

Management of Weapons

Weapons management refers to a system of work and accompanying set of procedures, equipment and basic training for the marking, record keeping, securing, distribution and verification of weapons in the possession of a company. The intention of effective weapons management is to ensure that all weapons for which a Private Security Company (PSC) is responsible are safe, secure and serviceable at all times. The term also applies to **weapon-related equipment**. These are defined as items directly associated with the weapon, including those that may not themselves have a lethal capability but still constitute a critical or vital part of a weapon system. Some examples are: magazines; ammunition belts; optics; aiming devices; guidance components; platforms; mounts; pods; muzzle attachments; spare parts (electrical and/or mechanical). All weapon-related equipment should be treated as serialised and sensitive equipment, and subject to the same security and serviceability standards as weapons. Equally, within this category is included weapons recovered by PSCs through confiscation, discovery or transfer.

For the purposes of this document, the term '**weapons**' includes 'less-lethal weapons', where the latter is considered to be any device that is *less likely* to cause a fatal injury compared to conventional weapons such as firearms. (The possibility of such a fatality arising however cannot be excluded). Similar to the **Indicators document on Material of War**, this publication addresses 'training' matters directly related to asset management. A separate Indicators document covers all other aspects of **weapons training**.

The indicators provided below are based on authoritative publications and established good practice on the management of weapons within the private security industry and wider (e.g. MOSAIC, ISO 18788 and ANSI/ASIS PSC1). They address the legal domain as well industry standards and good practice. They provide a **pathway for PSCs wishing to enhance proficiency in the management of weapons and ensure regulatory compliance**. They also provide the framework for reaching affiliate, transitional membership and certified membership status in ICoCA.

Although comprehensive in nature and specifically attuned to private security companies, these Indicators **do not** represent all available technical guidance on weapons management. Where needed, particularly on *how* to implement certain Indicators, further detail is available and should be heeded in authoritative documents such as those listed at Annex A. Ultimately it is the responsibility of **the user** to seek out the necessary information and to evaluate whether the recommendations in this document are feasible, useful and appropriate for the company and operating environment, to ensure the safe, legal and efficient management of weapons.

Reflecting the approach adopted for the Code's other Indicators, this document speaks to the full spectrum of PSCs:

- **Level 0** is intended for non-members of ICoCA who are interested in implementing basic good practice in weapons management. They might also be considering taking the first step towards ICoCA affiliation.
- **Level 1** comprises of Affiliates (i.e. those companies with affiliate status in ICoCA, having met certain criteria laid down by ICoCA). PSCs at Level 1 might also be in the process of fulfilling the criteria to progress to transitional membership status (i.e. Level 2).
- **Level 2** comprises those companies that have reached transitional membership status on the path to full certification.
- **Level 3** comprises those companies that have been granted certified membership status of ICoCA by attaining and maintaining relevant industry standards and certification (e.g. ISO 18788; PSC.1), along with ICoCA certification. An emphasis on continual improvement by Level 3, certified members is important.

The first set of Indicators deals with legal compliance, and is applicable to all PSC Levels. The second set is on industry good practice, where there is a degree of variance for each PSC Level. Here, the terms ‘Plan’, ‘Develop’, ‘Implement’, ‘Improve’ are used to **depict the extent to which PSCs at each Level should engage with a particular indicator – as a *bare minimum***.

Indicators Tables

Compliance – Legal	
	<p>Comply with the laws and regulations of the countries where the company is registered and operating for every contract, as well as applicable international law (including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and UN sanctions on the provision of weapons and related services) and applicable authorisation requirements, including permits and licenses, relating to (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquisition. - Possession. - Use. - Import, export, brokering and transshipment. - Movement and transport within the country (including local authority transfer permits). - Inventory management and accounting control, including traceability. - Inspection and maintenance. - Training and provision of other security-related services. - Transfer of possession or ownership, including sale, within the country. - Return, disposal and destruction (including at contract/licence/company expiry).

Comply with any prohibitions pertaining to the alteration/modification of weapons (including physical alterations to the serial number, calibre, timing and shooting mode).				
Industry Good Practices	<i>Level 0</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>
<i>Accounting and Storage</i>				
As part of the planning process prior to commencing a new contract, calculate the quantity and type of weapons required for the identified tasks, and also work out the storage requirements. Avoid fielding more weapons than is needed.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Create <i>comprehensive</i> processes and records, published in widely available Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the secure handling, storage, issue, maintenance, transport and use of weapons.	<i>Develop</i>		<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Have weapons ledgers available (separate to ammunition ledgers) to record the holdings of weapons, down to the following level of detail: make, model, calibre, country of manufacture, supplier details, serial number, butt number, type (e.g. pistol), action (e.g. manual), location where kept. A written ledger is good; an electronic one is better. Ledger records should be maintained for at least 20 years.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Have a similar/same ledger to record receipts and issues. This should include dates and times of receipts and issues, and relevant names and signatures. Losses should also be recorded. Ledger records should be maintained for at least 20 years.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Show the register(s) to the competent State authority if requested to do so (e.g. in connection with a criminal investigation).	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Ensure only a limited and agreed number of named individuals have access to the accounting ledgers.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
When not in use, all weapons should be secured in a locked location with two layers of security (e.g. armoury and locked weapons racks).	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Establish a robust system for the secure custody of access keys to weapons storage facilities.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Only allow weapons to be stored at a company location – not at an employee’s home.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Prohibit staff lending weapons to other individuals.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Permit the storage of weapons in secure, locked containers at smaller operating sites away from main armouries when the threat levels are high. (There should be no change however in the accounting and supervision procedures).	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>

Mark each weapon using a suitable method such as: stamping; casting; engraving; laser-marking; electronic chip (RFID); electro-chemical marking.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Place all spare weapons and ancillaries in bulk storage, using sealed and numbered containers, to support efficient management checks and to bolster care and preservation.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
When moving weapons between sites, ensure that any such movement is authorised by the local authorities and that company staff are in possession of any applicable permits.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
<p>Establish a set of good practices to support weapons <i>safety</i>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice from specialists/technicians on the best methods and places to store weapons. - Ensure weapons are kept in clean and dry storage, and ideally under cover and on firm, dry land. - Weapons are never loaded when stored. - Magazines are removed from weapons when stored. - Fire safety SOPs for stored weapons are produced and drills regularly rehearsed. - Regular disposal (via the national authorities if necessary) of weapons that are beyond repair. - Where practicable, assign the weapon to the person who zeroed it. 	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Establish and publicise an <i>amnesty</i> system, permitting employees to hand-in all unaccounted for weapons without fear of sanction. This should include a concerted campaign once a year to maximise the retrieval of such items.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Supervision				
<p>Establish a system of accounting checks of all weapons at all PSC locations. The frequency should be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily: 100% count by line managers/supervisors of all signed-out and stored weapons. - Weekly: 100% check by line managers/supervisors of quantity and serial/butt number of weapons holdings. (Note: sealed consignments of weapons in-store should not be opened, but the consignment markings should be checked as should the integrity of the packaging). - On hand-over of staff responsible for weapons accounting: 100% check by line managers/supervisors of the quantity and serial/butt number of all holdings of weapons. (Note: sealed consignments of weapons in-store should not be opened, but the consignment markings should be checked as should the integrity of the packaging). <p>A record of the date and person conducting each check should be kept throughout the life of the contract(s) and should be maintained for at least 20 years.</p>	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>

Designate and publish the directors/managers within the Company who have specific responsibilities for weapons management. The details should feature in respective job descriptions and relevant policy documents. Duties should include periodic checks of the quantity and type of weapons (e.g. once every quarter).	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Conduct independent and regular inspection of weapons holdings and accounting processes (i.e. by personnel (company or external) with no direct involvement in the day-to-day management of the stocks).	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Create and widely publicise a procedure for the rapid reporting of weapons management incidents (including the provision of confidential communication channels for when required).	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Establish an independent internal investigation and inquiry procedure to be immediately activated upon any report of weapons losses.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<p>Establish an independent internal inquiry system for serious weapons incidents (e.g. ammunition failure, breech explosion) causing fatalities, injury, major damage to equipment, reputational harm. A report should be produced for internal purposes, and where applicable for the client and the local authorities. Such an inquiry should seek to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time and location of the incident. - Identity of any persons involved including their addresses and other contact details. - Injuries/damage sustained. - Circumstances leading up to the incident. - Root causes. - Any measures taken by the company in response to the incident. - Recommended follow-on action. 	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Whenever a weapon is discharged, intentional or accidental (except in the case of live-fire training), ensure that the company has robust systems in-place for capturing and recording all salient details, and initiating formal investigations if the circumstances so dictate.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>
Create and sustain a culture of continuous improvement through: systematic assessment of performance; capturing best practice; implementing lessons learned; horizon-scanning for new ideas, freedoms and constraints.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
Staff				
Recognise the added-value by achieving gender balance and awareness within the company, and take decisive action towards accomplishing this objective.	<i>Implement</i>			<i>Improve</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As part of the recruit selection process, all potential employees who are required as part of their duties to manage or have access to weapons should be assessed on their physical, mental and behavioural suitability. This should include checks of identity, human rights violations, dishonourable discharge, criminal history, and any prohibitions related to acquiring, owning, possessing and/or using a weapon. - Such checks should be conducted by individuals with the relevant competencies. - Physical, mental and behavioural re-assessment should be conducted on a regular basis (e.g. at least every 12 months). - Companies should ensure that sub-contractors similarly comply. 	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<p>Ensure all personnel handling weapons, particularly armourers, have the competency to read, record and check all identification markings.</p>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<p>Conduct tailored <u>induction</u> training on weapons management for all new staff who have responsibility for weapons management to ensure they have the knowledge and competencies to carry out their functions safely, effectively, and efficiently. (Appropriate budgets and resources should be allocated to support such activities).</p>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<p>Conduct tailored <u>recurrent</u> training <i>and testing</i> on weapons management for all staff who have responsibility for weapons management to ensure they have the knowledge and competencies to carry out their functions safely, effectively, and efficiently. Training (and testing) should, amongst other things, be on security regulations, SOPs, security plans and weapons manufacturers' updates. (Appropriate budgets and resources should be allocated to support such activities). Where possible this should be done every 12 months.</p>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<i>Maintenance and Repair</i>		
<p>Make certain that all weapons are kept in a serviceable condition by complying with the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct regular inspections by qualified staff. - Daily pull-through and oiling of barrels. - Strip, clean and oil working parts as soon as possible after firing and at least every week. - Clean and oil all unboxed weapons at least once every 3 months. - Select a dedicated cleaning area where procedures can be properly supervised and where full safety precautions can be carried out. - When cleaning, avoid items coming into contact with sand and water. Place on clean and dry surfaces (e.g. tarpaulins). 	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<p>Ensure safety precautions are carried out whenever weapons are cleaned.</p>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>

Apart from minor work (such as repair to foresights) do not permit in-house repair and/or refurbishment of weapons. Either return the item to the manufacturer or if beyond repair, assign it for destruction.	<i>Implement</i>		<i>Improve</i>
Ensure that all weapons awaiting repair are appropriately marked, recorded and stored in a segregated area, thereby preventing a mix-up with serviceable items.	<i>Implement</i>		<i>Improve</i>
Disposal			
Ensure that all weapons awaiting disposal (through destruction or transfer to the national authorities) are appropriately marked, recorded and stored in a segregated area, thereby preventing a mix-up with other items.	<i>Implement</i>		<i>Improve</i>
Where weapons are to be destroyed, this should be carried out by the national authorities. If the latter grant authority for the items to be destroyed by the company, this must only be performed by trained staff and in accordance with international best practice. Burning; cement; crushing; cutting by bandsaw/hydraulic shears/hydro abrasive technology/rotating disc/oxy-acetylene/plasma torch; detonation; shredding; smelting; 'welding for art' are potential methods of destruction.	<i>Implement</i>		<i>Improve</i>
Take photographs before, during and after destruction, capturing all markings. Attach the photographs to the documentation submitted to the national authorities and retain copies. Ensure all ledgers are amended accordingly and maintained for at least 20 years.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>
Losses and Recoveries			
Ensure company employees with responsibility for weapons management are aware of the contributors to 'diversion' (i.e. unauthorised rerouting or appropriation). This can include: erratic checks; duplication of ledgers; frequent changes/over-loading of logisticians and armorers; poorly documented handovers; insufficient independent audits.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>
<p>Initiate measures to reduce the potential for diversion, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Procurement</u>: only order sufficient to fulfil assessed needs; only pay for those items that have been delivered and obtain proper receipts; 100% check of quantities and markings on arrival; ensure that more than one staff member is involved. - <u>Records</u>: enter the details of all authorised modifications in the holdings ledger. - <u>Reporting</u>: insist on the immediate reporting of all losses of weapons. - <u>Sanctions</u>: have in place appropriate disciplinary procedures for inadequate records, documentation and supervision that have led/or have the potential to lead to the diversion of weapons. 	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>

	Set up a systematic process for when company personnel discover, obtain or receive weapons not belonging to the company. This should cover: reception arrangements; transferral processes; storage; documentation.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
<i>Partners, Suppliers, Sub-contractors</i>					
	Conduct human rights due diligence checks of all partners, suppliers and sub/prime-contractors prior to working with them.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
	Conduct due diligence checks of all partners, suppliers and sub/prime-contractors on their record of weapons management prior to working with them (e.g. reports of weapons losses).	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
	Agree with partners, suppliers and sub/prime-contractors that they will conform, where applicable, to the legal and good practice indicators for weapons management given in this document.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>
	Establish in-house monitoring of the performance and behaviour of partners, suppliers and sub/prime-contractors to ensure compliance.	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>Improve</i>

Feedback

This is intended to be a '**living document**' that may be updated and further adapted as the realities of PSCs evolve and additional best practices are identified in the industry. ICoCA welcomes feedback from Members, Affiliates and other stakeholders.

Further Reading

General

- [*The Code - ICoCA - International Code of Conduct Association 09 November 2010*](#): ICoCA requirements on management of weapons, weapons training, management of material of war and incident reporting.
- [*ANSI/ ASIS PSC1 Management System for Quality of PSC Operations*](#): information on selection, background screening and vetting of personnel and sub-contractors; competence, training and awareness; Use of Force training; performance; incident management, monitoring, reporting and investigation; procurement and management of weapons, hazardous materials and munitions.
- [*IOS 18788 Management System for Private Security Operations*](#): information on weapons authorisations; procurement and management of weapons, hazardous materials and munitions; Incident monitoring, reporting and investigations.
- [*The Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)*](#): information on arms export and export assessment, import, transit or transshipment, brokering, diversion and record keeping.
- [*ITI \(International Instrument to enable States to Identify and Trace, in a timely and reliable manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons\)*](#): information on the marking, recording and tracing of weapons.
- [*Fire Arms Protocol \(Protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, supplementing the United Nations convention against transnational organized crime\)*](#): information on criminalisation; confiscation, seizure and disposal; record-keeping; marking of firearms; deactivation of firearms; requirements for export, import and transit licensing or authorisation systems; security and preventative measures; brokers and brokering.
- [*Staying Safe: Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management \(WAM\) during the COVID-19 Crisis | by Small Arms Survey | Medium*](#): 6-minute Small Arms Survey blog.

- [*A Guide to the UN Small Arms Process: 2016 Update | Small Arms Survey*](#): concise manual to assist and inform policymakers new to small arms on the international agenda. Covers definitions and terminology, a brief history of the small arms process, summaries of key issues, instruments and measures; and an overview of the roles of various institutions.
- [*The Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct – Understanding the relationship between international initiatives to regulate the global private security industry .pdf*](#): DCAF 2016 paper providing a detailed comparison between good practices contained in the Montreux Document and the ICoC principles, examining to what extent states may build on the ICoC and its Association in order to regulate the provision of private security services effectively and thereby implement good practices identified in the Montreux Document.
- [*DCAF Toolkit Use of Force.pdf*](#): 2019 DCAF publication providing a guidance tool for States on the basic principles and requirements for state regulatory frameworks on the use of force by private security providers.
- [*Private Security Governance and National Action Plans \(NAPs\) on Business and Human Rights | DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*](#): DCAF and the Danish Institute for Human Rights this toolkit publication to provide insight and guidance on the analysis of existing legal frameworks and policy responses for the development of new laws, policies, and practices that respond specifically to the human rights risks related to the private security industry. It is a tool for States and other human rights stakeholders, such as national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as private security providers (PSPs) themselves, to evaluate the human rights risks and impacts of ongoing and potential private security operations and services.

Munitions Management and Safety

- [*IATGs \(International Ammunition Technical Guidelines\)*](#): covering ammunition management principles, risk management, accounting, storage facilities, infrastructure, equipment and operations, surveillance, transport, security, destruction, accident reporting and investigations.
- [*UN Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations*](#): provisions for dangerous goods classification and transport of explosives and ammunition.
- [*A Practical Guide to Life-cycle Management of Ammunition | Small Arms Survey*](#): introduction to the Small Arms Survey's LCMA model and describes the role of national ownership in creating an enabling environment in which states can establish and maintain an LCMA system.
- [*Munitions Safety Information Analysis Center | MSIAC \(nato.int\)*](#): NATO free online resource with help to reduce, and eliminate, the risk to personnel and materiel from explosive incidents associated with own munitions.

- [*Small Arms Survey Podcast #23: The Dangers of Excess Munitions Stockpiles: the UEMS Handbook | Small Arms Survey*](#): 7 ½ minute podcast on the Small Arms Survey Handbook 'Unplanned Explosions at Munitions Sites (UEMS): Excess Stockpiles as Liabilities rather than Assets', published in June 2014.

Weapons Management and Safety

- <https://www.unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments>: a reference methodology for national weapons and ammunition management baseline assessments.
- [*MOSAIC \(Modular Small Arms Implementation Compendium\)*](#): information on SALW international transfer, end-use and end-user controls; civilian access to SALW (MOSAIC 03.30:2015 Section 13 – regulating PSC); stockpile management: weapons; marking and recording; destruction.
- [*UK Firearms Security Manual 2020*](#): information on cabinets, safes, gun rooms and armoury buildings.
- [*An Introductory Guide to the Identification of Small Arms, Light Weapons, and Associated Ammunition | Small Arms Survey*](#): Provides the reader with a basic understanding of how to identify and analyse SALW as an aid to tracking proliferation.

Gender Perspectives

- [*Taking stock of action on the illicit small arms trade: Gender-responsive small arms control | Small Arms Survey*](#): This blog post provides a short overview of four of the topics covered by the seventh panel of the Small Arms Survey 2020 online forum 'Taking stock of action on the illicit small arms trade' which explored how the principles intended to incorporate gender into arms control architecture, instruments, policies and programmes can be operationalised to create the impact they were intended to have.
- [*Gender-responsive Small Arms Control: A Practical Guide | Small Arms Survey*](#): concrete suggestions for how to develop and support gender responsive programming to address the gendered phenomenon of armed violence providing a roadmap for mainstreaming gender into the small arms project cycle.
- [*Small Arms Survey Podcast #48: Gender in Small Arms Control | Small Arms Survey*](#): podcast on Gender in small arms control, as part of the Gender Lens for Arms Control Support and Sustainability (GLASS) project.
- [*GBV ATT-brief.pdf \(reachingcriticalwill.org\)*](#): Gender based violence and the Arms Trade Treaty.
- [*Gender and Security Toolkit | DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*](#): a series of practical tools and policy guides to promote Gender equality and integrate a Gender perspective in the security and justice sector.

- [*Gender and Private Security Regulation Policy Brief.pdf \(dcaf.ch\)*](#): DCAF Policy Brief – Gender and Private Security Regulation.

Counter Diversion

- [*Diversion - Certificate \(smallarmssurvey.org\)*](#): Infographic series on possible measures to prevent and address diversion: supporting effective implementation of the ATT.

Training Resources

- [*Instructional Designer's Handbook – Simple Book Publishing \(unizin.org\)*](#): compilation of presentations, readings, research and best practices to assist in designing a course of instruction.
- [*UNODC Systematic Approach to Training.qxd*](#): nine-page overview from UNODC on the systematic approach to training model.
- [*ISO - ISO 10015:2019 - Quality management – Guidelines for competence management and people development*](#): guidelines for an organization to establish, implement, maintain and improve systems for competence management and people development to positively affect outcomes related to the conformity of products and services and the needs and expectations of relevant interested parties.
- [*UNITAR Online Facilitation Guide: Methodological Tips \(flipsnack.com\)*](#): Entitled ‘How to Turn Face-to-Face into Online Events’ this UN Institute for Training and Research online booklet intends to provide tips to support effective delivery of training content on-line.
- [*UNITAR Online Facilitation Guide: Designing Learning Events \(flipsnack.com\)*](#): Entitled ‘Guiding Questions for Designing Learning Events (Face-to Face and Online)’ this UN Institute for Training and Research online booklet provides a list of key questions along nine key stages with a course design process.