapons (L.110/1975, art. 10).¹³ A dedicated unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the *Unità per le Autorizzazioni dei Materiali di Armamento* (UAMA), controls the export, import, and transit of weapons of war and related equipment.

Common firearms are all non-war-related firearms, and are divided into shooting firearms (L.85/1986, art. 2; L.110/1975, art. 10) and hunting firearms (L.157/1992, art. 13). Sports shooting weapons include both long and short firearms that because of their structural and mechanical characteristics can be exclusively used for sports activities.¹⁴ Common firearms used for hunting include shotguns with the following characteristics:

- a smoothbore barrel, with two strokes, repeating or semi-automatic, with a magazine containing no more than two cartridges of a calibre not exceeding 12 gauge;

- a rifled barrel, with a single-handed manual or semi-automatic action, of a calibre not less than 5.6 mm, with a shell of a height not lower than 40 mm; or
- two or three barrels combined, one or two of which are smoothbore barrels with a calibre not exceeding 12 gauge, or one or two rifled barrels with a minimum calibre of 5.6 mm.

According to L.85/1986 (art. 2), the Ministry of the Interior and the national Commission on Firearms had the power to decide whether a firearm qualified as a common firearm, and these were listed in an annex to the National Catalogue of Firearms. With the abolition of the catalogue and the commission (see section 1.1.2), the common juridical opinion is that the Ministry of the Interior has the sole power to make such decisions.¹⁵

As in most countries,¹⁶ Italy requires no licence or registration process to own and operate blank-firing firearms. Such firearms are included in the category of 'tools convertible into firearms' (previously called 'toy weapons', L.110/1975, art. 5). They are divided into those made of metal and those of other materials (e.g. plastic, wood, etc.). Both types must be constructed so that they cannot be turned into lethal weapons that can fire bullets. Only those made of metal must have a fully blocked barrel and must not be able to fire any kind of live ammunition. In addition, the barrel must be closed by a non-removable red cap.

Finally, Interior Ministry internal administrative notes (*circolari*) indicate how policy should be implemented.¹⁷

Crimes related to firearms can be grouped into two categories:

1. illicit actions as such: the embezzlement, theft and possession of firearms with subversive intentions; the removal of serial numbers; the manufacture of fake branded weapons; and the alteration/reactivation of firearms; and
2. actions considered to be illicit without proper authorisation: the manufacture, import, selling, transfer, export, possession and carrying of weapons.¹⁸

In addition to the requirement to ensure the proper storage of legitimately held weapons (detailed specifications for weapons storage containers are provided by law), there is an obligation to immediately report to the competent authorities any theft of weapons and explosive materials, and to record all daily operations related

to firearms (transfer, transportation, etc.). According to the TULPS (art. 41), agents and officials of the Judicial Police who receive reports of the presence of illegal firearms, ammunition or explosive materials in any public or private venue or home are obliged to immediately institute a search for such materials in order to seize them.

1.1.2 Firearms licences

In Italy it is illegal to carry weapons in public places, but the law provides for different types of gun licences that are issued to applicants only after the conclusion of a formal, centralised procedure managed by the Ministry of the Interior. Two kinds of authorisation are needed to legally purchase firearms:

1. An 'authorisation to purchase' (*nulla osta all'acquisto e detenzione*)¹⁹ allows the holder to purchase and own a firearm, but not to carry or use it. It is valid for 30 days and for only one purchase. An authorisation to purchase is also needed to inherit firearms from a deceased estate.
2. A licence to carry (*licenza di porto d'armi*) allows more purchases until the expiry date. It is valid for one year (for concealed carrying) or six years (for sports shooting and hunting).

The local police headquarters (*questura*) issue both authorisations. To obtain either type of licence, an applicant must be 18 or older, and provide proof of service in the armed forces or police, or a certificate of his/her ability to handle weapons (usually issued by a national sports shooting club). This documentation must not have been obtained more than ten years before the application is made. Finally, the applicant must have a clean criminal record (as verified by the police) and must not be mentally ill or be a known abuser of or addicted to alcohol or illegal drugs.

There are four types of nationally valid licences to carry firearms:

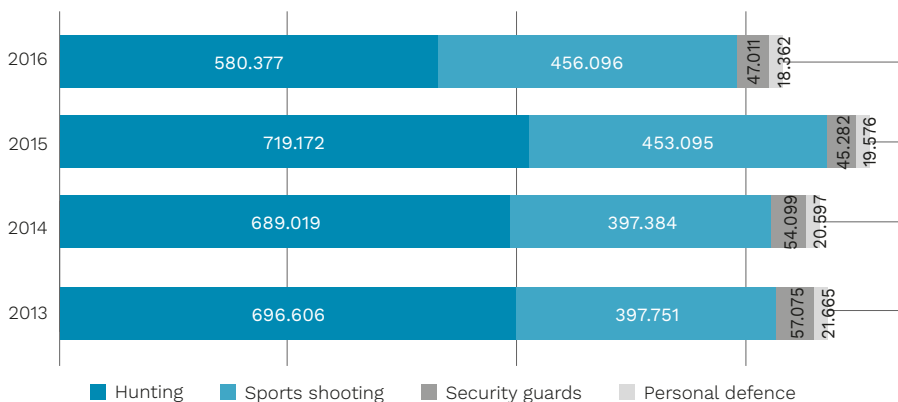
1. *Hunting licence*. This allows the licence holder to carry hunting weapons²⁰ only during the hunting season and only in game reserves. When transporting them outside game reserves, the weapons must be kept unloaded and locked in their case.
2. *Sports shooting licence*. Licence holders are allowed to transport firearms unloaded and stored in a proper case from their home to an authorised shooting range or to another safe place to practise shooting. A private area used for this purpose must be reasonably distant from roads and inhabited areas, and not accessible to unauthorised people. The licence holder can

therefore transport his/her gun anywhere through the national territory, although these guns can only be used in the designated places referred to above and must never be left unattended during transportation. Six sports shooting firearms can be owned, while common arms (for hunting) are limited to three.

3. A licence to carry a concealed firearm (known as a licence for 'personal defence'). This allows a citizen to carry a handgun for personal defence. This kind of licence is usually much harder to obtain than the other two firearms licences, it must be renewed yearly (while hunting and sports shooting licences are valid for six years), and the applicant has to provide a valid reason for carrying a concealed gun (e.g. someone who sells valuable goods such as jewellery). Unlike the other two licences, this one is issued by the *prefettura* (prefecture) and not *questura*.²¹
4. A special licence to carry for private security personnel. This licence differs from the standard licence to carry a firearm in that it has to be renewed every two years and costs less to obtain. The open carrying of handguns is not explicitly forbidden by law, but is de facto permitted only for on-duty security personnel. Some officials such as state police, prefects, and prosecutors can buy and carry guns for self-defence without a licence.

The Ministry of the Interior does not publicly release official numbers of firearms licences, but according to a media source citing the ministry we estimated the following numbers (Figure 1 and Table 2).

Figure 1: Number of licences issued, 2013-2016



Source: Corriere della Sera (2017)

Table 2: Security guard and personal defence licences issued for long-barrelled and short-barrelled firearms, 2013-2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Security guards (short-barrelled)	56,396	53,368	44,734	46,381
Security guards (long-barrelled)	679	731	548	630
Personal defence (short-barrelled)	21,200	20,162	19,117	18,034
Personal defence (long-barrelled)	465	435	459	328

Source: Corriere della Sera (2017)

According to another media source, the numbers differ slightly. According to this source, in 2015 the total number of issued licences was 1,265,484, of which 774,679 were for hunting (12.4% higher than 2014), 470,821 were for sports shooting (18.5% higher than 2014) and 19,984 for self-defence (4.7% lower than 2014).²²

The number of sports shooting licences has increased enormously over the last few years – particularly since 2015 – because it is easier and cheaper to obtain licences. Several media sources²³ and interviewees have highlighted how, in order to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the concealed carrying licence, in recent years more and more people have taken out sports shooting and hunting licences. There is no effective official control of the veracity of the activities for which the applicant claims these licences will be used (i.e. no required number or type of sports shooting activities).

1.1.3 Counter-terrorism laws

The control system in place in Italy aims at preventing any illicit access to firearms for subversive purposes; as such, it also limits terrorist access. In addition, Italian law has a system of provisions specifically targeting terrorism, whose roots are to be found in the country's recent past. Association for the purposes of terrorism, including international terrorism, or for the purposes of subversion of the democratic order (*associazioni con finalità di terrorismo anche internazionale o di eversione dell'ordine democratico*) are the specific object of article 270-bis of the Italian Criminal Code. This article was introduced by Law 15 of 1980 to control the subversive movements that attempted to undermine the democratic order of the state during the 1970s (see section 3.1). It was amended after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 by Law Decree 374 of 18 October 2001, 'Urgent Measures to Combat International Terrorism', which was converted into Law 438 of 15 December

2001; this law introduced the offence of international terrorism in article 270-bis of the Criminal Code.

Law 34 of 14 February 2003 ratified the UN Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Attacks by the Use of Explosives through article 280-bis of the Criminal Code. The development of emergency legislation was subsequently accelerated after the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 through Law Decree 155 of 27 July 2005 entitled 'Urgent Measures for the International Combating of Terrorism' (known as 'Decreto Pisanu', according to the then-minister of the interior), subsequently converted by Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005. The provision gave new powers to the police to identify terrorists (and non-residents could be given a residence permit as a reward for providing useful information in terrorist investigations); extended the use of telephone tapping; extended the period for which electronic data can be stored; and extended to the armed forces the power to identify and detain people and means of transport on the spot. Detention in prison was permitted for a crime even if it was normally punishable by a 'soft' sanction if it was committed for the purposes of terrorism. The arrest of those suspected of planning acts of terrorism was also permitted.

The most recent urgent counter-terrorism measure adopted by the government is Law Decree 7 of 18 February 2015 entitled 'Urgent Measures for Countering Terrorism, Including International Terrorism', which was converted with amendments to Law 43 of 17 April 2015. It introduced new measures for the expulsion of foreigners in order to prevent terrorism, for interviews of detainees by directors of the security services for the purposes of obtaining information that could prevent terrorist activities, the processing of personal data by the police, etc. With an amendment to article 270 quinquies of the Criminal Code, Italian lawmakers intended to sanction not only the person providing training in the use of firearms for the purposes of terrorism, but also the person receiving such training (carrying a sentence of five to ten years' imprisonment). The same punishment is applied to someone self-training him-/herself to use firearms; with training courses conducted through IT being an aggravating factor.

In terms of international compliance, Italy has adopted EU Directive 91/477/EEC through the Law Decree 527/1992, which was then integrated with Law Decree 121/2003 and further modified by Law Decree 204/2010, which adopted EU Directive 2008/51/EC. Law Decree 204/2010 introduced the definition of a firearms broker as 'a person or entity, other than a dealer, whose trade or business consists wholly or in part of the sale, acquisition and organisation of the transfer of arms, ammunition and parts thereof, without having the material available'. According to an interviewee, Italy's compliance with the relevant EU directives is comprehensive and far

exceeds EU requirements.²⁴ Italy has also ratified UN Protocols against Organised Transnational Crime (Law 146/2006) and the UN Arms Trade Treaty (2013).

1.2 National authorities

No single Italian authority is specifically dedicated to combating the illicit firearms market. The illicit possession and/or use of firearms applies to each criminal sector (organised crime, drug trafficking, petty crime, etc.), so the various law enforcement and judicial authorities active in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illicit trafficking all effectively tackle the illicit circulation of firearms (see Figure 2).

Due to the prominent presence of mafia groups and organised crime in Italy, at the judicial level the most relevant body is the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Bureau (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo, or DNA), which is the coordinating judicial body enforcing anti-mafia legislation. The DNA is responsible to the Corte di Cassazione (the highest judicial court), which falls under the Ministry of Justice. District sections (DDA) are located in the 26 regional capitals where courts of appeal sit and are in charge of the investigation and prosecution of organised crime, mafia-type activities and terrorism. In 1991 the specialised Anti-Mafia Investigative Department (Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, or DIA) was set up to carry out preventive investigations related to organised crime.

In terms of law enforcement, the main police forces in Italy are the State Police (Polizia di Stato, or PS) and the Arma dei Carabinieri, both with national jurisdiction and respectively under the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Defence. The Polizia di Stato is a civilian police force, while the Carabinieri is a military force. The Polizia di Stato operates under the Directorate for Public Security (Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza): it provides general police services throughout Italy, and has police stations (*questure*) in every major city and town. The Polizia di Stato's Rome headquarters (the Servizio Centrale Operativo, or SCO), which falls under the Direzione Centrale Anticrimine (which in turn is under the Directorate for Public Security) coordinates *questure* flying squads and investigations of organised crime.

The Directorate for Public Security also includes the head office of the Polizia di Stato: the Central Police Directorate for Crime Prevention (Direzione Centrale della Polizia di Prevenzione, or DCPD). The DCPD is in charge of the prevention of and fight against internal and international terrorism. Among DCPD units there is the Anti-Terrorism Central Section (Servizio Centrale Antiterrorismo), which coordinates the local offices of the General Investigations and Special Operations Division

(Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali, or DIGOS). The DIGOS is a special operational division of the Polizia di Stato that acts as its intelligence branch; it has an office in each provincial headquarters (*questura*) of the Polizia di Stato. It is charged with investigating sensitive cases involving terrorism, organised crime and serious offences, and it periodically reports to the minister of the interior and the chief of police.

The Carabinieri is a military police force that historically belongs to the wider family of European gendarmerie, with both military responsibilities and general responsibility for maintaining civilian public order. The Carabinieri includes a special operations group called the Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (ROS), which is its main investigative branch for dealing with organised crime and terrorism. It was created from the remains of the Special Anti-terrorism Unit, which was established in the 1970s mainly to combat domestic terrorism. Having defeated the Red Brigades in the 1980s, the Special Anti-terrorism Unit was also employed to investigate organised crime, especially during the phase of escalating military-style attacks organised by the Sicilian Cosa Nostra during the first half of the 1990s. Among the investigative methods used by the ROS, one of the most effective (and most dangerous for the agent concerned) is the undercover infiltration of gangs; this method is used in investigations into narcotics; kidnapping; money laundering; and the smuggling of firearms, ammunition and explosives.²⁵ The ROS has an internal unit for counter-terrorism that has three sub-sections: religious terrorism, left-wing terrorism and right-wing terrorism.²⁶

The Guardia di Finanza (Financial Crime Police) is a militarised police force under the authority of the minister of economics and finance that addresses activities connected with financial and economic crimes (such as various financial crimes, organised crime, smuggling, international drug trafficking, illegal immigration, terrorist financing and copyright violations). Its Servizio Investigazione della Guardia di Finanza (SCICO) is responsible for preventing and suppressing criminal infiltration of the Italian economic sector.

The secret services also deal with firearms crimes, organised crime and terrorism. The External Information and Security Agency (Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna, or AISE) has the task of researching and processing all the information needed to defend the independence, integrity and security of the Republic from threats from abroad. The Internal Intelligence Agency (Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna, or AISI) deals with any internal threat and subversive activity, and any form of criminal or terrorist aggression. The Department of Security Information (DIS), which is responsible to the prime minister, coordinates the planning of research, analysis, and operations by the AISE and AISI.²⁷

The Committee for Strategic Anti-terrorism Analysis (Comitato Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo, or CASA) is an inter-agency committee chaired by the chief of police and with members from the Polizia di Stato, Carabinieri, secret services (the AISE and AISI), Guardia di Finanza, and Directorate for Prisons Administration (Dipartimento Amministrazione Penitenziaria). The CASA deals with current national and international threats, but not at an investigative level. Because all the information it deals with is highly sensitive, we were not granted an interview.²⁸

In terms of the ballistics and forensics sector, the Scientific Investigation Department of the Carabinieri (RIS) and the Italian Scientific Police (Polizia di Stato) are both national bodies and have the same duties of cooperating in investigations and sharing ballistics information via the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS).

1.3 Policy

An analysis of Italian policy to combat the illicit firearms market and terrorist access to firearms requires an examination of both policies to control firearms and policies to counter organised crime and terrorism.

1.3.1 Policies to control firearms

Licensing requirements

The police have adopted a policy of limiting licence renewals in order to control firearms. In the last few years the number of licences issued for personal defence has decreased, due to increased refusals by *questure* (Table 2). The principle of self-defence has formed part of Italian law since 1930 under article 52 of the Criminal Code. In 2006 (Law 59), the definition of self-defence was widened, allowing a weapon to be used for self-defence in certain specific circumstances. A new reform further extending the circumstances in which firearms can be used for self-defence is under discussion at the time of writing, although it has been subjected to considerable criticism.²⁹

Moreover, Law Decree 121/2013, which has been implemented since May 2015, introduced the requirement of a health certificate proving an applicant's psycho-physical fitness for the issuance of a firearms licence. Such a certificate is issued by local health agencies or by military or State Police medical offices and health facilities. After 2015, hundreds of firearms were handed over to the police by private individuals who could not comply with the health certificate requirement.³⁰

Registration

Italian law prescribes that any rifled firearm imported or manufactured in Italy after 1976 should bear a serial number assigned by a commission composed of government officials and representatives from the Italian arms industries. The commission's role was to decide if a rifled firearm should be classified as either a weapon of war or a common firearm. The National Catalogue of Firearms (Catalogo Nazionale delle Armi Comuni da Sparo) described the characteristics of the weapon (barrel and overall length, number of rounds in the magazine and other technical specifications); these characteristics could not legally be altered without resubmitting the weapon to the commission for reclassification. In 2012 the catalogue and the related commission were abolished by the Economic Stability Law.³¹ Their place was taken by the Banco Nazionale di Prova (National Proof House, or BNP) in Gardone Val Trompia, which is institutionally the technical supervisor of the conformity of firearms and ammunition to technical and legal standards, and can therefore be considered the 'registry office' of all weapons produced in Italy and most that are imported. The BNP admits or rejects firearms pending importation from non-CIP³² countries, while simultaneously maintaining an electronic record of the characteristics (long or short firearm, European firearms category, manufacturer, magazine capacity, etc.) of the firearms whose sale is permitted. The number of tested firearms is publicly available (Table 3); however, no track is kept of where these arms go after proofing.

Table 3: Firearms registered by the National Proof House, 2011-2015

Type of firearm	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Long firearms (hunting and sport)	381,136	406,576	500,617	439,144	N/A*
Short firearms (sports and common)	149,672	214,955	260,620	190,430	N/A
Replicas and muzzle-loading firearms**	74,597	96,441	122,692	113,674	N/A
Blank-firing firearms	127,032	92,347	113,958	95,217	N/A
Single parts	27,110	37,263	29,756	40,356	N/A
Total	759,547	847,582	1,027,643	878,821	797,037

Source: BNP

* Data not available.

** These are not considered to be firearms in many EU countries.

The BNP does not classify arms according to their civil or military use (as the catalogue was meant to), with this having been clarified by Annex 1 to Directive 91/477/EEC.³³ Although Italian law requires marking only for common firearms, Italian firms already voluntarily mark military weapons during the manufacturing process. Moreover, the Ministry of Defence must test all military weapons manufactured by private industry.³⁴

Each firearm is marked with a unique serial number, the year of import, the country of origin and the marking of the Italian Republic (or some other marking for firearms imported from a country outside the EU).³⁵ A firearm is considered illegal if it does not have one of these marks (L.110/1975, art. 11). With the exception of Germany, the Italian BNP is very advanced and is considered one of the best among CIP countries.³⁶ Due to the experiences of the 1970s – during which kidnappings, knee-cappings, robberies, executions and bombings were ubiquitous – Italy has developed an advanced legal framework for the deactivation and demilitarisation of firearms.³⁷ Firearms certified by the BNP are no longer convertible.

Record keeping

According to interviewees, it is impossible to keep track of registered firearms in Italy. The BNP has a record of firearms, but does not know where they are, while the producer does not know what happens to its firearms after they are sold: ‘A firearm’s identity card exists only for a short time after the firearm’s production, but it does not follow the firearm throughout its life.’³⁸

In terms of record keeping, Italian law requires licensed firearms dealers to verify the eligibility of purchasers (through licences) and maintain records of gun purchases, which must be forwarded to the police on a monthly basis.³⁹ Each gun shop provides data to local police headquarters, but no harmonised database of licences is available to gun shops.⁴⁰

Italian law enforcement agencies collect data when weapons are stolen and on recovered firearms reported by all police forces across the national territory, and these data are included in the inter-forces database (Sistema d’Indagine, or SDI).⁴¹ The SDI is run by the Criminal Police Central Directorate.⁴² According to the UAMA, Italian national databases contain all the information related to a firearm’s recorded movements (stolen, illegally acquired, bought or owned by private individuals, destroyed, seized, removed from depositories, unmarked, etc.), and records are kept for 50 years.⁴³

Information on firearms is also stored in the IBIS database (known as the Archivio Ballistico Nazionale Elettronico), which is checked whenever a firearm is found,⁴⁴ but this information is not exhaustive and often it is impossible to ascertain the origin of the firearm.⁴⁵ When firearms are seized, they are generally sent to the RIS (Carabinieri) to check if they have been used previously in other incidents. The authorities in charge check both IBIS and the Interpol Ballistic Information Network (IBIN). Because organised crime groups, especially mafia groups, generally use a weapon only once, IBIS often fails to provide a positive match.

1.3.2 Policies to combat organised crime and terrorism

Italy is the country of origin of some of the most important organised criminal groups that are capable of acting on a global scale in any type of illicit trafficking (see section 2.2). It is worth emphasising how the territorial roots of these organisations, their ability to infiltrate legal markets, the international ramifications of their presence and their extraordinary capacity for social conditioning have compelled the Italian state to develop one of the most advanced anti-mafia laws in the world.⁴⁶ When the recent surge in international terrorism required preventive and investigative structures, these were already in place in Italy as a result of the fight against mafia groups. Another peculiarity of the Italian context and its rich history of politico-criminal violence is that criminal organisations appear to have started using terror tactics as a result of their strategic interaction with repressive state action.

During the 1970s counter-terrorism measures were part of emergency legislation, while during the 1980s these measures focused on the collaboration of (internal) terrorists with the justice system. In the 1990s Italy changed its approach to addressing terrorism: the new generation of counter-terrorism measures aim not only at repressing the phenomenon, but also preventing it.⁴⁷ From the brief analysis of the reconstruction of the major interventions in the anti-terrorism law framework since 2000 (see section 1.1), one can observe how in the past 16 years the government has adopted three law decrees (emergency laws) to tackle the threat constituted by the rise of a new form of international terrorism. One may observe that – as elsewhere in Europe and beyond – this process was incident-driven, or anchored in emotional waves among the public triggered by terrorist attacks, and there was therefore limited capacity to shape a harmonious and organic preventive strategy. In a nutshell, the legislative approach is aimed at countering terrorism with increased preventive measures by extending the areas/activities covered by the law, so as to cast a wider net and impose more severe prison sentences in the hope of neutralising threats and preventing attacks.⁴⁸ From 2001 the focus has been on the prevention of Islamist radicalisation and jihadist recruitment by criminalising

assistance to associates, such as, among other things, imposing severe sentences for all criminal associations, including terrorist ones; the expulsion of imams⁴⁹ accused of fomenting hatred; monitoring places frequented by Islamist radicals and jihadist suspects; and establishing an Islamic Council (Consulta per l'Islam Italiano) under the Ministry of the Interior.⁵⁰

More recently, the most significant step was the inclusion of anti-terrorism powers under the DNA since April 2015.⁵¹ To better operate in the new field of counter-terrorism, DNA prosecutors are improving staff training and developing international cooperation with Eurojust and the judicial authorities of other countries, especially Balkans countries, including excellent cooperation with Albania and Serbia.⁵² All national authorities dealing with the fight against illicit firearms markets appear to have been involved in tackling organised crime and internal terrorism since around the 1990s, and have improved their skills to deal with the new challenges presented by international terrorism.

The DNA and its SIDDA/SIDNA database constitute a reference and analysis centre for the Italian judicial information system. SIDDA/SIDNA is the Sistema Informativo Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia/Sistema Informativo Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (at the district level of DDA and the national level at the DNA). This is one of the most advanced databases in the world (especially among those for judicial use), which allows data processing related to serious crimes⁵³ throughout the country.⁵⁴ It draws on data from over 50 remote databases, including all Italian police and administrative databases, as well as those of phone companies. By preventing the fragmentation of information on terrorism-related offences, it provides timely support to judicial and non-judicial evaluations. Big data and modern analytical tools allow preventive measures to be taken based on the availability of real-time data.⁵⁵ Furthermore, there is constant information exchanges among the prosecutors in the DDA and DNA, since local DDA deal with criminal offences potentially related to terrorist-subversive criminality (so-called 'flag crimes').⁵⁶ The illegal possession of arms and explosives is considered a flag crime. The Italian Ministry of Justice has made the SIDDA/SIDNA database available to the Serbian Special Prosecutor's Office fighting organised crime.⁵⁷ The national anti-mafia and anti-terrorist prosecutor stated that 'Our aim is to export this database system to all the prosecutors in the Balkans region, in order to harmonise the various systems ... if we all have the same system, it will be easier to communicate and exchange data'.⁵⁸

2. Characteristics of the illicit firearms market in Italy

As with other EU countries, most weapons circulating in Italy's black market come from the legal market and are diverted into illegal environments. Illicit production, mostly by small-scale craftsmen, represents only a small share of the market.

2.1 Size of the illicit market

There are only a few studies of the illegal firearms market in Italy, with rough estimates of its size and proceeds. Existing international estimates assess the size of the illegal firearms market at between 10% and 20% of the total volume of the legal market.⁵⁹ Reliable and accurate official data on legal firearms possession in Italy is currently not available. Although weapons should all be reported to the authorities, at present there is no accurate and official available data on legally held firearms in the country. The last available data from the EURISPES report (2008) mentions 10 million firearms in Italy.⁶⁰ In addition, the specialised website Gunpolicy.org provides unofficial and outdated estimates of privately owned firearms in Italy (both licit and illicit), with a total of around 7 million firearms, as well as government firearms, 1,600,000 of which are owned by the military and 420,000 by law enforcement agencies. The National Association of Arms and Ammunition Producers (Associazione Nazionale Produttori Armi e Munizioni, or ANPAM) has stated that the market for sporting firearms and ammunition had a total turnover of €100 million in 2016, 50% of which was constituted by ammunition, 25% by long firearms with smoothbore barrels, 12.5% by long-barrelled rifled firearms, and 12.5% by handguns.⁶¹

Because reliable data and sources that could be triangulated are lacking, it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of illicitly held firearms in Italy. It is currently not even possible to ascertain how many firearms are seized each year. Data on seizures for the period 1993-2000 are partially available from secondary sources.⁶² No national authority is responsible for collecting a total number, and the three agencies in charge of seizures (Guardia di Finanza, Polizia di Stato and Carabinieri) collect their own data, but these figures are not publicly available. The FIRE⁶³ international research project compiled an interactive database with seizure cases for each country from 2010 to 2015, based on news sources. Given the reliance on non-comprehensive and unofficial data, most of the findings that were obtained are of an approximate nature. According to Transcrime's contribution to FIRE, Italy holds an important position in Europe for the number of firearms seizures in the period 2010-2015, with 493 cases documented, second only to the Netherlands (555

cases).⁶⁴ In terms of numbers of incidents involving illicit firearms, Italy ranks first, with 1,589 incidents, representing over one-third of the EU total.

In addition, the data on lost or stolen firearms and data on destroyed firearms are stored in the police SDI database, but are not publicly available. UN sources allow one to retrieve partial data on the destruction of firearms in Italy for the period 2005-2009. In 2009 the Italian Army destroyed 15,027 surplus firearms, which is a much lower number than in previous years (169,925 in 2007; 140,088 in 2006; 37,371 in 2005).^{65,66}

Another way of identifying the size of the illicit firearms market is by examining the revenue of mafia groups, but here data also appear to be deficient and outdated.⁶⁷ By drawing on official reports and news sources, one can infer that organised criminal groups own large numbers of weapons, but detailed information is highly fragmented and unsystematic: most of the details come to light as a result of law enforcement seizures.

2.2 Actors on the illicit gun market

The main protagonists in the illicit supply of firearms in Italy are organised criminal groups. They usually engage in arms trafficking in addition to other illicit activities, using their expertise in illicit trafficking, and relying on well-established routes and contacts. Paoli states that 'Italy's most important criminal coalitions are increasingly succeeding in penetrating the "wholesale" sector of international arms trafficking, participating in sizable and highly profitable transactions'.⁶⁸

The main mafia groups in Italy are the Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and Sacra Corona Unita. These groups are respectively based in the southern regions of Sicily, Calabria, Campania and Apulia, but have branches spread throughout Italy and abroad.⁶⁹ In periods of mafia wars, in particular in Sicily and Calabria, mafiosi were among the most important customers of international arms markets. Once they gained control over the supply sources, they became sellers of firearms.⁷⁰ Mafia groups purchase firearms both to commit crimes (homicides, intimidation and extortion) and to sell on to others. They trade arms with other criminal groups, mainly in exchange for illicit goods like drugs. Among the organised criminal groups based in Italy, Europol finds that the 'Ndrangheta and Albanian criminal groups are most involved in the illegal firearms trade.⁷¹ The most recent reports by Italian law enforcement agencies emphasise the involvement of both Italian mafia groups and foreign criminal organisations (Bulgarian, Albanian, Russian and African) in the trafficking of illegal firearms, even though no specific details are

made available.⁷² According to our interviewees, there are strong contacts with organised criminal groups from Albania, which seems to be the only foreign criminal groups acting as firearms suppliers in Italy.⁷³ As one interviewee puts it, 'You have to negotiate with Albanians who are in Italy. You don't go to Albania yourself, but you ask them. Those who need serious firearms look for an Albanian intermediary. They send him to acquire a sample of the firearm to avoid a dud, test the firearm and finalise the purchase.'⁷⁴

Besides Italian and foreign organised criminal groups, a number of other actors are also linked to the illicit gun market in Italy. Another group of actors in the Italian illegal firearms market is made up of illegal gun owners who are not directly linked to criminal or terrorist groups, but who possess firearms without having the necessary permits. This relatively amorphous category includes both individuals acting negligently and those with criminal intent (e.g. theft, poaching). The former are less of a security concern: they merely possess firearms without having the necessary permits. Of more concern are illegal gun owners with criminal connections. Ineligible buyers, such as members of criminal groups, tend to obtain guns from the legitimate market through 'straw purchasers' – relatives, friends or ordinary citizens with a gun licence who buy firearms on their behalf and then usually report them stolen. The serial numbers on these firearms are usually removed. Because a straw purchaser is not likely to be able to acquire more than one gun in this way, the mafiosi seem to rely on more structured sources of supply to maintain their stocks of weapons.⁷⁵ Corrupt officials and professionals also play a role in the illicit circulation of firearms,⁷⁶ with public officials stealing firearms from official stocks and selling them on the black market. Finally, hobbyists and amateurs alter and reactivate firearms.

2.3 Availability and prices of firearms

Given the clandestine nature of the illicit firearms trade, only limited information is available on the types, quantities and value of the illicit firearms in circulation. Only seizure information disaggregated by weapon type, model, and the circumstances of the seizure can help to determine whether unusual or new types of equipment enter illicit markets, identify the transfer routes of specific models, and potentially reveal new flows.⁷⁷ Below we discuss recent literature on Italian organised criminal groups, seizure information from news sources, and interviewees' views in order to sketch a likely scenario.

Most Italian organised criminal groups possess their own supplies of firearms, which are usually old and varied, including guns, revolvers, AK-47-pattern assault rifles and converted firearms. During periods of shortage they even use Second

World War-era firearms or modified toy guns. Some organised criminal groups have access to large stockpiles of sophisticated weaponry, including military firearms and even bazookas.

According to Massari, “they generally prefer to use 7.65 mm machine guns and revolvers, as well as 9 x 21 mm pistols – the model used by Italian police. AK-pattern assault rifles are also widely used, since they seldom misfire, cost less than their market equivalent (M16), and are best known by members.”⁷⁸

AK-47 assault rifles still work even if they have been buried for years,⁷⁹ and they are often found in seizures of weapons stocks, together with hunting rifles, old carbines, firearms from the Second World War, firearms stolen from security guards, machine guns, Uzis, Kalashnikovs, and semi-automatic handguns.⁸⁰ According to the police, Kalashnikov replicas manufactured in China circulate in the Italian illicit market, after having been legally purchased in Balkan countries and then trafficked to Italy.⁸¹

Information on the firearms discovered during recent large-scale seizures confirms this picture of varied weapons holdings. During Operation Lethal Arm in June 2015, for example, over 200 firearms were seized in the area around Milan and Brescia, including six machine guns (Browning, MG, M60, Breda, Sokolov), 24 automatic firearms (Uzi, Beretta M12, H&K MP5, Steyr, Sten),⁷⁴ semi-automatic and automatic rifles (Kalashnikov AK-47, Colt M16, FAL, Thompson), and 76 handguns (Beretta, Colt, S&W, Tokarev).⁸² In March 2017 the Italian police raided the ‘headquarters’ of a gang that hijacked security vans (*portavalori*) in Milan and recovered Kalashnikovs, a shotgun and handguns.⁸³ In addition, news sources⁸⁴ reported the seizure of 13 shotguns, eight handguns and 1,200 pieces of ammunition during a seizure in Crotona (Calabria) in April 2017 (see Box 3). The majority of the firearms seized in Crotona are produced in Italy, but none has a serial number, so the authorities could not immediately trace their origin. More likely these are old firearms resulting from thefts from private homes or gun shops.

With regard to prices, in 2012 Federica Angeli⁸⁵ conducted an in-depth investigation of firearms black market dynamics in Rome. The retail prices of firearms that were published as a result of this study (Table 3) were confirmed by our interviewees. Prices differ according to whether the firearm is new or second-hand. According to the Italian police ‘there are real price lists for firearms, ranging from €500 to €3,000, based on the “neatness” [*pulizia*] – meaning previous criminal uses – of the firearm and its efficiency’.⁸⁶ According to another and more recent media source investigating the illicit firearms market in Rome, prices can go even lower: €250 for a semi-automatic gun, €2,000 for a Kalashnikov and €1,000 for an Uzi sub-machine gun.⁸⁷

Box 3: Firearms seized in Crotona in April 2017

- One Beretta A304 Silver Lark shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number
- One Franchi 520 shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number
- Two Benelli Monte Feltrio Super 90 shotguns, 12 gauge, with erased serial numbers
- One Benelli M2 shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number
- One Benelli Argo rifle, 30-60 calibre
- One Franchi 500 shotgun, 12 gauge
- One rifle *tipo*⁸⁸ Doppietta Acier Cockeryll, 12 gauge, without a serial number
- One Beretta A301 shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number
- One Benelli 121 shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number
- One Benelli shotgun, 12 gauge, with erased serial number and model
- One *tipo* double-barrelled P. Lorenzotti shotgun, double trigger, 12 gauge, without serial number
- One Acier Cockeryll double-barrelled shotgun, without serial number
- One CZ 99 handgun, 9 mm calibre, with erased serial number
- Two Beretta 70 handguns, 7.65 mm calibre, with erased serial numbers
- One P38 handgun, 9 mm calibre, with erased serial number
- One P38 handgun, 9 mm calibre
- One Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum calibre handgun, with erased serial number
- One SFRJ handgun, 7.53 mm Mauser calibre, with erased serial number
- One Marca Star 30P handgun, 9 mm calibre

Table 4: Retail prices of some firearms circulating on the black market in Rome (in euros)

Model	New	Second-hand
9 x 21 mm semi-automatic handgun	1,700	700
38 mm handgun (special and revolver)	1,400	700
Assault rifle	2,000	–
Sub-machine gun	3,000	2,000

Source: Angeli (2012)

2.4 Supply chains for the illicit firearms market

The illegal production of firearms is generally not considered to be one of the most important sources of firearms for the illegal gun market in both Europe in general and Italy in particular. The overwhelming majority of illicit firearms were legally produced, but at some point have leaked into the illegal market.⁸⁹ Licit firearms can be diverted during transportation, by leakage from factories or surplus stocks, and by theft from stockpiles or individual owners. They can also be trafficked from abroad or converted through reactivation, modification or conversion. Diversion during transportation is not easy in the framework of the strict Italian legislative framework governing the movement of firearms, but it is still possible that a completely licit transaction on paper does not happen in reality, and weapons disappear to unknown destinations thanks to fake end-user certificates that are often obtained through bribery. According to police sources, the 3D printing of firearms in Italy is not an issue, and from the monitoring of the dark web it appears that most of the sales advertised there are in fact frauds.⁹⁰ Therefore, in terms of firearms procurement, three main patterns can be identified that are relevant to Italy: (1) smuggling; (2) reactivation or alteration;⁹¹ and (3) theft.

2.4.1 Smuggling

The Balkans region has been a major source of firearms since the end of the Cold War due to the presence of many stockpiles in the region that experienced major leaks or were looted. The internal demand for firearms in the Balkans has decreased, and so has arms trafficking, because there are currently no active conflicts in the region. During the mid-1990s the easy availability of huge amounts of cheap weapons from the Balkans – AK-47 assault rifles were sold for US\$300 dollars or less – permitted a substantial increase in the size of the Italian mafia's weapons holdings.⁹² Drawing on seizure data in the 1990s, police officials confirm that most of the illegal weapons in circulation among organised criminal groups in Italy were of foreign origin, primarily Yugoslav, Albanian or East European.⁹³ The availability of cheap, powerful weapons created a demand among Italian organised criminal groups for this new kind of equipment.

According to some interviewees and news sources, in 1994 a large cargo ship from Ukraine was seized and found to contain two thousand tons of arms (including shotguns and rockets) destined for conflict areas in the former Yugoslavia, in violation of the UN embargo.⁹⁴ The seized arms were taken to Italy to be destroyed, but after being stored at various sites,⁹⁵ they were not destroyed and are still extant,

having been either sent by the government to the Iraqi Kurds in 2014⁹⁶ or falling into the hands of organised criminal groups.⁹⁷

In 1996 the police discovered large numbers of weapons in San Giuseppe Jato, Sicily, a village 40 km from Palermo. At that time this was the largest arsenal that law enforcement agencies had ever discovered in Italy. Police seized two underground bunkers that contained, among other weapons, ten missiles, ten bazookas, 50 AK-pattern assault rifles, 35 pistols, seven sub-machine guns, ten anti-tank bombs, 400 kg of explosives, and some bulletproof vests. Most of these weapons originated in Eastern Europe, the former Yugoslavia, Iran and Afghanistan.⁹⁸

According to experts on mafia groups, 'Ndrangheta families started to live in Balkans countries during the conflicts there in the 1990s, when the international trade in firearms was fed by suppliers from the former Soviet bloc. They became brokers, buying and selling arms, and becoming central to the firearms market. These weapons from the former Soviet Union still supply the market today, which is demonstrated by the fact that there are very well-established 'Ndrangheta networks in the Balkans area, especially in Bosnia.⁹⁹

In 2012 Angeli reported that 90% of illegal firearms in Rome originated from the Balkans, especially Croatia.¹⁰⁰ All our interviewees agreed that Balkans countries are the major sources of illicit arms in Italy, specifically Albania, Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia. In addition to the huge availability of arms and the much cheaper costs compared to Italian weapons, it is also worth stressing the use of well-consolidated routes and criminal networks for multiple trafficking activities.

More recently, in 2015 in the northern city of Udine, the ROS of the Carabinieri reported a case of arms trafficking from the Balkans. The investigation documented how the supply chain originated in Croatia, where weapons were easily obtained from a military depot with a falsified firearms control system. Firearms were then sent to and sold in Slovenia at the Militaria arms fair – a collectors' event that takes place every six months in Sempeter pri Gorici (close to Nova Gorica).¹⁰¹ In Italy it is forbidden to sell firearms at arms fairs, unlike at the *bourse aux armes* in Switzerland, where firearms auctions are allowed. On Italian soil only arms expos are allowed, but no sale are permitted on site.¹⁰²

According to police sources, transport overland seems to be the preferred way of smuggling firearms, with weapons carried in hidden compartments in cars, vans and trucks. Transportation overland from northern Italy in double-bottomed trucks has been the easiest method used for the last 20 years.¹⁰³ Thus, northern Italy (e.g. Udine, Venice, etc.) is a key area for seizures, which mostly occur along borders,

especially in regions close to third countries with stockpiles; in close proximity to large ports; and in regions with a strong presence of organised criminal groups. According to investigative authorities, Gioia Tauro has given way to Rotterdam as the port of preference for firearms smugglers, because when seizures exceed 20% of smuggled goods, the mafiosi prefer to change port: 'Mafiosi can always change ports; this is the strength of the 'Ndrangheta.'¹⁰⁴ Large cargo ships have been replaced by small speedboats, due to the tightening of controls in ports. On the Apulian coast, for example, the Guardia di Finanza is specifically equipped to detect illicit goods smuggled in this way.¹⁰⁵

According to the police, a new strategy involves sealed 'torpedoes' (sealed containers) towed by speedboats, which are unhooked near the coast and later retrieved by the intended recipient with very little risk.¹⁰⁶ Both media sources and the DIA have also mentioned ultralight aircraft as a way of transporting drugs.¹⁰⁷ All the interviewees agreed that firearms are not arriving with migrants by boat (as was happening in the 1990s from Albania) via the route that is currently known as the central Mediterranean route from North Africa, because migrant boats are intercepted by coastguards and migrants are rescued by law enforcement agencies, which would mean that arms smuggled in the same boats as migrants would be seized.¹⁰⁸

A recent media enquiry unveiled a possible nexus between illicit firearms trafficking and art trafficking, but this is the only source of the reported link.¹⁰⁹ A *La Stampa* journalist pretended to be an art collector and uncovered illicit art-for-weapons trade in southern Italy among the 'Ndrangheta and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). According to him, Italian crime gangs reportedly sold weapons to ISIS in Libya in exchange for looted antiquities. According to the report, various organised criminal groups are involved in this ring: the Russian mafia provides firearms from Moldova and Ukraine; the Italian mafias (especially the Camorra and 'Ndrangheta) arrange for the exchange; and the Chinese mafia is in charge of shipments. Chinese-flagged cargo ships usually transit from Sirte to the Calabria port of Gioia Tauro. Antiquities are then sold on to collectors in Russia, China, Japan and the Gulf states.¹¹⁰ However, we have no official information on this trade. Our respondents were not prepared to confirm speculations about logistical links between mafia groups and terrorists in Italy.

2.4.2 Reactivation

According to interviewees, Italy is a good place for reactivation due to its extensive firearms production facilities and the related local expertise. Until the 1980s the *'Ndrangheta* and other mafia groups reactivated firearms left by US soldiers at the end of the Second World War.¹¹¹ Yet the reactivation of firearms currently seems to be minimal, and not significant in terms of numbers.¹¹²

Box 4: Trafficking from Slovakia and reactivation in Sicily

In 2015 there was a case of the illicit trafficking of 151 reactivated firearms (86 sub-machine guns, 45 rifles, 17 pistols and three revolvers) and several kinds of ammunition in Catania (Sicily) that involved two members of the Cosa Nostra (from the Ceusi clan). The two individuals bought the weapons from an online shop in Slovakia (AFG Security) for approximately €46,300 and imported them into Italy without a licence.¹¹³ The deactivated firearms transited overland from Slovakia to Austria, where they were delivered to a courier used by the Slovak online shop to send firearms to Western Europe. From Austria, the firearms reached Catania, where they were reactivated. A lever had been inserted in the barrel to deactivate the weapons, and this could easily be removed.

Ballistics analysis revealed that the firearms had been deactivated using a procedure that was not compliant with Italian legislation. This deactivation procedure, known as the 'movie prop' method, was permitted in Slovakia and could be easily circumvented to reactivate firearms. Once reactivated, the firearms were supposed to be sent to Malta, but when they were detected by X-ray in Catania they were seized by the Italian authorities. The authorities only found ten to 15 firearms.¹¹⁴ According to the prosecutor in charge, Malta could not have been the final destination since there is no war there, there are strict gun controls on the island, and there is no firearms trade there for the kind of weapons that were found. The firearms were presumably intended for criminals in Egypt and the surrounding areas who were involved in illicit trafficking in people and drugs.¹¹⁵

According to EFFECT researchers, modifications of arms do happen, but 'not always and not only conducted by organised criminal groups'.¹¹⁶ Firstly, amateur gunsmiths (*armaioli*) offer their expertise and skills in their workplaces or at home. They

usually do not know the firearms' end use and are not necessarily linked with organised criminal groups, but are what could be called micro-criminals. In most documented cases handguns and double-barrelled shotguns were reactivated to make them capable of firing live ammunition. There were also cases of disguised firearms, such as guns built into pens.¹¹⁷ Secondly, collectors can play a dual role, and while posing as collectors they are actually brokers who buy deactivated weapons and then reactivate them. Their role as collectors allows them to gain access to decommissioned weapons.¹¹⁸

According to a DNA prosecutor, several craft workshops are able to convert toy guns into lethal weapons, and are mainly located in the Neapolitan, Palermitan and Catanese areas: 'Small craftsmen are quite inexpensive; they are outsiders of organised crime, but they are trustworthy people while contacts [i.e. artisans] in the Balkans are totally unreliable, and are often used only once.'¹¹⁹ According to other interviewees, Calabria and Sicilia are the main centres for the reactivation of firearms. In Calabria, the port of Gioia Tauro hosts the clandestine modification of firearms in containers.¹²⁰ During the mafia wars fought at the end of the 1980s, murders were frequently committed using sawn-off shotguns.¹²¹

The source countries of reactivated firearms are often other EU countries (see Box 4).

2.4.3 Thefts and leakages

Thefts from gun shops were one of the most popular terrorist and mafia procurement methods in the 1970s. An interviewee from the DNA remarked that until the 1990s there had always been 'Cosa Nostra gun shops' in Sicily. These were the Cosa Nostra's own gun shops, run by its frontmen, where a theft could be simulated, allowing the group to take the firearms it wanted. However, nowadays this is no longer possible, because controls have been tightened and applications to open gun shops are more rigorously screened by the administrative and judicial authorities. Gun shops of any significance no longer exist, but there are trustworthy artisans who can reactivate or convert firearms (see above).¹²²

According to Massari, "almost 70% of the thefts of legally owned civilian-held firearms in Campania had been faked; the guns were not stolen but voluntarily given to mafiosi. This type of procurement represents an important channel used by organized crime to secure 'clean' weapons for homicides and other crimes".¹²³

Sometimes mafia weapons holdings include firearms stolen from private homes or security guards: for mafia groups, stealing a security guard's gun is a way of testing

the courage of new members.¹²⁴ According to an interviewee from the arms lobby, the storage of firearms is a major problem for legal owners, due to the increase in thefts of handguns.¹²⁵ The EFFECT report highlights how the number of stolen firearms has increased with the increased numbers of thefts from apartments.¹²⁶

According to the DNA, leakages from factories no longer occur: this was a major source of firearms for internal terrorist groups in the 1970s.¹²⁷ Government stockpiles are still at risk of being targeted, however. Corrupt members of the security forces may allow firearms to be diverted by sabotaging control systems, or state officials can themselves be stealing weapons.¹²⁸

Huge numbers of firearms are stored at destruction sites. The destruction of firearms in Italy is carried out by the Direzioni di Artiglieria under the army logistics command in the Ministry of Defence. Specific sections deal with firearms destruction: the Centro Rifornimenti e Mantenimento (CeRiMant), located in Naples, Padova, Rome and Milan; and the Sezione Rifornimenti e Mantenimento (SeRiMant), with units in Cagliari, Palermo and Treviso.¹²⁹ In April 2017 the Ministry of the Interior reported 'congestion in the armoury that is creating significant technical-logistical problems, and it is critical, in terms of security, to keep the weapons under custody'.¹³⁰ An interviewee stated that there is a waiting list for firearms to be destroyed, since not only seized firearms have to be destroyed, but also firearms with manufacturing defects and firearms handed over to the *questure* by private individuals who do not or cannot comply with licensing requirements.¹³¹¹³² A significant case of arms leakage was recently discovered at CeRiMant in Padova (2017). A ballistics expert working as a fireman and his son smuggled entire weapons or their parts from the army section at Padova, assisted by a lieutenant and an employee working for CeRiMant. The serial numbers were then removed or parts were assembled into new weapons and subsequently sold on the Sardinian and Calabrian markets. The weapons were also used as payment for drugs sold by the 'Ndrangheta and then sent to Sardinia.¹³³ These firearms included semi-automatic guns of various sizes and brands; assault rifles, including several AK-47; Beretta 7.62 calibre FAL assault rifles; and Israeli-made Galil rifles.¹³⁴

2.5 Dynamics of the illicit firearms market

The Balkans region appears to be the main origin of firearms on the current Italian illicit market. Our interviewees agreed that the market was very fragmented, lacking any single means of control or any convergence, although the 'Ndrangheta plays a significant role in the market that sells to organised criminal groups, with minor foreign criminal groups also emerging, mostly Albanians.¹³⁵ Mafia groups

have access to large supplies of weapons, and play a crucial role in the distribution of firearms in these circles. Seizures often take place based on information provided by mafia turncoats. Indeed, police tend to test the reliability of *pentiti* (turncoat informants) by asking them to locate hidden firearms stores.¹³⁶ Given the territorial organisation of mafia groups, each one usually has its own supplies of firearms.¹³⁷ 'In the case of both the Camorra and the 'Ndrangheta, the areas where these criminal organisations traditionally operate – Campania and Calabria – are “flooded” with large numbers of weapons.’¹³⁸ In both Sicily and Calabria most arms caches are discovered in rural areas, close to old houses, inside farm stalls, behind double walls, in bunkers, or in underground caches or wooden boxes, as was the case in the most recent major seizure (see Box 3).¹³⁹

The illicit firearms market in Italy is not huge, since it does not aim to produce profits, serving more as an organisational method for structuring and strengthening organised criminal groups. In the past, for example, firearms exchanges occurred between organisations (e.g. Camorra and Cosa Nostra), while nowadays organised criminal groups access their own weapons, in particular from their contacts outside Italy.¹⁴⁰ According to both police and judicial sources, the illicit firearms market in Italy supports other criminal markets.¹⁴¹ In terms of their financial value per weight of the weapons that are smuggled, firearms are definitely a much less profitable cargo. Smuggled Kalashnikovs would be much heavier and take up far more space than a shipment of cocaine or heroin worth an equivalent value, and the smuggled firearms would be far more difficult to conceal from law enforcement agencies. With the exception of mafia weapons stocks in hidden locations, both firearms and drugs are regularly seized. Firearms are often paid for with drugs, whose wholesale distribution in Europe is largely controlled by the 'Ndrangheta (or with cash, given the enormous profits provided by drug trafficking).¹⁴²

According to a prosecutor, Albanian organised criminal groups carry weapons to protect the drugs while they are being trafficked, and then leave these firearms as a gift to their counterparts in Italy.¹⁴³ There is a long history of criminal links between Italian and Albanian organised criminal groups. During the 1990s smuggling routes that had traditionally been used for cigarettes and drugs were converted to accommodate the growing flow of migrants from Albania. In a report released in 2003, the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Committee stressed that during the 1990s firearms and ammunition travelled with migrants in small, fast boats along the same routes. According to police sources, by the end of the 1990s, with the Albanian arrivals, weapons were widely available, and 'quantities of weapons and drugs were exchanged'.¹⁴⁴ The strong partnerships established between mafia groups and foreign organised criminal groups facilitated a specific type of exchange of services: Italian organisations needed drugs and firearms in order to allow Balkans

organised criminal groups to manage the business of illegal immigration by sea along the Italian coast.¹⁴⁵

In Italy, each organised criminal group manages the circulation of firearms in the area it controls, thus access to the market depends on the group's grip on its territory. According to an expert on the 'Ndrangheta, in Calabria it is difficult for other groups to enter the illicit market, while in other areas other organised criminal groups could become brokers, since the 'Ndrangheta deals mainly with large-scale trafficking of various kinds.¹⁴⁶ The purchase of firearms occurs among trusted contacts in the criminal network or customers whom intermediaries can vouch for.¹⁴⁷ According to media reports¹⁴⁸ that have been confirmed by the Italian police,¹⁴⁹ in Rome firearms are stocked in certain neighbourhoods, where buyers can choose the firearm they want or even rent one for a specific job.

3. **Terrorist access to firearms in the illicit market in Italy**

3.1 **A history of domestic terrorism**

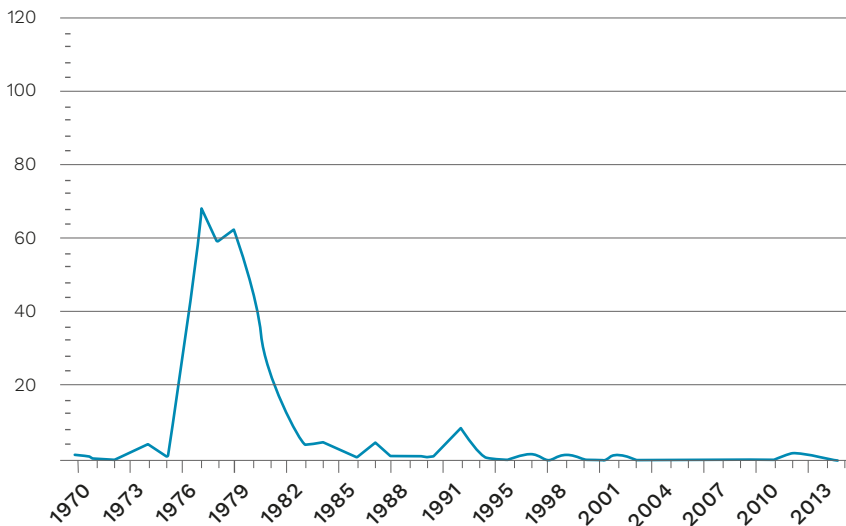
The first bomb to disrupt Italian society and lead the way for Italian domestic terrorism was set off by a neo-fascist group in a bank, the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura, in Piazza Fontana in Milan on 12 December 1969. Since then, many different forms of terrorism have troubled Italy over the past five decades. Grievances against the Italian government in the post-war period generated political violence ranging from nationalist-separatist terrorism in the South Tyrol region near the Austrian border¹⁵⁰ to right-wing neo-fascist terrorism, left-wing Marxist and anarchist armed wings, Sardinian autonomy movements, and mafia groups.¹⁵¹

The terrorism that affected Italy was very fractured, with five key players: communists – mainly the Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades); the extreme right – fascists, with links to rogue segments of the secret services; anarchists; organized crime – mafia groups; and power-mongers – politicians and wealthy industrialists. Right-wing terrorists were responsible for the highest death toll of all terror attacks during the '*anni di piombo*', although in most instances these acts cannot yet be attributed to one specific organisation.¹⁵² While left-wing organisations always claimed responsibility for attacks, the right-wing strategy was to cause massive insecurity through indiscriminate attacks on the population at large. Neo-fascists involved in major terror attacks were never caught red-handed and it was not until the mid-1980s that

trials of members of the militant Right began to shed some light on many terror incidents.¹⁵³ The twinned menace of terrorism and the so-called ‘strategy of tension’¹⁵⁴ gradually declined in the 1980s, with the cycle of right-wing terrorism culminating in the bomb at the Bologna station on 2 August 1980, which killed 85 people. A year later a masonic lodge known as P2 was discovered to have subversive political aims; its members included prominent figures in the armed forces, business and politics.¹⁵⁵

The Global Terrorism Database records 1,545 terrorist attacks in Italy in the period 1970-2015, peaking at the end of the 1970s. While most attacks were carried out with explosives (685) or incendiary devices (458), 348 involved firearms.

Figure 3: Terrorist attacks in Italy using firearms, 1970-2015



Source: Global Terrorism Database (2015)

Of the 348 attacks involving firearms, 135 were committed by the Red Brigades, 48 by Prima Linea (an Italian Marxist-Leninist group), over 40 by other communist groups, and over 20 by extreme-right and neo-fascist movements (i.e. Armed Revolutionary Nuclei and the Italian Social Movement). The majority of attacks were armed assaults and the rest were attempted assassinations without any fatalities, while a few cases resulted in one or two deaths. As in Europe, in Italy the most

active groups – except attacks that were not claimed by any group or carried out by unknown perpetrators, representing 48% of the total – were mainly national groups: the Informal Anarchist Federation, the Red Brigades and neo-Nazi groups.¹⁵⁶ Besides internal terrorism, there were, among others, attacks by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (25 attacks between 1979 and 1981 using explosives and firearms), Palestinian attacks, and attacks by Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) Basque separatists at the beginning of the 1990s involving the planting of explosives at airports, tourist sites or businesses.¹⁵⁷

It is believed that in the 1970s terrorists in Italy were able to access firearms via leakages from factories, thefts from gun shops and connections with mafia groups.¹⁵⁸ However, the authorities never managed to seize any Red Brigades weapons, so the source of their firearms could not be ascertained.¹⁵⁹ The most recent and relevant seizure of firearms from internal terrorists took place in February 2007. In Operation Tramonto the police seized three weapons of war¹⁶⁰ and four common firearms¹⁶¹ from the Political-Military Communist Party (which had links to the Red Brigades).¹⁶²

As some interviewees pointed out, firearms seized from suspected terrorist who were detained in high-security prisons in Calabria, in particular in the areas of Conigliano and Rossano, were identified as having been used in mafia-conducted assassinations. It seems that these guns originated from firearms leaked to mafia groups from seizures by the Italian authorities in the Balkans in 1991-1994 (see section 2.4). Mafia families needed money at the time and firearms were sold to obtain cash; however, since it was risky to sell them on the international market, they were sold to small gangs, small ethnically based criminal groups and terrorists.¹⁶³¹⁶⁴ The mafia's connections with Italian terrorism have facilitated relations with foreign terrorism. In fact, the 'Ndrangheta also played a relevant role in providing firearms to other terrorist groups at the European level, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Basque terrorist group ETA.¹⁶⁵ In 2012 Operation Metropolis revealed that a senior IRA member, Henry James Fitzsimons, started to act as an intermediary for the 'Ndrangheta after the IRA abandoned its armed struggle.¹⁶⁶ Some media sources highlighted an alleged arms-for-drugs exchange between the Camorra and ETA in the 2000s, with ETA supplying drugs obtained from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (the main Colombian insurgent group) in exchange for the Camorra supplying weapons from Eastern Europe, but further confirmation and details were not available.¹⁶⁷

3.2 Islamist terrorism

No firearms-related terrorist attacks by international terrorist groups have occurred in Italy in recent years. The last such attack, in which semi-automatic weapons were used, was carried out at Fiumicino Airport in 1985 by Palestinians from the Abu Nidal group. More recently, in 2009 a Libyan man planted explosives in front of a barracks in Milan, but the bomb only partially exploded and he injured only himself. According to news sources, he was protesting against the presence of Italian troops in Afghanistan.¹⁶⁸

In Italy no judicial proceedings have occurred involving the use of firearms by Islamist terrorists, nor even cases of foreign fighters or radicalisation where firearms are in some way involved. Some prosecutors highlight the first and only case of an investigation of Islamist terrorism involving firearms.¹⁶⁹ In Turin in 1998 an Egyptian citizen (Misbah Ali Hassanay Azab) with a false Yemeni passport was arrested with two other Egyptians (with regular documents) who were hosting him. The three were all suspected of being part of the group known as Egyptian Islamic Jihad.¹⁷⁰ A large number of firearms manufactured abroad were found in the garage of the house of one of the two Egyptians with regular documents. These firearms included SIG Sauer pistols and Uzi sub-machine guns.¹⁷¹ A cooperative informant involved in investigations of the 'Ndrangheta who was an important arms trafficker in the 1980s¹⁷² saw the seized firearms on TV news and recognised a firearm he had sold to the Pavignaniti 'Ndrangheta clan.¹⁷³ The trafficker stamped the serial number on firearms in a very specific way, thus it was not difficult for him to recognise 'his' firearms. However, as the prosecutor stated after the case had been concluded, 'how the arms got from the 'Ndrangheta in Milan to Islamists in Turin we never managed to discover'.¹⁷⁴

More recently, Anis Amri, the perpetrator of the terrorist attack in Berlin on 19 December 2016 (which involved his shooting a truck driver and driving the truck into a Christmas market, killing 12 people) used a handgun against the Italian police in Milan during a random document check. The Italian police confirmed that the gun used in the Berlin attack, an Erma pistol, matched the one found on Amri.¹⁷⁵ News sources reported that Amri might have acquired the gun in Switzerland.¹⁷⁶ Investigators stated that the gun was legally imported into Switzerland in the 1990s, but it remained unclear what happened to it afterwards, because it did not appear in the weapons registers of any Swiss cantons and there was no national weapons register in Switzerland at the time.¹⁷⁷

The government officials who were interviewed agreed on how difficult it was for terrorist groups to access firearms in Italy nowadays. Firstly, they emphasised the absence of any active terrorist networks in Italy, which means that no group is looking for sources of supply. Investigations of potential terrorists are ongoing in Italy, but no

findings have emerged from these investigations regarding the actual availability of firearms to members of international terrorist organisations.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, supply channels are tightly controlled by Italian organised criminal groups, even though the market is fragmented. As has already been stressed, mafia groups still exercise strong control over 'territories' and illicit trafficking, and there are no independent ethnic criminal environments, except for the emerging Albanian organised criminal groups. On the one hand, illicit firearms are fairly easily accessible to private individuals with underworld connections, but, on the other hand, it is hard for groups who are not part of Italian organised criminal groups or have no contacts with such groups to access the illicit firearms market. Selling to outsiders means that information could become available to the police through their informants.¹⁷⁹

Terrorist networks' inability to access the illicit firearms market does not mean that individuals cannot obtain a gun.¹⁸⁰ However, unknown buyers like Islamist lone-wolf terrorists would have no access to the illicit market. As a prosecutor stated with regard to terrorists' access to firearms in Italy: 'At this time, if there is evidence of a terrorist destination, I do not see that firearms could be easily acquired. But if you do not have a beard you can get a gun without much difficulty.'¹⁸¹ According to the authorities there are currently no concerns about terrorist access to firearms in Italy, since no terrorist network is active in the country and weapons are only sold to known buyers. Terrorists looking for firearms need to go directly to source countries.¹⁸²

The difficulties Islamist terrorists face when attempting to access the illicit gun market in Italy are well illustrated in the 'Briki Lassaad + 1' case in 2016.¹⁸³ A Tunisian and a Pakistani were under investigation for terrorism and radicalisation, and in a wiretapped conversation they mentioned the possibility of buying a toy gun for target practice (as suggested by the self-training guide they were using entitled *How to Survive the West: A Mujahidin Guide*). However, one said to the other, 'we cannot do it with your name, since as soon as they see a Muslim name they activate the filter and say "let's see what he's doing"'.¹⁸⁴ According to the prosecutor responsible for the case, the two accused had no connections that would allow them to buy firearms in Italy.¹⁸⁵ The inability to find firearms has represented the major – if not the only – obstacle to the implementation of terrorist attacks.

No evidence is currently available of direct links between Italian organised crime and terrorism. Investigations into this issue are under way, but they are confidential.¹⁸⁶ According to the last DIA report, there are no connections between Cosa Nostra and international terrorism.¹⁸⁷ In the words of a prosecutor: 'to investigate the access to firearms by terrorist groups in Italy, the [basic] premise is missing: the presence of terrorist groups and the need to find arms in Italy.' He added that mafia groups see forms of Islamist radicalisation as risky, since they increase the level of

security, even in prisons, which poses problems to them.¹⁸⁸ However, an expert interviewee, when questioned about the 'Ndrangheta and Italian organised criminal groups, did not rule out possible collaboration in the future: "*mafias are rational entities in the short and medium-term, but they are capable of self-injury, in the sense that if it becomes convenient, they buy or sell from and to ISIS, as is already the case with narcotics. Thus [a future connection between the mafia and Islamist terrorism] cannot be ruled out The mafiosi do not do politics, but they do business, and they do business with everyone.*"¹⁸⁹

4. Conclusions

The findings presented in this chapter combine available data in the literature and official reports with interviewees' observations on the illicit firearms market in Italy, its actors and dynamics. These findings reveal the possibility of future terrorist access to firearms, as well as links between organised criminal groups and terrorists.

In terms of firearms control, strict Italian legislation is backed up by advanced investigation techniques, and the investigative apparatus put in place to fight mafia groups and internal terrorism in the 1970s has widened to include the fight against international Islamist terrorism. However, no systematic attention is paid to the phenomenon of illicit firearms as such, and the law enforcement system focuses on the perpetration of crimes in general. The diversion of licit Italian-made firearms to the illicit market is quite difficult, except in case of thefts or leakages from government stockpiles. The illicit market has mainly been supplied with firearms from the western Balkans since the 1990s. Mafia groups tend to purchase their weapons through their connections in source countries. The illicit firearms market appears to be used to support other illicit markets such as drug-trafficking and counterfeiting. Mafia groups control their territories and illicit trafficking, with Albanian organised criminal groups as the only relevant foreign actor emerging in the illicit firearms market. However, other foreign criminal groups could appear in Italy in the future to fill any spaces left by mafia and Albanian groups.

Interviewees agreed that terrorist access to firearms in Italy continues to be difficult for several reasons. Firstly, because there is no active terrorist network in Italy, no terrorist is trying to find firearms in the country. Secondly, even if there were terrorists who needed firearms in Italy, there is no independent ethnic criminal milieu, as in France and Belgium, that is able to provide procurement channels. Gatekeepers are needed to access the Italian illicit firearms market, which is managed by Italian

organised criminal groups, with the 'Ndrangheta being the most relevant player. According to government officials who were interviewed, at this stage terrorist groups have no connections with the organised criminal groups managing the circulation of illicit firearms in Italy. Mafia groups seem to feel that it is best not to be involved in high-profile deals with terrorists, in order to pursue their interests in business and the infiltration of politics without drawing unnecessary attention to their activities. Nevertheless, if they see benefits to themselves in dealing with terrorist, then they would do so.

ENDNOTES

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- 2 Malmström, C. (2012) *Speech at the Conference on the Fight Against Arms Trafficking: Where Do We Stand?*, 19 November 2012, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-841_en.htm, accessed 9 May 2017..
- 3 TradeMap (<http://www.trademap.org>) elaborates data provided by the UN Comtrade (<https://comtrade.un.org>). The export categories used by NISAT and UN Comtrade to compile data are the same but collection methods may differ. The comparison between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 data must therefore be made with caution.
- 4 Lupsha, P. (1996), "Transnational Organized Crime Versus the Nation-State", *Transnational Organized Crime*, 2 (1).
- 5 Europol 2013 "Threat assesment - Italian organised crime", June, The Hague.
- 6 Sagramoso, D. (2001) *The proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons in and around the European Union: instability, organised crime and terrorists groups*, Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College, University of London, The case of Italy pp. 19-26; Calderoni, F., Favarin S., Garofalo L., Sarno F. (2014) "Counterfeiting, illegal firearms, gambling and waste management: an exploratory estimation of four criminal markets", *Global Crime*, volume 15, issues 1-2 (February-May), pp. 108-137.
- 7 Massari, M. (2013) "Gun's in the family. Mafia violence in Italy", in LeBrun E, McDonald G., Alvazzi del Frate A., Berman E.G., and K. Krause, *Small Arms Survey 2013*, Cambridge University Press.
- 8 Our thanks must go to the cooperation of the initial group of experts we interviewed, as well as researchers from the FIRE and EFFECT projects. Other experts were then selected using a snowballing approach (with one interviewee recommending others) and through direct contacts via events like the Vicenza firearms expo, where we could interact with firearms lobbyists and producers.
- 9 Specifically, informal phone conversations or email exchanges were held with a member of an Italian NGO that monitors firearms and related issues, a lawyer/academic expert on Italian criminal law and counter-terrorism, a prosecutor who had dealt with a specific case, an official working for the Dipartimento Centrale Polizia di Prevenzione, and two journalists.
- 10 Compiled by the University of Maryland, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>, accessed 5 April 2017.
- 11 Constitution of the Italian Republic art. 117(d), English version published by the Parliamentary Information, Archives and Publications Office of the Senate Service for Official Reports and Communication, https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf.
- 12 Presidential Decree 359 of 1991 contains rules governing which weapons are available to the National Police: it states that the use of weapons must be adequate and proportionate to the protection of public order and safety, the prevention and punishment of crime, and other institutional duties.

- 13 A relevant, but larger category of 'weapons' falls under *materiali di armamento*, as defined in L.185/1990, article 2, which include various types of equipment that are not strictly speaking considered to be weapons (e.g. vehicles, software and other materials/equipment with a specific military use).
- 14 The "exclusive use" of a firearm for sporting activities is an ambiguous requirement, since in abstract terms a sports firearm could be used to injure people or hunting. Therefore, it is actually required that the arm is suitable for a sporting use in terms of precision, lightness of the explosion, length of the barrel, and other characteristics. Maiello, V. (2015) *La legislazione in materia di criminalità organizzata, misure di prevenzione ed armi*, Torino: Giappichelli editore.
- 15 Maiello 2015, p. 635. According to an interviewee (IT-10) the distinction of civilian/military use of a weapon is made by companies for their benefits; before it was certified according to the Catalogue, but now ex L.110/1975 is the prefecture in charge of the decision.
- 16 Small Arms Survey 2015.
- 17 Circulars on the issue of arms, Ministry of Interior: <http://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/38614>.
- 18 For a detail analysis of the criminal framework on arms see: Maiello 2015.
- 19 All forms are available on the website of the Polizia di Stato: http://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/44/acquisto_porto_trasporto_armi_sportive_collezione.pdf, accessed 4 April 2017.
- 20 Hunting firearms are either smoothbore guns, with a gauge not larger than 12, an overall length more than 60 cm and a barrel length more than 30 cm; or rifled guns firing a bullet with a calibre of more than 5.6 mm or a cartridge longer than 40 mm, with an overall length of more than 60 cm and a barrel length of more than 30 cm.
- 21 The Prefettura is the local body representing of the Ministry of Interior, while the Questura is the peripheral body of the Department of Public Security.
- 22 Zanotti, R. (2016) "L'Italia che vuole sparare: Ho la licenza di caccia ma per proteggere casa", *La Stampa*, 6 November.
- 23 See among others: Zanotti, "L'Italia che vuole sparare: Ho la licenza di caccia ma per proteggere casa", *La Stampa*, 6 November 2016; Federico Malerba, "L'Italia con la pistola. Milano e Torino le più armate", *Il Giornale*, 9 January 2017; Nello Scavo, "Porto d'armi, licenze record", *Avvenire*, 12 March 2017; Luciano Galassi, "In Italia c'è un esercito di oltre un milione di civili armati di fucili e pistole", *Agi*, 27 March 2017.
- 24 IT-02
- 25 ROS official website: <http://www.carabinieri.it/arma/oggi/reparti/organizzazione-mobile-e-speciale/raggruppamento-operativo-speciale/organizzazione>.
- 26 IT-09
- 27 AISE, AISI and DIS official website, <https://www.sicurezza nazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/chiamo/organizzazione/aisi.html>, accessed 12 May 2017.
- 28 Conversation with an official of the DCP, 10 May 2017.
- 29 Rubino, M. (2017) "Ladri in casa la notte, ok della camera alla nuova legge che amplia la legittima difesa", *La Repubblica*, 4 May.
- 30 Il Messaggero 2015; Armimagazine (2017) "No certificato? Armi rottamate!", *armimagazine.it*, 2 March.

- 31 The Catalogue has been abolished ex comma 7 art. 14 L. 183/2011 <http://www.poliziale.com/2011/12/16/catalogo-nazionale-delle-armi-la-legge-di-stabilita-abolisce-larticolo-7-della-legge-18-aprile-1975-n-110-allarme-dei-sindacati-di-polizia/>
- 32 Fourteen States are members of the *Commission Internationale Permanente pour l'Epreuve des armes à feu portative* (Permanent International Commission for the Proof of Small Arms, CIP). Those states that sign the Convention undertake to recognise each other's Proof House, <http://www.cip-bobp.org/>.
- 33 Annex 1 of the Directive 477 specifies arms' categories. EU Council Directive 91/477/EEC, Official Journal of the European Commission, n. 256, 13 September 1991.
- 34 United Nations, Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, Italy country profile.
- 35 Maiello 2015, p. 719.
- 36 IT-03
- 37 IT-03
- 38 IT-04
- 39 IT-03
- 40 A private society has developed a software for armouries ("Progetto Armeria"), which contains data from the national Catalogue of firearms, control functions on expired or revoked licenses, administrative forms related to the sell/purchase/transport of arms, etc. <http://www.progetto-armeria.it/index.php>. Conversation with "Progetto Armeria" manager at Vicenza HIT firearms' expo, 12 February 2017.
- 41 Conversation with DCPD officer, 15 April 2017.
- 42 Polizia di Stato, Ufficio tecnico ad analisi di mercato, Descrizione del Sistema Informativo Interforze e Dimensionamenti, p.7.
- 43 United Nations, Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, National reporting tool - Italy (2016).
- 44 IT-07
- 45 IT-08
- 46 In 1982, the Italian Parliament introduced the art. 416-bis of the Italian Criminal Code, transforming the meta-juridical concept of mafia into the juridical category of mafia-type criminal organization (Paoli 2014, p. 122).
- 47 Hof, T. (2013) "The success of Italian anti-terrorism policy", in: *An international history of terrorism. Western and non-western experiences*, edited by Hanhimaki J.M, Blumenau B., New York: Routledge, pp. 100-112.
- 48 Padrone, D. (2016) "La repressione penale d'urgenza del terrorismo internazionale - The penal repression of emergency of international terrorism", *Cassazione Penale*, n. 11, p. 4079.
- 49 Expulsion of Imams in Carmagnola and Turnin: Corriere della Sera (2003) http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2003/11_Novembre/17/carmagnola.shtml; La Repubblica (2008) <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/12/sezioni/cronaca/imam-condannato/imam-anno-zero/imam-anno-zero.html>.
- 50 For an in-depth analysis of Italian counter-terrorism measures since 1970s see: Vettori B. (2007) *Terrorism and counterterrorism in Italy from the 1970s to date: a review*, NCTB Counterterrorism project, Final report, Transcrime.
- 51 Law Decree n.7 of 18 February 2015, converted into Law n.43 of 17 April 2015.

- 52 IT-11, IT-15
- 53 At the time of writing the SIDNA database only includes crimes involving terrorism, criminal conspiracy and mafia-related criminal conspiracy (*associazione a delinquere di stampo mafioso*).
- 54 According to the prosecutor in charge of the SIDNA database at the DNA (IT-15), it includes 1,600,000 individuals (compared to about 60,000 in the Europol and 200,000 in the Interpol databases).
- 55 IT-15. See also DNA 2016, p. 4.
- 56 Ivi, p. 6.
- 57 IT-15
- 58 In that occasion, a memorandum of understanding has also been signed by Italy with 16 countries in the area of Eastern Europe in order to provide them the SIDNA database (IT-15). Ansa (2016) Balcani: Franco Roberti a conferenza anticrimine Belgrado, http://www.ansamed.info/nuova_europa/it/notizie/nazioni/slovenia/2016/05/25/balcani-franco-roberti-a-conferenza-anticrimine-belgrado_5e580b09-e1a7-4b3a-9a72-6d8d-de7e5d70.html, accessed 11 May 2017.
- 59 Marsh 2002.
- 60 EURISPES is the Institute for Political, Social and Economic studies, an Italian leader research institute, <http://www.eurispes.eu>.
- 61 ANPAM (2017) *Al via osservatorio sul mercato delle armi sportive in Italia*, 13 February 2017, <http://www.bighunter.it/Fucili/ArchivioNews/tabid/214/newsid732/21161/Default.aspx> (accessed 26 April 2017).
- 62 Sagramoso 2001.
- 63 <http://fireproject.eu/explore/#/seizures>.
- 64 Savona, E. U., and M. Mancuso (eds.) (2017) *Fighting Illicit Firearms Trafficking Routes and Actors at European Level*, Final Report of Project FIRE (www.fireproject.eu), Milano: Transcrime – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.
- 65 More specifically, in 2009: nine Garand M1 rifles, one AR 70/90 rifle, 24 G3 rifles, 4,150 FAL BM59 assault rifles, 2,025 MG 42/59 machine guns, 2,666 MAB pistols, and 6,152 miscellaneous firearms; in 2007: 16,872 Beretta Model 34 self-loading pistols, 130,645 Garand M1 rifles, 11,812 FAL BM59 assault rifles, and 10,596 miscellaneous firearms; in 2006: 770 Beretta Model 34 self-loading pistols, 93,697 Garand M1 rifles, 37,390 FAL BM59 assault rifles, and 8,231 miscellaneous firearms; in 2005: 31,291 Beretta Model 34 self-loading pistols, 3,869 Winchester M1 carbines, 1,197 Winchester M1-A1 carbines, and 1,014 light weapons of various kinds.
- 66 United Nations, Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, Italy country profile.
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- 68 Paoli, L. (2013) « The integration of the Italian crime scene », in Albrecht H.J and A. Klip (eds.) *Crime, criminal law and criminal justice in Europe*, Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff publishers, pp. 3-42.
- 69 Descriptions of the divisions and the relations between these four organizations can be found in periodical reports issued by the DIA (last available DIA 2016) and DNA (last available DNA 2016).

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- 72 Direzione Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo (2016) *Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia e antiterrorismo nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015*, February 2016; Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (2016) *Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento*, 1° semestre 2016.
- 73 IT-07; IT-09; IT-11; IT-13
See also as example the GDF operation “Illiria” on trafficking of drugs and arms by Albanians: DIA 2016, p. 299.
- 74 IT-11
- 75 Massari 2013, p. 88.
- 76 IT-01; IT-09
- 77 De Martino, L. and D. Atwood (2015) *Reducing Illicit Arms Flows and the New Development Agenda*, Research Note n. 50, Geneva: Small Arms Survey.
- 78 Massari 2013, p. 92.
- 79 IT-09
- 80 IT-01
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- 121 EFFECT final report, Annex on Italy, in Brown and Poole 2016, p. 116.
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- 131 Since 2015, after the introduction of the requirement for a medical certificate as part of a licence application, many people handed over firearms to the police, and these had to be destroyed.
- 132 IT-02
- 133 Pinna, N. (2017) "Cerimant di Padova, l'Esercito sospende i due responsabili del traffico d'armi", La Stampa, 29 March.
- 134 Il Mattino di Padova 2017.
- 135 IT-09
- 136 Massari 2013, p. 89.
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Ivi, p. 90.
- 139 The video in the article of ADNkronos 2017 shows the discovery of the hidden stashes of firearms, as well as Carabinieri's uniforms, in the middle of thick greenery and empty ruins.
- 140 IT-11
- 141 IT-09.
- 142 Massari 2013, p. 93.
- 143 IT-01
- 144 IT-07
- 145 CPIFCOMS – Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia e sulle altre associazioni criminali similari (2003), Relazione annuale, Rome: Tipografia del Senato, p. 304.
- 146 IT-05
- 147 IT-13; Spapens 2007.
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- 150 South-Tyrolean were fighting for independence from Italy since 1950s with the BAS (Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol), and till the end of 1980s with attacks by Ein Tyrol and Sudtiroler volkspartei, as wells as Italian movements as MIA (Movimento Italiano Altoadige). Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sugli episodi di terrorismo 1992.
- 151 For further details on attack see the Global Terrorism Database, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>.
- 152 For in-depth analysis see Ginsborg, P. (2003), *A history of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
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- 154 A subversive strategy based primarily on a prearranged and well-planned series of terrorist acts designed to create a state of tension and widespread fear among the population that would justify or promote an authoritarian response. The British weekly newspaper *The Observer* coined the expression in December 1969, following the massacre in Piazza Fontana. The bomb in Piazza Fontana was a response by some of the most reactionary forces of Italian society, including neo-fascist groups and rogue sectors of the state security apparatus, to the powerful wave of social unrest in 1968-1969, as well as the Italian Communist Party's electoral campaign.
- 155 Ginsborg 2003, p. 423.
- 156 Elaboration on data from the Global Terrorism Database.
- 157 Elaboration on data from the Global Terrorism Database.
- 158 IT-05; IT-11
- 159 IT-14
- 160 One Kalashnikov 7.62 x 39 calibre assault rifle; one Uzi 9 x 19 calibre sub-machine gun; and one Skorpion 7.65 Browning calibre machine gun.
- 161 One Renato Gamba .38 Special handgun; one semi-automatic SIG Sauer handgun; one Winchester 94, 30-30 carbine; and one Tyrol .22 carbine.
- 162 IT-14
- 163 According to interviewees, the 'Ndrangheta has a long-standing relationship with terrorism, which emerged in the 1970s when terrorists and separatists were held in Italian prisons. A kind of solidarity among these inmates resulted in the development of business opportunities. This connection was strongly emphasised by the state agency that used the 'Ndrangheta as mediators in various issues concerning terrorism, for example, the case of the kidnapping of the Neapolitan politician *Ciro Cirillo* by the Red Brigades or that of *Aldo Moro* (IT-05). There is scope for dialogue between terrorist and mafia groups in a relationship of trust and solidarity irrespective of political positions. Mafia groups had contacts with both black terrorists and Red Brigades (from the *Prima Linea* group in particular), which resulted in tactical alliances to both purchase and destroy weapons.
- 164 IT-04; IT-05
- 165 IT-05
- 166 *Il Sole 24ore* (2013) "Ndrangheta e Ira riciclano insieme nel turismo calabrese", 5 March.
- 167 *Napoli today* (2009).
- 168 *La Repubblica* (2009) "Paura a Milano, bomba nella caserma. Un libico si fa saltare con 2 chili di esplosivo", 12 October.

- 169 IT-11; Spataro 2004.
- 170 Conversation with the Prosecutor in charge of the Azab case, 12 April 2017.
- 171 Conversation with the Prosecutor in charge of the Azab case, 12 April 2017.
- 172 Maurizio Borsetto was selling arms to different (and even opposed) mafia groups in Milan in the 1980s.
- 173 Conversation with the Prosecutor in charge of the Azab case, 12 April 2017.
- 174 Conversation with the Prosecutor in charge of the Azab case, 12 April 2017.
- 175 La Presse 2017.
- 176 Independent online 2017.
- 177 Corriere del Ticino 2017.
- 178 Conversation with an official of the DCP, 10 May 2017.
- 179 IT-09
- 180 IT-12
- 181 IT-12
- 182 IT-11
- 183 Corte d'assise di Milano, sez. Ia, Sentenza Briki Lassaad + 1, n. 3/16, 25 May 2016.
- 184 Translated from Italian by authors, Ibid. Corte d'assise di Milano, sez. Ia, Sentenza Briki Lassaad + 1, n. 3/16, 25 May 2016.
- 185 IT-12
- 186 IT-11
- 187 DIA 2016, p.17.
- 188 IT-12
- 189 IT-05