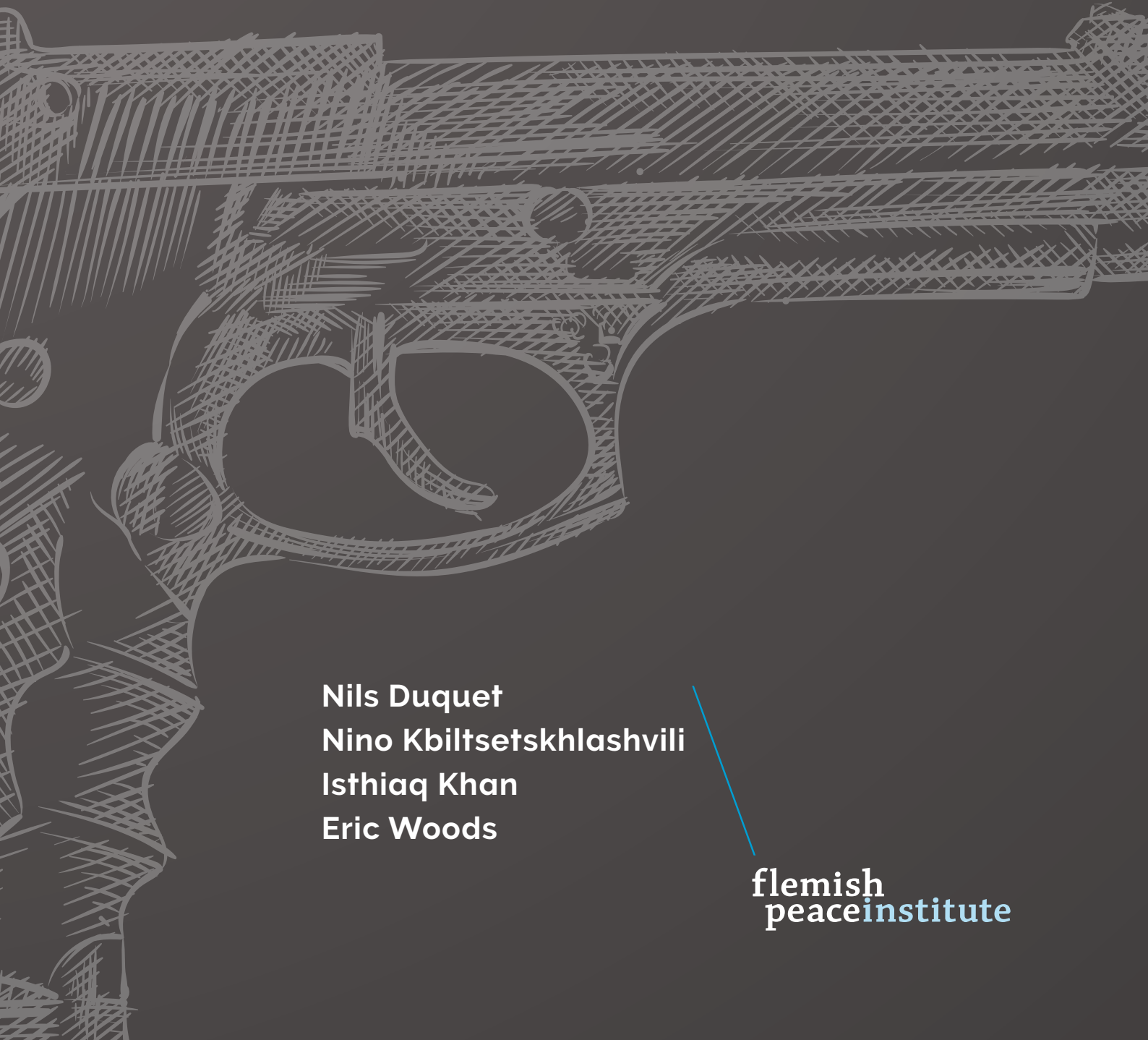


REPORT

Armed To Kill

A comprehensive analysis of the guns used
in public mass shootings in Europe
between 2009 and 2018



Nils Duquet
Nino Kbiltsetskhlashvili
Isthiaq Khan
Eric Woods

flemish
peaceinstitute

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Colophon

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1

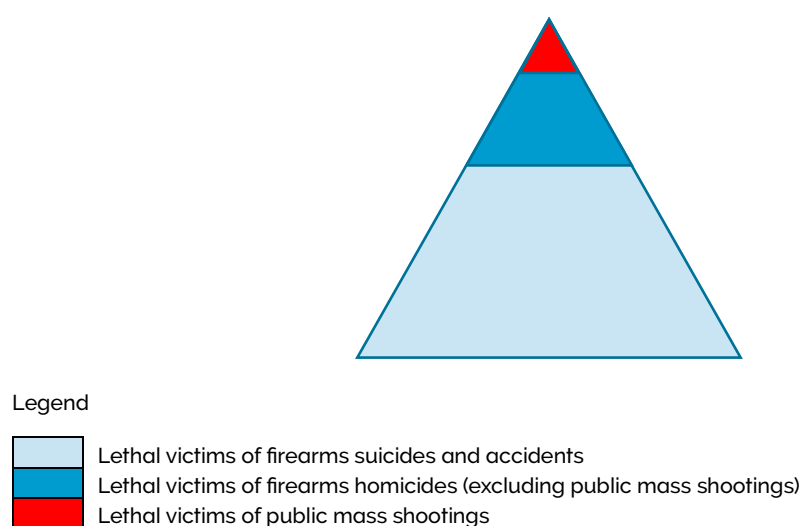
Introduction

Public mass shootings in which one or more gunmen start shooting at people in the streets, at schools or offices, in religious buildings, or at places of recreation such as movie theatres, concert halls or bars generally send a shock wave through local communities and impact national politics, while reports on them are broadcast internationally. The recent mass shootings in a shopping mall in El Paso (United States, August 2019), at mosques in Christchurch (March 2019), on a tram in Utrecht (March 2019), at the Stoneman Douglas high school in Florida (February 2018) and at the music festival in Las Vegas (October 2017) demonstrate that these deadly incidents can happen anywhere and are a global phenomenon. In recent years several such shootings have also been perpetrated in Europe, the most notorious of which are probably the spectacular terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 and the mass shooting on Utøya island in Norway in 2011. Although public mass shootings are a global phenomenon, most people still instinctively think of the United States as the place where such shootings occur. This is quite understandable: recent research comparing public mass shooting rates across 171 countries indicates that 31% of the global public mass shootings between 1966 and 2012 occurred in the United States.¹

Public mass shootings are the object of heated political and societal debate in the United States. This has resulted in numerous studies and analyses of various aspects of this phenomenon. Research on public mass shootings in Europe is, however, very limited. A quick look at recent European public mass shootings shows that significant differences can be observed in terms of, for example, the locations where the shootings occurred, the number of perpetrators, the motives of the perpetrator(s), the selection of the victims and the firearms used. In this report we will focus on one specific aspect of public mass shootings in Europe: how did the perpetrators of these shootings acquire their firearms? For this analysis we will focus on public mass shootings defined as “homicides in the (semi-)public space in which at least four people, excluding the perpetrator(s), were fatally shot by one or more perpetrators in a relatively short time frame and within a rather limited geographical area” (see section 2.1).

In Europe approximately 6,300 people die each year as the result of gunshot wounds. The large majority of these gun deaths are the result of successful suicide attempts, while about 900 people die annually as the result of homicides committed with firearms. These homicides are committed in various contexts. The little available research on the firearms used in homicides in Europe suggests that different types of firearms are used in different contexts.² Public mass shootings are a small, but very specific type of gun violence. As we shall see later in this report, public mass shootings accounted for approximately 341 gun deaths between 2009 and 2018. With an average of about 35 lethal victims per year, public mass shootings thus account for less than 4% of the annual number of gun homicides and less than 1% of the annual number of gun deaths in Europe.

Figure 1: Public mass shootings as a proportion of the total number of gun deaths in Europe, 2009-2018



Despite their small share of the total number of gun deaths, these public mass shootings tend to have significant policy impact in Europe. Whereas gun-related incidents in which criminals settle scores with other criminals generally occur at a distance from everyday life, the violence of mass shootings in the (semi-)public space occurs extremely close to home. In many places in the world such mass shootings tend to lead to societal debate on the role of firearms in society, and are often an important stimulus for legislative or policy change. The recent public mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, is a clear example of this. Less than a month after this incident, the country's lawmakers voted almost unanimously in favour of more restrictive firearms legislation that curbs, among other things, the circulation and use of most semi-automatic firearms, parts that convert firearms into semi-automatic firearms, and high-capacity magazines.³ In addition, a gun buy back programme was organised: in the first month of this programme more than 10,000 firearms were voluntarily surrendered in exchange for a fee.⁴ Changes in national firearms legislation and policies as a direct consequence of public mass shootings can also be observed in Europe; for example, in the United Kingdom in 1997 following the mass shooting at the Dunblane primary school in late 1996, in Belgium in 2006 following the lethal shooting of a two-year-old infant and her

nanny in the streets of Antwerp, and in Germany in 2009 after the Winnenden school shooting. Also the European Union (EU) as a whole has responded to mass shootings with new firearms legislation and new policy initiatives. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 the European Commission adopted a proposal to significantly amend EU Firearms Directive 91/477/EC,⁵ which sets out the framework for EU member states' national legislation, and adopted a new action plan to strengthen the fight against illicit firearms trafficking into and within the EU.⁶

A lack of basic information about and thorough analysis of European firearms-related issues severely limit the development of effective firearms legislation and policy. The bulk of the research into the relationship between firearms and violence focuses on the situation in the United States. This is also the case for research into public mass shootings: the United States has a long tradition of researching these violent incidents. Previous analyses of the weapons used in mass shootings in the United States between 1982 and 2012, for example, concluded that the perpetrators predominantly used pistols and rifles.⁷ A crucial question from a policy perspective is how these perpetrators obtained the firearms that they used in these lethal shooting incidents. Information on this issue can support the development of stronger and more efficient firearms policies. Previous research has demonstrated that in the United States the perpetrators of mass shootings mostly use legally acquired firearms: in almost 80% of 62 identified mass shootings in the United States between 1982 and 2012 the perpetrators legally owned their firearm(s).⁸ A similar result was found in Australia: two-thirds of the perpetrators of the 17 identified mass shootings that occurred there between 1987 and 2015 owned their firearms legally, and 56% of those who died in these shootings were shot with a legally owned firearm.⁹ But it would be unwise to simplistically apply these results to the European context, since the situation in terms of firearms legislation and possession in Australia – and especially in the United States – differs significantly from that in Europe.

Significantly less research has historically been available in Europe on the weapons used in mass shootings. For example, very few studies provide an in-depth examination of the types of firearms used in these deadly shootings, the legal status of these weapons and the ways in which the perpetrators got hold of them.¹⁰ Yet these are important focal points in the societal debate surrounding the role of firearms in general in European society, and the various aspects of firearms legislation and policy in particular. To develop better legislation and policies aimed at preventing gun violence in our societies, it is important to improve our understanding of the problem. The aim of this report is therefore to support the societal and policy-oriented debate around gun violence in Europe through an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of how the perpetrators of public mass shootings in Europe acquired their firearms. In 2016 the Flemish Peace Institute first explored this topic by analysing how this happened in eight public mass shootings in Europe between 2009 and 2015.¹¹ This report will build on the 2016 report and will analyse the firearms acquisition process of all 23 public mass shootings that were identified between 2009 and 2018.

2

Methodological framework

In this study, we have elected to use a qualitative research methodology to analyse in detail which firearms were used by the perpetrator(s) of 23 public mass shootings carried out in Europe in the period 2009–2018 and how these perpetrators obtained their weapons. Before proceeding to the case studies in Chapter 3, we will briefly explain our methodological framework and, more specifically, the definition of public mass shootings that was used, the identification of the case studies and the sources of our information.

2.1 Definition and scope

In this report we will analyse the guns used in incidents known as “public mass shootings”. An important initial task is to define the scope of this phenomenon. This is a difficult endeavour, since there is no standard definition of what constitutes a “mass shooting” in the literature. Moreover, several terms are also used to describe similar phenomena (for example, mass shooting, mass murder, multiple-victim homicides, mass killing, rampage killing, active shooter incident, etc.). The lack of universally accepted definition of the term “mass shooting” therefore leads to different assessments of the frequency of such events and limits analytical comparisons.¹²

We argue that lethal mass shootings can be considered as mass murders in which one or more firearms are used to kill a number of victims. A mass murder is generally considered an incident in which several people are killed by one or more perpetrators in a relatively short time frame (usually within a few hours) and within a very limited geographical area. What varies from study to study are the specifics of the characteristics of these events that lead to a particular incident being labelled a “mass murder” or “mass shooting”. A crucial element here is the casualty threshold (the number of dead and/or wounded victims). A common approach used in the literature to determine the casualty threshold for mass shootings is to adopt the US Federal Bureau of Investigation’s casualty threshold for a mass murder, which is four fatalities

excluding the perpetrator(s). This approach has, however, been criticised, since it does not capture homicides with fewer fatalities but a high number of injured victims, or homicides with four or more victims, but with less than four victims killed by the use of a firearm. In addition to the issue of the casualty threshold, differences in definition and scope are also found with regard to the context in which these shootings occur. Some studies, for example, exclude mass shootings that stem from domestic or gang violence.¹³

In this report we define “public mass shootings” as “homicides in the (semi-)public space in which at least four people, excluding the perpetrator(s), were fatally shot by one or more perpetrators in a relatively short time frame and within a rather limited geographical area”. Mass shooting that were solely carried out in the domestic sphere were therefore not included in our selection. Yet, mass shootings that started in the domestic sphere but also involved fatally shot victims outside of the domestic sphere were included. Given the significant societal impact of the recent terrorist attacks in which firearms were used and the prior observation of differences in the ways in which the firearms used in these attacks were acquired,¹⁴ we decided to include terrorist-related mass shootings in the (semi-)public space in our study. Criminal-on-criminal mass shootings are part of the scope of this study, but such shootings with at least four lethal victims have not been identified in Europe in the period 2009–2018.

2.2 Data collection

Based on our definition of public mass shootings, we identified 23 mass shooting incidents that occurred in the (semi-)public space in Europe in the period 2009–2018, in which in total approximately 341 people (excluding the perpetrators) were killed (see Table 1).

We compiled this list of public mass shootings after an extensive web-based search using a series of search terms that included “mass shooting”, “public shooting” and “school shooting” (in various European languages), and after analysing various existing lists of similar shooting incidents in Europe. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)¹ was also analysed to identify other potential public mass shootings.

After the compilation of a broad list of potential public mass shootings in Europe, as much relevant information as possible was subsequently acquired about each of the initially identified shooting incidents to assess whether the incident in question fell within our definition of public mass shootings.

¹ The GTD is an open-source database containing information on terrorist events that occurred around the world from 1970 through 2017. It includes information on more than 180,000 cases. For each incident information is available on the weapon(s) used. The information contained in the GTD is based on reports from a variety of open media sources. Information is only added if the source is considered to be credible. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism makes the GTD online: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

Table 1: Overview of public mass shootings in Europe, 2009-2018

Date	Location	Firearm deaths*
March 2009	Winnenden (Germany)	15
December 2009	Espoo (Finland)	4
June 2010	Cumbria (United Kingdom)	12
August 2010	Devínska Nová Ves (Slovakia)	7
September 2011	Alphen aan de Rijn (Netherlands)	6
July 2011	Utøya (Norway)	67
December 2011	Liège (Belgium)	6
March 2012	Toulouse-Montauban (France)	4 ¹
April 2012	Smilkovci (Macedonia)	5
September 2012	Chevaline (France)	4
February 2013	Menznau (Switzerland)	4
April 2013	Velika Ivanča (Serbia)	13
September 2013	Annaberg (Austria)	4
May 2014	Brussels (Belgium)	4
November 2014	Tirana (Albania)	4
January 2015	Paris (France)	17
February 2015	Uherský Brod (Czech Republic)	8
May 2015	Naples (Italy)	4
August 2015	Roye (France)	4
November 2015	Paris (France)	Approximately 130
July 2016	Žitište (Serbia)	5
July 2016	Munich (Germany)	9
December 2018	Strasbourg (France)	5

* Perpetrator(s) not included.

After the potential incidents were confirmed as public mass shootings in terms of the definition used in this research project, we searched for information to clarify as fully as possible the chronology of each of these shootings incidents and to collect as much relevant information as possible about the firearms used in the incidents and how the perpetrators acquired them.

Research into mass murder is generally based on two types of information: that released by official bodies and/or that contained in media reports. Advantages and disadvantages are associated with both types of data. In this report we made use of both types of information, although we have given priority to that from official documents and declarations issued by public bodies and official court documents. We have used these types of documents as much as possible in our study. For example, in the wake of the various shooting incidents, press conferences are frequently organised in which information about the facts of the incident is disclosed, often including information about the weapons used. Moreover, following numerous shootings that were carried out with legally obtained firearms, studies were carried out on how the perpetrators acquired the weapons they used. The results of these studies were often released into

¹ In total the perpetrator of this public mass shooting carried out a series of attacks between 11 and 19 March 2012. These attacks are known as the “Toulouse and Montauban shootings”. During these attacks seven people were killed and three others were wounded. Only the attack on 19 March, however, fits under our definition of a public mass shooting since this was the only separate incident with four or more fatalities.

the public domain. It is obvious that this information from official bodies added significant value to our study, given its high level of reliability and detail.

Where no information was available from official government or court documents, investigation reports, and press conferences, only online media reports were used. These reports often contain relevant information on the weapons used, but one of the disadvantages of using this kind of data to analyse criminal activity is that not all types of activities receive the same level of media exposure. Mass murders generally receive significant media attention. This is also apparent from our analysis of mass shootings in Europe: for each of the selected cases, detailed information was found in local (and often also international) media reports regarding the shooting in general and the weapons used in particular. However, the major concern regarding the use of media reports of the weapons that were used is their reliability. Media reports are at times speculative, can contain erroneous information and can contradict one another. Therefore priority was given to media reports that cited government officials over other types of reports. At the next level, priority was given to media reports containing the most detailed information, while local media reports were chosen over international reports. If uncertainties and contradictions remained, we explicitly indicate this in the descriptions of the cases and factored this into our analysis.

3



Case studies of public mass shootings

In this chapter of the report we will analyse into detail the firearms used and the acquisition of these firearms by the perpetrators of the 23 identified public mass shootings in Europe between 2009 and 2018. Each case study will begin with a short description of the chronology of the shootings. For a few shootings little reliable information was available on the (acquisition of the) firearm(s) used. For most shootings, however, this was not the case and we were able to collect from public sources detailed information on the firearms and often also the specific acquisition process of the perpetrators (see section 2.2 for more information about the data collection).

3.1 Winnenden (Germany, March 2009)

On the morning of 11 March 2009, 17-year-old Tim Kretschmer walked into his former high school in Winnenden, a small town in south-west Germany, armed with a Beretta pistol. He entered three classrooms and shot dead nine students and three teachers. Seven other students were wounded. The police quickly arrived at the scene and an exchange of fire took place between them and the perpetrator. Kretschmer was able to escape and, while fleeing, shot dead a worker at a nearby psychiatric hospital (where he had been treated a year earlier). He then hijacked a car and forced the driver to take him to Wendlingen, 40 km away. There he entered a Volkswagen car showroom and shot a salesperson and a customer. When the police arrived at the scene a second exchange of fire took place in which two police officers and Kretschmer were wounded. Having been cornered by the police, he shot himself in the head. During the deadly attacks, which lasted for three hours, more than 100 shots were fired, 16 people (including the perpetrator) were killed and nine others were wounded.¹⁵

During the shootings Tim Kretschmer used a semi-automatic 9 mm Beretta 92 pistol; his father legally owned both this pistol and the accompanying ammunition. At the time of the incident the perpetrator's father was a member of a local shooting club and owned 15 legally obtained firearms. Every three years the father was checked by the Landsratsamt Rems-Murr-Kreis to ascertain whether his licence to own these firearms should be extended. Most of the father's firearms were securely locked away in two gun cabinets, each of which were secured with a numerical code. However, the 9 mm Beretta pistol used in the shootings was not stored in a gun cabinet, but lay in an unlocked cabinet in the father's bedroom.¹⁶ In the aftermath of this tragedy the father was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and "negligence causing bodily harm". He received a suspended sentence of 18 months for not having securely stored the pistol that his son used in the shootings.¹⁷

Following the shootings, it was suggested that the perpetrator must have been a very good marksman. Although Tim Kretschmer did not own any firearms himself, he did have more than 20 airguns in his possession, and, along with youths from the neighbourhood, regularly used these airguns for shooting. According to his companions he was an excellent shot. According to some sources, he even had a fully fledged shooting range for his airguns in the basement of his home. During a police interrogation Kretschmer's father confirmed that his son had also come to his shooting club on at least three occasions and that they had practised shooting handguns there together, with the last occasion being about three weeks before the fatal shootings.¹⁸

¹ With the exception of one male student, all of the victims were female.

3.2 Espoo (Finland, December 2009)

On 31 December 2009, 43-year-old Ibrahim Shkupolli, born in Kosovo and a long-term resident of Finland, killed five people in the Finnish district of Espoo. On the day of the incident the perpetrator stormed into the Sello shopping mall and reached the Prisma supermarket in the mall at 10.05 am. There he shot two Prisma employees on the first floor and another two on the second floor. All four victims almost immediately died from their injuries.¹⁹

The police were notified at 10.08 am and arrived at the scene shortly afterwards, but by then the perpetrator had already driven off. He was found dead later that same day from injuries caused by the same gun he used at the mall, an apparent suicide, according to the authorities.²⁰ Following the shooting, the Finnish police found the body of his ex-girlfriend, who was also a Prisma employee, in an apartment in Espoo.²¹ She had been fatally stabbed with a knife. The investigation remains uncertain about the time of her death, notably regarding whether she was killed before or after the shootings in the shopping centre.²² According to the investigation, her killing had a "domestic" motive because a restraining order had been issued against Shkupolli for death threats he had made to her and her family.²³

The Finnish authorities stated that Shkupolli used a 9 mm CZ 75 pistol to fire ten shots during the shooting at the mall. The police recovered the pistol when they raided the perpetrator's apartment and found his body. The gun had a loaded magazine. A cache of ammunition was also seized from the apartment: a black camera bag containing 273 cartridges was recovered together with 14 magazines containing 223 cartridges.²⁴

The CZ 75 pistol that Shkupolli used was manufactured in the former Czechoslovakia in 1984 and sold legally in Norway. In 1990 the pistol was stolen from a legal owner.²⁵ It is unclear how Shkupolli acquired this pistol, but in the same year he moved from Norway to Finland with his wife and two children after failed asylum applications in Norway and Sweden. Since then Shkupolli had been convicted of a number of violent and gun-related crimes.²⁶ Between 1993 and 2003 the Finnish police recorded a total of 51 offences that he had allegedly committed.²⁷ These offences included fines for the illegal possession of a 7.65 calibre pistol with cartridges (in 2003) and for the illegal possession of 18 cartridges for a 9 mm handgun (in 2007).²⁸ These elements suggest that Shkupolli acquired the gun used in the mass shooting illegally, either on the criminal gun market in Finland, or in Norway during the time that he lived there.

3.3 Cumbria (United Kingdom, June 2010)

On 2 June 2010, 52-year-old taxi driver Derrick Bird shot dead 12 people and wounded 11 others in the west of Cumbria, a county in north-west England. His deadly attack began in the early hours of the morning, when he left his house in Rowrah and drove in his taxi to his twin brother's house in the nearby village of Lamplugh and shot him dead. He then drove to the home of the family solicitor in the neighbourhood and also shot him dead, at around 10 am.

After these two murders within the extended family circle, the perpetrator drove to the small harbour town of Whitehaven, where he worked as a taxi driver. Armed with a sawn-off shotgun and a rifle, he shot four colleagues, one fatally. He then drove south in the direction of the coastal town of Seascale, roughly 25 km away. On the way he continued to shoot at people from his taxi, often asking them what the time was from inside the taxi and, once they were standing close enough, shooting them. Nine people lost their lives in this way and eight others were wounded.

He then drove inland, but ran out of petrol after 15 km. He had also used up all the shotgun ammunition. Bird left his shotgun in the car and continued on foot at around 12.30 pm armed only with his rifle. An hour later his body was found in the woods near Boot: he had shot himself with his rifle.²⁹

During his deadly attacks Derrick Bird used two firearms: a CZ 452-2E ZKM .22 rifle and a *"side by side shotgun chambered for standard 12-gauge shotgun cartridges, using a non-ejector, external hammer action"*. He was legally entitled to own both firearms, possessing a shotgun certificate for the shotgun and a firearm certificate for the rifle. The Cumbria police had issued these licences. He was also in legal possession of the ammunition he used. However, several hours before the shootings Bird had sawn off part of the rifle's barrel. He also owned two other shotguns¹ on the basis of his shotgun certificate, but did not use them on 2 June.³⁰

Bird's shotgun certificate was issued in 1974 (when he was 16) and was subsequently renewed on several occasions. The most recent renewal occurred in 2005 and was valid until November 2010. His firearm certificate was issued in 2007 and permitted the possession of a .22 calibre rifle, 1,500 rounds of ammunition and a silencer for the rifle. He justified his application by stating that he wanted to use the rifle to shoot vermin on his farm. The investigation into the Cumbria shootings, which was commissioned by the Association of Chief Police Officers, revealed that none of the authorised bodies possessed information that would have given them reasonable cause to revoke Bird's

¹ According to the Association of Chief Police Officers' report, an *"over and under shotgun chambered for standard 12 gauge shotgun cartridges, using an automatic ejector mechanism"* and a *"single barrelled shotgun chambered for standard 20 gauge shotgun cartridges"*.

licences and confiscate his weapons. The most important conclusion from this investigation was that the licensing procedures had been carried out correctly.³¹

3.4 Devínska Nová Ves (Slovakia, August 2010)

On 30 August 2010, Lubomir Harman murdered seven people in the Bratislava neighbourhood of Devínska Nová Ves. The rampage began when he broke into his neighbour's house and murdered the five members of a Roma family who lived there. Afterwards, he moved downstairs from his apartment and out into the street. There he started shooting at random, but the chronology of these shootings remains unclear. At some point while he moved from his apartment into the street an older woman standing on her balcony was shot. The police reported that the perpetrator fired 140 rounds in total during the massacre: 24 rounds inside the apartment complex and 116 once he reached the street. Police officers wounded Harman before he turned the gun on himself.³²

The primary weapon used in the shooting¹ was a legally owned Vz.58 7.62 × 39 mm assault rifle modified for burst fire.³³ Harman also used a CZ 85 combat pistol and a CZ 52 pistol.³⁴ Altogether he legally owned six rifles.³⁵

Harman learnt how to shoot during compulsory military service. Although he was not a professional soldier, he kept up his skills by participating in shooting competitions, while sport shooting was his main hobby.³⁶ He was a member of the former Soldiers Club, and for several years was also a member of the Amateur Army Club, where he participated in shooting competitions and meetings and became a friend of the club's president.³⁷

¹ Early reports incorrectly stated that a shotgun and sub-machine gun were used in the massacre. See for example: Muž v Bratislavě střílel do oken paneláků, zabil šest lidí i sebe, *Novinky*, 30 August 2010, <https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/evropa/210005-muz-v-bratislave-strilel-do-oken-panelaku-zabil-sest-lidi-i-sebe.html>

3.5 Alphen aan den Rijn (The Netherlands, April 2011)

Shortly after 12.00 pm on 9 April 2011, 24-year-old Tristan van der Vlis drove into the car park of the Ridderhof shopping centre in Alphen aan den Rijn, a Dutch town in South Holland province situated half way between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The young man parked his black Mercedes there and took a pistol, revolver and semi-automatic rifle from his car's boot. He shot a random passer-by with his rifle several times at close range in the car park; the man died at the scene. This marked the start of a shooting spree that only lasted a few minutes, but which cost the lives of six people and left 16 others wounded. After he had shot the man in the car park, van der Vlis entered the shopping centre at 12.08 pm and immediately began shooting in the direction of a clothing shop, killing a couple. He walked around the shopping centre and continued shooting. Three people died on the spot, including two people in a mobility scooter. Later a sixth person died from his wounds in hospital. The police quickly arrived at the scene, but there was no exchange of fire with the perpetrator, who killed himself at 12.11 pm.³⁸ During these few minutes van der Vlis had fired more than a hundred shots with his three firearms.³⁹ After the shootings the police found a letter in his parked car which stated that explosives had been planted in three other shopping centres. However, this claim turned out to be false. The perpetrator's mother later found a farewell letter from her son.⁴⁰

Van der Vlis used three firearms in the shootings: a Colt .45 pistol, a Taurus 66 revolver and a semi-automatic Smith & Wesson M&P15-22 rifle. Shortly after the shootings, it became apparent that van der Vlis, despite having been diagnosed with schizophrenia, was a member of a shooting club and was in legal possession of the weapons he had used. In reaction to parliamentary questions and with the aim of improving public safety, the minister for security and justice requested the Dutch Safety Board, which is an investigative authority set up in 2005 by the minister for internal affairs, to "initiate an investigation into the Dutch system governing the legal possession of firearms to determine whether the system functions and did function adequately in relation to the incident". This official investigation's report described in detail how the perpetrator acquired his weapons.⁴¹

In August 2005 the 19-year-old van der Vlis applied to the Hollands Midden police for a firearms licence for the first time. However, his licence application was refused in September 2005 when the police discovered that as a minor he had been involved in two incidents involving an airgun two years earlier: in February 2003 he was involved in the destruction of property with an airgun and in March 2003 he was involved in a threatening incident with an airgun during which someone was shot in the ankle.⁴²

In September 2007 van der Vlis became a member of his father's local shooting club, which rented shooting ranges from a commercial sport shooting centre. The Koninklijke Nederlandse Schietsport Associatie (Royal Dutch Shooters Association) granted him a

licence to shoot small-calibre weapons at the shooting club. After one year's membership he became eligible for a firearms licence, and in October 2008 he applied to the Hollands Midden police for such a licence for the second time. Another background check was conducted. The incident with the airgun from 2003 was taken into consideration, but because the case had been dismissed (due to his minimal involvement) he obtained his firearm licence in November 2008. This licence allowed him to possess a SIG Sauer 9 x 19 mm pistol, which he bought immediately. The licensing procedure was flawed, however, since information relating to the refused firearms licence in 2005 was not included in the background check. Even more importantly, information relating to the fact that the local mayor had ordered van der Vlis to be confined in a psychiatric hospital for 15 days in September 2006 for fear of his committing suicide^I was also not included in the background check.⁴³

After receiving his licence in 2008, van der Vlis legally bought and sold several firearms. In October 2009 he sold his SIG Sauer pistol and bought a Taurus 66 revolver. Five weeks later he also bought a Norinco pistol. However, in early 2010 he sold both of these firearms and bought a Colt .45 pistol. In April 2010 he bought another Taurus 66 revolver. His firearms licence was extended twice during this period.^{II} During a home inspection in December 2010 the police checked whether van der Vlis's weapons and ammunitions were correctly stored. The police did not observe any problems with this regard.⁴⁴

In 2010 van der Vlis applied for a firearms licence for a semi-automatic Smith & Wesson M&P15-22 rifle, having completed a WM3 form. The board of van der Vlis's shooting club confirmed in this document that he wanted to use the weapon to practise one of the shooting disciplines offered at the club. The police approved this application and granted van der Vlis a licence for the weapon. Following the subsequent Safety Board investigation, it transpired that this firearms permit should not have been issued to van der Vlis, since the weapon could not be used in one of the sport shooting disciplines practised at the club. After obtaining his firearms licence van der Vlis bought an M&P15-22 rifle and a single magazine from the firearms retailer at the sport shooting centre in January 2011. A few weeks later he bought a second magazine at the same shop, and three additional magazines from a different firearms retailer. These magazines were delivered on 8 April 2011.⁴⁵ The next day van der Vlis drove to the shopping centre with his M&P15-22 rifle, Taurus revolver and Colt pistol in the boot of his car and began his deadly attack.

^I His parents feared that he might use one of his father's firearms to kill himself.

^{II} In November 2009 and November 2010.

3.6 Utøya (Norway, July 2011)

On 22 July 2011, 32-year-old Anders Breivik left the farm where he lived in Vålstua, a small village in eastern Norway, and drove towards the Norwegian capital, Oslo. This was the start of the most deadly attack in post-war Norway, in which 77 people died in total and dozens more were wounded. He used both a home-made car bomb and two firearms.

Around 3.15 pm local time, Breivik, who was dressed in a fake police uniform, parked a white Volkswagen Crafter van filled with a fertiliser bomb weighing around 950 kg in front of a government building that housed the prime minister's office in the Regjeringskvartalet, the political heart of Oslo. He left the car parked there and set off on foot. About ten minutes later the van exploded and eight people were killed as a result, while ten others were seriously injured and taken to hospital.⁴⁶

In the meantime, Breivik had already walked to a nearby square armed with his pistol, where he had parked another car, a Fiat Doblo, a few hours earlier. He drove this car in the direction of Utøya, a small island situated approximately 35 km north-west of Oslo. The island is the property of Arbeidernes ungdomsfylking, the youth wing of the Norwegian social democratic party Arbeiderpartiet. At the time the group was holding its annual summer camp. More than 500 young people from across the country had been invited to the island to take part in political debates, sing and perform. At around 5.00 pm the perpetrator took the ferry to the island, still dressed as a police officer and armed with a pistol and rifle. He explained to the ferry operator that he was part of the Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste (the police security service) and that he needed to travel to the island in connection with the investigation into the bomb attack in Oslo.⁴⁷

Once on the island Breivik began shooting at the people present. He was able to continue his shooting spree on the island for over an hour without interruption, shooting 67 people dead, I predominantly young people, and wounding tens of others. In total he fired at least 189 shots. He called the police twice from the island and told them that he would like to give himself up. However, after each telephone call he continued to shoot people. A SWAT team arrived on the island at 6.25 pm. When confronted by the police, Breivik surrendered immediately.⁴⁸

By his own account, Breivik was part of a militant-nationalist group called the Knights Templar. Although he pleaded not guilty, he explained during his trial that he had deliberately chosen his victims because, in his eyes, they were traitors who advocated immigration and a multicultural society.⁴⁹ This view was also confirmed in his 1,500-page manifesto entitled 2083: A European Declaration of Independence, in which he described the preparations for his attack in detail and which he posted online shortly before the start of the attack. On 24 August 2012 Breivik was sentenced to 21 years of

¹ Two others died during their attempts to escape (from a fall and by drowning).

"preventive detention", a sentence that, on completion of the initial period of 21 years, can be extended repeatedly if the convicted person is still considered to be a danger to society.

Breivik carried out his deadly attacks on Utøya island with two firearms: a semi-automatic .223 Remington calibre Ruger Mini-14 rifle equipped with a 30-cartridge magazine, additional laser sights and a bayonet, and a semi-automatic 9 mm Glock 34 pistol equipped with laser sights and two extra magazines with a capacity of 17 and 31 cartridges. In total he had 1,036 cartridges on his person in Utøya. In his car, which he left at the Utøya ferry terminal, a 12/89 calibre Benelli Nova pump-action shotgun and a large amount of ammunition were found.⁵⁰ During his trial he explained that he gave his weapons names from Norse mythology¹ and had these names inscribed on the weapons.⁵¹

A few weeks after the attacks a commission was set up to investigate what had gone wrong on 22 July. This investigation revealed that Breivik had these firearms in his possession legally. The first weapon that he had acquired was his Benelli shotgun, which he bought in June 2003 at a firearms retailer in Oslo. His application for the purchase of this weapon was approved and it was registered in the registry of weapons in September.⁵² In his manifesto he describes in detail how he obtained the remaining firearms. At the beginning of August 2010 he travelled to Prague with the specific aim of purchasing an AK-47 assault rifle and a Glock 17 or 19 pistol. However, he did not manage to complete the purchases and then decided to acquire the weapons legally back home: "I have now decided to abort this sub-mission and rather focus on acquiring the weapons I need legally, back in Norway."⁵³ In the subsequent weeks he applied for a licence for the semi-automatic Ruger Mini-14 rifle, officially for hunting:

I now have to acquire a semi-automatic rifle and glock legally. I don't think the rifle will be a problem, as I have completed the 1 week duration hunter course, and I have had a Benelli Nova Pump-Action shot gun for 7 years without incident. I don't have a criminal record so there is no reason why the police should reject my application. I have now sent an application for a Ruger Mini 14 semi-automatic rifle (5.56). It is the most 'army like' rifle allowed in Norway, although it is considered a 'poor man's' AR-15. ... In any case; I would rather have preferred a Ruger Mini 30, but I already own a 7.62 bolt rifle and it is likely that the police wouldn't grant me a similar caliber. On the application form I stated: 'hunting deer'.⁵⁴

In his own words, Breivik had a much harder job acquiring the Glock pistol. In 2005 he had become a member of a local shooting club with a view to increasing his chances of

¹ More specifically, he gave the name Gungnir (the name of the Norse god Odin's spear) to the Ruger Mini-14 and the name Mjöltnir (the name of the Norse god Thor's hammer) to the Glock pistol.

being able to legally acquire a Glock. In the following years he only visited the shooting club sporadically. After the failed attempt to buy firearms in Prague, he decided to visit the club more often to increase his chances of obtaining a licence:

Acquiring a pistol, legally, is more tricky. I have been a member of Oslo Pistol Club for a few years but it is required that you train regularly in order to be eligible. I will have to train more often this winter and ensure I build up a solid track record, which in turn should enable me to get a permit.⁵⁵

During the period from November 2010 to January 2011, by his own account he went to the club 15 times to shoot in order to enhance the chances of his licence application being approved. In mid-January 2011 he submitted his licence application for a Glock pistol. In the same period he underwent training on three occasions in rifle shooting and bought large quantities of .223 bullets for his Ruger rifle through a small-scale US supplier.⁵⁶

The established facts that were summarised in the official investigation report by the 22 July Commission support Breivik's version of how he acquired his weapons. It was ascertained that he was a member of the Oslo Pistol Club between 2005 and 2007, and, after an interval of a few years, once again from June 2010. From the summer of 2010 he gradually started to buy more weapons, ammunition and associated equipment. In 2010 and 2011 he spent a total of 39,032 Norwegian krone (NOK) on the purchase of firearms and associated equipment and NOK 8,151 on ammunition in various shops. On 12 July 2010 he obtained a våpenkort (firearms licence) for a Weatherby Vanguard rifle designed for elk hunting. He bought the weapon in question and the accompanying ammunition in a department store in the centre of Oslo, but sold it to someone else in January 2011. On 14 October 2010 he obtained his våpenkort for the Ruger rifle for deer hunting, and bought it in November for NOK 8,790 (roughly €1,050 at the time) at a firearms retailer in Moss, a small coastal town 60 km south of Oslo. In March 2011 he obtained his våpenkort for the Glock 34 pistol and bought it for NOK 7,700 (roughly €1,000 at the time) at a firearms retailer in Oslo. In the same shop he also bought two magazines, each capable of holding 17 cartridges, and ammunition. In his licence application for this pistol he indicated that he was a member of the Oslo Pistol Club, that he intended to participate in the NAIS training programme of the National Rifle Association of Norway (for which he could use this type of pistol) and that in the future he might want to participate in shooting competitions. Furthermore, between May 2010 and April 2011 he bought additional magazines and various pieces of firearms equipment, including a silencer and sights. He usually bought the equipment via the websites of foreign sellers and received the products through the post.⁵⁷

3.7 Liège (Belgium, December 2011)

On 13 December 2011, 33-year-old Nordine Amrani walked into the centre of Liège around midday. He had been summoned for a police hearing in connection with a sexual offence, but instead of attending the hearing he went heavily armed to the Place Saint Lambert, the square in the centre of Liège where the courthouse is situated and where a Christmas market was in progress at the time. Just before 12.30 pm he walked over to a restaurant on the square and took the staircase to the roof of the building. A few minutes later he took at least three hand grenades and an FN FAL assault rifle from his sports bag. He pulled the pins out of the grenades and threw them in the direction of the bus shelters and the Christmas market in the square. Numerous people were in the square at the time, many of whom were young people coming back from school and parents who were visiting the Christmas market. The explosions shook the square. He then began shooting in the same direction with his assault rifle.⁵⁸ Two teenagers and a one-and-a-half-year-old toddler died on the spot, and a 75-year-old woman and a 20-year-old man died later in hospital from their injuries.⁵⁹ Amrani was himself wounded when a fourth grenade exploded.⁶⁰ According to the public prosecutor, an investigation revealed that he then killed himself with his revolver.⁶¹

Immediately after the start of the shootings, 250 local police officers, 120 federal agents and 90 official investigators were drafted into Liège. The police reaction was initially chaotic and the security forces had difficulty in correctly assessing the situation, partly because of rumours that other gunmen were at large in the centre of Liège. A large security perimeter was set up. About two hours later the police confirmed that the perpetrator was working alone and the security perimeter was lifted.⁶² In the hours following the shootings the police discovered that Amrani had already killed another victim half an hour before the attack in the square. In his shed in the Rue Bonne Nouvelle, approximately 2 km from the Place Saint Lambert, the police found the lifeless body of a 48-year-old woman. Amrani had asked the woman, who was a domestic worker for one of his neighbours, if she could come and do some chores in the shed. She had died from a gunshot wound to the head.⁶³

During the shooting Amrani was armed with an FN FAL assault rifle and a Smith & Wesson .41 Magnum revolver. He used the assault rifle to shoot at the people present at the Christmas market and only used the revolver to kill himself. The police subsequently found nine magazines with a total of 270 bullets in his sports bag,⁶⁴ together with numerous hand grenades.⁶⁵ It was initially stated that no weapons had been found at his house, but the minister of justice subsequently confirmed that after the shooting the police had found a revolver in the house and a riot gun and a long rifle in his shed in the Rue Bonne Nouvelle.⁶⁶

In the weeks following the shootings, additional information appeared in the Belgian press about the FN FAL assault rifle and the Smith & Wesson revolver that Amrani used during the shooting. Both weapons had originated from the illicit milieu, but had taken

a circuitous route before coming into his possession. In November 2009 the Smith & Wesson revolver and a dozen other weapons were stolen from a firearms trader in Verviers, a small town in Liège province close to the border with Germany.⁶⁷ In January 2012 prosecutors confirmed that the weapon that Amrani had used to kill himself had been stolen in the burglary in Verviers.⁶⁸ According to the robbed firearms trader, professionals who clearly knew what they were doing and which weapons they were looking for had carried out the burglary. In total, according to the firearms trader, exactly 30 small arms had been stolen, all of them "classic weapons" such as Smith & Wesson and Colt .45s.⁶⁹ Some of these weapons were found in 2010 in the possession of an armed robber from Beyne-Heusayn, a suburb of Liège, following an armed robbery at a car shop in Aubel, a small municipality near Liège. In a small bedroom of the man's house the police found numerous firearms that had been stolen from the firearms trader in Verviers in 2009. The man denied that he had any connection with the firearms robbery, but was sentenced to 28 months in prison for armed robbery and illegal possession of weapons.⁷⁰ These facts suggest that Amrani's Smith & Wesson revolver originated from the criminal underworld of armed robbers.

The FN FAL assault rifle ended up in his possession through a different route. In August 2012 the Israeli media reported that the emblem of the Israel Defense Forces could be seen on Amrani's FN FAL assault rifle, while a serial number and a few words in Hebrew were apparently engraved on the weapon. The Belgian police requested the Israeli army to investigate at what point the weapon had disappeared from the official radar. This report was confirmed by the Israeli Ministry of Defence, which added that the investigation was ongoing.⁷¹ A few days later additional details about the weapon emerged in the Belgian media. It appeared that the FN FAL rifle used in the attack had been put together with components from several such rifles. A number of components, including the barrel, originated from firearms that had been sold to the Israeli army by the Belgian weapons manufacturer FN Herstal some time in the second half of the 1960s (probably between 1965 and 1967). These firearms were either produced in FN Herstal's weapons factory in Liège and then exported to Israel or produced in Israel under licence. However, it is still uncertain where these weapons went after being decommissioned from the Israeli army: they were either sold on to another country or sold to the local Israeli civilian firearms market.⁷²

After the deadly shooting at the Liège Christmas market, the police confirmed that Amrani had probably spent time in the past converting weapons by, for example, reactivating deactivated weapons or converting fully automatic assault rifles that had been converted to semi-automatic weapons back to fully automatic weapons.⁷³ On the day of the shooting it was revealed that during a house search in October 2007 as part of an anti-drugs operation, the police had found, in addition to a professional cannabis plantation, a dozen firearms and around 9,500 firearm components in Amrani's shed in the Rue Bonne Nouvelle. Among the "complete" firearms that were found were an AK-47 assault rifle, an MP40 machine gun, an FN FAL assault rifle and a pump-action shotgun, besides handguns. A rocket launcher was also found, as well as silencers and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.⁷⁴ Amrani bought the shed in 2003. A striking fact is that the building was used until 1953 as the workshop of Jean Falla, a famous artisanal

weapons maker from Liège. The district where the shed was situated used to be home to numerous weapons workshops where knowledge of firearms production was passed down from generation to generation. According to some sources, Amrani supplied the Liège underworld with firearms (either repaired or converted) from his shed.⁷⁵ A few months after the shooting, however, the minister of justice stated in the Dutch Senate that the investigation had found no prove that Amrani had also been an illicit arms dealer.⁷⁶

On the basis of the weapons arsenal found in 2007, Amrani had been prosecuted for illegal possession of weapons and was initially sentenced to 16 months in prison.⁷⁷ However, the Court of Appeal acquitted him of the charge. The Liège public prosecutor declared that the Court of Appeal could not convict him on the charge for technical reasons.⁷⁸ The public prosecutor subsequently clarified that Amrani had been acquitted based on the fact that at the time when he was caught a national weapons surrender programme was in force in terms of the modified Weapons Act of 2006.⁷⁹ In 2009 the Court of Appeal sentenced him to 48 months in prison for having the cannabis plantation. He was also required to serve an extra 24 months because of a conviction for rape in 2003, the sentence for which had been suspended. At the beginning of October 2010, despite two negative opinions from the prosecutors and the prison directors, he was conditionally released early.⁸⁰

3.8 Toulouse-Montauban (France, March 2012)

Between 11 and 19 March 2012, the 23-year-old Mohamed Merah carried out a series of attacks in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France. In the attacks he targeted French military personnel, as well as children and a schoolteacher outside a Jewish school, killing seven people in total and wounding five in three attacks. The last of these three attacks fits our definition of a public mass shooting (see section 2.1).

The series of attacks began at approximately 4.00 pm on 11 March in Toulouse when Merah arrived on a scooter and opened fire with a Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol from point-blank range at a French soldier from the 1st Parachute Regiment, shooting him in the head and killing him.⁸¹ The soldier had been standing next to his motorbike outside a gymnasium and was not in uniform, suggesting that he was off duty. Reports suggest that he was there to meet Merah, who might have been a potential buyer for his motorbike, which he had advertised for sale on a classified website.⁸²

Four days later, on 15 March, at approximately 2.00 pm, Merah carried out his second attack in Montauban, a town 46 km north of Toulouse. He shot three soldiers, all members of the Parachute Regiment and dressed in their military uniforms, who were withdrawing cash from a cash machine very close to their barracks. Merah arrived at the scene armed with the same Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol that he had used in the previous attack. As soon as he got off his scooter he shoved past a senior citizen and opened fire on the three soldiers, aiming at their heads. Two died on the spot, while the third was hospitalised in critical condition, but survived his injuries. The perpetrator left the crime scene on his scooter.⁸³

The third attack took place just outside Ozar Hatorah, a Jewish school in Toulouse, at around 8.00 am on 19 March. According to several sources, Merah arrived on his scooter and attempted to open fire with an Uzi sub-machine gun, which jammed.⁸⁴ He then used the same Colt .45 pistol that he had used in the two previous incidents to shoot at a Jewish teacher, his two sons aged three and six, and a girl between the ages of seven and ten; all of them died on the spot.⁸⁵ The perpetrator then shot and injured a 17-year-old boy as he fled the scene on his scooter.⁸⁶

The shootings came to an end after a 30-hour standoff as the police conducted one of the largest manhunts in recent French history.⁸⁷ The police raided Merah's apartment in Sergeant Vigné Street in the Côte Pavée neighbourhood of Toulouse, where an exchange of fire took place and Merah managed to injure three officers by shooting them through the door. The first police assault failed.⁸⁸ Hours later the police blew the door open and threw grenades into the apartment, followed by an exchange of shots in which Merah was eventually shot dead.⁸⁹

Ballistics reports confirmed that Merah used two different kinds of weapons in the attacks. The first two attacks on the military personnel were both carried out with the

Colt .45 pistol. In the Jewish school attack, Merah used two firearms – an Uzi sub-machine gun and the Colt .45 used in the two preceding attacks.⁹⁰

After Merah's death, a cache of weapons was found in a search of his apartment and vehicles (a rented Renault Megane and Clio). According to the *Section Centrale Armes, Explosifs et Matières Sensibles* of the French Judicial Police, seven firearms were recovered during the search: a Franchi Spas 12-gauge shotgun, a ROF Sten MK II sub-machine gun (9 x 19 mm),¹ a Micro-Uzi sub-machine gun (9 x 19 mm) with an altered serial number, a Colt Python revolver (.357 Magnum), a reactivated Spanish-made Llama Max-II pistol, and two Remington 1911 A1 pistols (also known as Colt .45s). One of the Remington pistols had been assembled by using components from various other weapons.⁹¹ During the siege Merah told police that he was able to pay for his stash of arms with the earnings from years of criminal activities – such as robbery and burglary – that provided him with sufficient money to buy guns and ammunition.⁹² According to media reports, Merah had previously been employed as a “go-fast” driver by an organised criminal group smuggling cocaine between Spain and France.⁹³

The French authorities were able to identify the sources of the two firearms Merah used in the three attacks. The Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol was stolen in June 2011 from a professional sport shooter from the Toulouse area. It had been in a crate containing more than 80 kg of firearms that was stolen by well-informed thieves, who also stole another crate filled with ammunition.⁹⁴ Some of the other stolen weapons from this theft were later seized from Toulouse-based drug dealers.⁹⁵

Merah acquired the Uzi sub-machine gun from a Toulouse-based drug dealer called Fettah Malki, who in November 2017 was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for criminal terrorist conspiracy¹¹ for his role in providing the Uzi sub-machine gun, ammunition and a bulletproof vest to Merah. He testified in court that he had known Merah since childhood, but was closer to the latter's older brother, Abdelkader Merah, with whom he went to school and played football, but had distanced himself from the brother in 2006, when Abdelkader started to become more religious.⁹⁶ In court Malki described himself as acting on his own and that he was mainly involved in supplying drugs, cars and stolen goods in his neighbourhood. He admitted supplying the Uzi sub-machine gun, but strongly denied accusations of his involvement with any terrorist networks or activities. He stated that he did not know that Merah was planning the terrorist attacks.⁹⁷ Prior to the attacks, Malki had given some weapons to his ex-girl friend to hide. Two weeks before the first attack he had asked her to dig up the Uzi, which he then passed on to Merah, along with a bullet-proof vest that had been stolen from a police station in August 2011.⁹⁸ It is unclear where and how Malki acquire the sub-machine gun.

¹ The obsolete Sten gun was recovered from Merah's Renault Megane and was found disassembled in three parts, but it still would have commanded a price of around €3,000 on the black market, since it was considered to be an antique.

¹¹ The perpetrator's brother, Abdelkader Merah, was also involved in the case, and was sentenced to 20 years for helping his younger brother in the preparations for the attacks.

3.9 Smilkovci (Macedonia, April 2012)

On 12 April 2012, five men were killed on the shore of Lake Smilkovci in the northern suburbs of Macedonia's capital, Skopje, against a backdrop of incidents of interethnic violence in early 2012. The murders were carried out in assassination style: each victim was shot between four and seven times, with one shot to the head of each. Apparently four young men aged between 18 and 20 were first shot, followed by the killing of a 45-year old man whose body was found a short distance from the other bodies. It is presumed that the older man witnessed the episode. These murders shocked Macedonia, strongly exacerbated ethnic tensions and sparked violent protests. A few weeks later, Macedonian law enforcement agencies arrested six ethnic Albanian men for the murders.^I According to the prosecutor, the murders were part of an act of terror designed to provoke ethnic strife between the Macedonian majority and the country's large Albanian minority. After the arrests, large protests rocked the city when local Albanians perceived the arrests to be biased and lacking in evidence.⁹⁹ In 2014 a Macedonian court convicted the six men of murdering the five victims and sentenced them to life imprisonment. Two of the defendants^{II} were tried in absentia, because they were serving jail terms in Kosovo on illegal weapons charges. The terrorism convictions sparked even more interethnic tensions.¹⁰⁰

The defendants appealed their convictions, insisting that the case was a government-staged political prosecution. In December 2015 the Court of Appeal upheld the sentences imposed on the six men.¹⁰¹ In December 2017 the Macedonian Supreme Court ordered the acquittal of four of the men who were in prison in Macedonia and ordered a retrial. The two men convicted in absentia remain beyond the reach of the Macedonian justice system. In February 2018 the retrial started.¹⁰²

Autopsies indicated that the victims had been shot at close range.¹⁰³ At least three different firearms were used, but the calibres and types of the weapons involved were not disclosed.¹⁰⁴ As a result of the political sensitivity of these attacks, it was impossible to collect reliable information on the firearms used in the shootings.

^I Alil Demiri, Afrim Ismailovic, Agim Ismailovic, Fejzi Aziri, Haki Aziri and Sami Ljuta.

^{II} Alil Demiri and Afrim Ismailovic.

3.10 Chevaline (France, September 2012)

On 5 September 2012, a shooting incident occurred on the Route Forestière Domaniale de la Combe d'Ire near Chevaline, Haute-Savoie, near the southern end of Lake Annecy in France. On the day of the incident an unknown assailant shot dead three members of a British-Iraqi family and a French citizen at a rest stop on the mountain-side road in the French Alps. The victims were all shot at close range. The parents and grandmother of the British-Iraqi family were shot twice in the head in their car. Two children from the family survived the attack: a seven-year-old girl was shot in the shoulder and physically assaulted, resulting in a skull fracture, while a four-year-old girl hid for hours under her mother's skirt inside the family car and escaped without injuries. It is unclear why the family was targeted. Investigators stated that the French victim had no apparent link to the family, and believed that he arrived on the scene as the attack was under way and was then shot.¹⁰⁵

The murder case has not been solved. Investigators have made several arrests and carried out numerous interrogations in connection with the attack, but the identity of the perpetrator and the motive behind the attack still remain unclear. The investigation is still ongoing.¹⁰⁶

All the victims were shot with a single firearm, which suggests there was only one perpetrator. Approximately 25 bullets were found at the crime scene that had been fired from a 7.65 mm semi-automatic pistol. The investigation noted that all the shots were fired at close range from outside the vehicle.¹⁰⁷

According to several sources, the firearm used in the attack was a Swiss-made Luger P06 7.65 mm semi-automatic pistol, which suggests that the perpetrator may have come from the same region as the one in which the shootings occurred, because other examples of this type of Luger pistol were widespread in the Haute-Savoie region.¹⁰⁸ The Luger P06 is a very old model and, in total, the Waffenfabrik Bern manufactured 45,814 of them between 1906 and 1929.¹⁰⁹ It is currently still unknown how the perpetrator(s) acquired the pistol.

3.11 Menznau (Switzerland, February 2013)

On the morning of 27 February 2013, 42-year-old Viktor Berisha, a naturalised Swiss citizen of Kosovar Albanian origin, walked into the cafeteria of the Kronospan wood-processing plant in the Swiss town of Menznau, where he had been working for 15 years. At approximately 9.00 am he used a pistol to open fire on some of his colleagues. The shooting lasted for about two to three minutes, during which time Berisha fired 18 shots. In total, four people died (three of them at the scene, while a fourth succumbed later in hospital) and seven more were wounded in the attack. The police later found the victims and the perpetrator, who was already dead, lying on the factory floor, in a corridor and in the cafeteria.¹¹⁰ Berisha died from a gunshot wound to the head inflicted by his own pistol. It is unclear whether he committed suicide or was killed by someone in an act of self-defence.¹¹¹

During the police investigation it was discovered that Berisha suffered from acute paranoid schizophrenia. It is believed that he perpetrated the shooting during a severe attack of paranoia.¹¹²

Berisha was armed with a Sphinx Systems AT 380 sub-compact pistol and a loaded revolver during the shooting, but only used the pistol to carry out the attack.¹¹³ The perpetrator's brother legally purchased the pistol in 2003, and later illegally gave it to the perpetrator. Berisha legally purchased the revolver himself in 2004, but the make and calibre are unknown.¹¹⁴

3.12 Velika Ivanča (Serbia, April 2013)

On 9 April 2013, 60-year-old Ljubiša Bogdanović carried out the deadliest mass shooting in Serbia's history after the conflict in the 1990s had ended. The attack in the village of Velika Ivanča, which is located approximately 50 km south of Belgrade, resulted in 13 people being killed and at least two wounded.

The first victims were family members of the perpetrator. He shot his wife, son and 83-year-old mother with a pistol. Only his wife survived the attack. Bogdanović then walked to other houses in the neighbourhood and started shooting the residents. First he went to the Despotovići's residence, where he killed five members of the family, including a two-year-old boy.¹¹⁵ Then in the Stekics' home, which was approximately 100 metres from the Despotovići's residence, Bogdanović killed a 78-year-old woman. After this he walked 200 metres to the Ješićs' home, where he killed a 64-year-old woman and a 48-year-old man. He then continued to the Mijailovics' house, where he killed a 68-year-old man and seriously wounded a 69-year-old woman (who later died in the hospital). At this point, Bogdanović went back to the Stekics' residence and murdered a 50-year-old woman. At this time he noticed he had run out of ammunition and returned home; here he shot his wife once more in the neck. When the police arrived, Bogdanović turned the gun on himself. He died a few days later in a Belgrade hospital as a result of the self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.¹¹⁶

Bogdanović's motive for committing these killings remains unknown. According to several sources, he might have suffered from psychological issues as a result of the Yugoslav wars and hereditary mental disorders (his father hanged himself several years earlier and residents of the town noted that at least two uncles in the family suffered from mental illnesses). The recent loss of his job was also noted as a possible triggering factor.¹¹⁷

The weapon used in the massacre was a legally owned 9 mm CZ 88 Tokarev-style pistol.¹¹⁸ Bogdanović bought it in January 1981 and had held a permit for it ever since.¹¹⁹ He also possessed a hunting rifle that he had inherited from his grandfather. He once told a neighbour that everyone should have a gun, "just in case". However, he had apparently never used his firearms before the fatal shooting in 2013: according to his neighbours, he never fired his weapons, even when local custom required it, for example when his son, daughters and grandchildren were born.¹²⁰

3.13 Annaberg (Austria, September 2013)

On 16 September 2013 the Austrian police received tip-off regarding illegal hunting in the Annaberg area. Law enforcement officers were sent to the area and set up checkpoints. Shortly after midnight on 17 September a 55-year old poacher, Alois Huber, broke through a police checkpoint with his car and shot a 38-year-old police officer. He then crashed his car and continued on foot towards Schmelz. In the meantime the emergency services had been called to the crime scene. Huber then ambushed and fatally shot a Red Cross paramedic and wounded a police officer who was in an emergency vehicle. He then continued on foot. Two kilometres away, Huber fired at another police patrol car. He killed a 51-year-old officer and threw him out of the patrol car. He took control of the police car and held a 44-year-old officer hostage, although it was later established that the hostage was already dead when he was supposedly taken hostage. Huber drove the police car to his house in Großpriel, throwing away one of his rifles during his escape. At about 4.00 am, heavily armed officers from the Cobra police tactical unit surrounded the house.¹²¹ At 7.00 am Huber called an old friend and hunting companion to “say goodbye” and to confess his crimes. He also told the friend that he had been shot in his stomach and that “they were not going to get him”.¹²²

At 2.00 pm, three military vehicles of the Federal Army and helicopters approached the building. Huber responded by repeatedly shooting at the police officers. At about the same time the body of the dead hostage was found in the garage of Huber’s property. Consequently, the operational tactics of the Cobra unit changed, because there was no longer a hostage situation. Huber remained quiet and no sign of any activity could be discerned in the house.¹²³

Around 6.00 pm police officers started to enter the house. They looked for Huber for several hours, but could not find him. Some time after midnight on 18 September they found a bunker behind a false wall in the basement of the house. Here they found Huber’s burned corpse: he had committed suicide by setting himself on fire.¹²⁴

According to police, since 1994 Huber had accumulated 108 fines for illegal poaching, primarily in Lower Austria and Styria.¹²⁵ He was also suspected of the attempted murder of a hunter with knife in 2011. According to his neighbours, Huber used to hunt legally, but after his wife died he became a childless widower without close family members and hunting became an obsession. One of his friends also stated that several weeks before the incident Huber confessed to being schizophrenic.¹²⁶

Huber used a semi-automatic STG-77 assault rifle, a Glock 17 pistol and a Mauser hunting rifle during the shooting.¹²⁷ The STG-77 assault rifle is the Austrian-made 5.56 x 45 mm Steyr AUG, which was given the designation STG-77 when the Austrian army adopted it in 1978. The assault rifle was equipped with a silencer, a shell catcher and night-vision equipment.¹²⁸

After the shooting incident the police discovered a large firearms arsenal in the perpetrator's house that included approximately 100 firearms of various types and calibres, as well as ammunition.¹²⁹ Huber legally owned six of the firearms that were seized, while several of the other firearms had been stolen, including from some of his friends.¹³⁰

The STG-77 assault rifle used in the shooting, which Huber threw away during his escape, was only discovered eight months later on the banks of the Lassingbach stream by a former neighbour. An examination of the firearm concluded that several components of the rifle originally came from a military stockpile in Karinthia. These components were supposed to have been destroyed at the *Heereslogistikzentrum* (the logistical centre of the armed forces), but apparently were diverted into unauthorised hands. Investigators believe that Huber acquired these components on the illicit market and assembled the firearm himself.¹³¹

3.14 Brussels (Belgium, May 2014)

On 24 May 2014, at around 3.00 pm, 29-year-old French national Medhi Nemmouche perpetrated a mass shooting at the Jewish Museum in the centre of Brussels. Initially two victims were shot dead with a revolver in the museum's entrance hall, followed by a third victim at the reception desk. Then Nemmouche changed weapons and killed a fourth victim with an automatic assault rifle. According to the ballistics investigation, in total five shots were fired with the revolver and eight shots with the assault rifle. All the victims were shot at close range in the head or throat. After the shootings, Nemmouche immediately left the building.¹³²

Six days later, French customs arrested Nemmouche at the Saint-Charles bus station in Marseille. He had the revolver (with six cartridges) and the assault rifle (with 31 cartridges) that were used in the shooting in his possession. The rifle was wrapped in a white sheet with Arabic script on it. In one of the separate bags Nemmouche carried on the day of his arrest police also found an additional 261 cartridges for the assault rifle and 51 cartridges for the revolver.¹³³

Nemmouche had been previously convicted of violent theft and robbery multiple times and spent five years in prison, where he was radicalised. Immediately after his release from prison in January 2013 he left for Syria to fight for the so-called Islamic State. He returned to Europe in March 2014, two months before the attack at the Jewish Museum.¹³⁴ He is believed to have been the first returning foreign fighter from Syria and Iraq to carry out a terrorist attack in Europe.¹³⁵ It was later established that Nemmouche had been in contact with Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who is suspected of organising several terrorist attacks in Europe (e.g. see section 3.20), a couple of weeks before the shootings at the Jewish Museum. Nemmouche is believed to have known other perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe.¹³⁶ During court proceedings Nemmouche expressed his admiration for Mohamed Merah, the perpetrator of the attacks in Toulouse and Montauban in 2012 (see section 3.8), and called him “le plus grand mec que la France ait produit”.¹³⁷

In March 2019 Nemmouche was convicted of four terrorism-related murders and sentenced to life imprisonment. A second person, Nacer Bendrera, was considered to be a “co-author” of the shootings and was sentenced to 15 years in prison for supplying Nemmouche with firearms.¹³⁸

Nemmouche used a Spanish-made Llama revolver (.38 Special) and a Zastava M70 AB (7.62 x 39 mm), which is a Kalashnikov-type assault rifle that was produced in the former Yugoslavia.¹³⁹

The tracing of the Zastava assault rifle through its serial number indicated that the firearm had been delivered to a customer in Golubic in the Republic of Croatia in November 1998. The Croatian authorities were unable to provide any further information that could trace the firearm's circulation since that date.¹⁴⁰

The Llama revolver had been manufactured and sold in Spain. The official Spanish arms register stated that on 6 October 2006 the revolver was sold as a "deactivated" weapon by a shop that specialised in collectable pieces and paramilitary equipment in La Jonquera, near the French border; the sale was to a person initially identified as Jean Quittek, a German national. In total this person bought six deactivated firearms from the same store in 2006: a Walter and a Beretta pistol in February, two CETME assault rifles in May, and the Llama revolver and a Glock 17 pistol in October. The Glock pistol was seized in Avignon in April 2010 after being used to settle scores in the criminal underworld. Police investigations in Germany revealed that Jean Quittek had been the victim of an identity theft.¹⁴¹ It is therefore unknown how the Llama revolver was reactivated and ended up on the illicit market.

In January 2017 the Spanish police, in collaboration with Europol, dismantled a network that sold lethal-purpose firearms and deactivated firearms that did not comply with existing deactivation standards in several European countries, including Spain, France and Belgium. These weapons were bought through legal channels and were later reactivated. Over 10,000 assault rifles, pistols, revolvers, anti-aircraft machine guns, 400 shells and grenades, and essential parts and components such as barrels were seized during this operation. Police officers also discovered an illegal workshop with various types of machinery to alter and reactivate weapons.¹⁴² According to Spanish media reports, the investigation into this Spanish network originated in the follow-up to the investigation of the weapons used in the attack at the Jewish Museum.¹⁴³

The time frame between Nemmouche's return to Europe from Syria in March 2014 and the 24 May shooting was relatively short, giving Nemmouche a period of weeks to access the firearms he used once he was in Europe. During interrogations, Nemmouche told the police that he had stolen these firearms and ammunition through the open window of a parked car in Belgium. He also stated that he was no longer able to remember the exact location. He said that he was travelling to Marseille to sell them.¹⁴⁴

Police investigations indicated that Nacer Bendrer had supplied the weapons to Nemmouche. The men had met each other in the Salon-de-Provence prison. In April 2014, after Nemmouche's return from Syria, they talked on the phone and Bendrer came to Brussels to meet Nemmouche. Nemmouche asked Bendrer to supply him with a Kalashnikov rifle and later visited Bendrer in Marseille. Bendrer, however, denies supplying the weapon.¹⁴⁵

Bendrér was well known to the authorities. His criminal activities started in 2004 and included offences such as theft, violence and drug-related crimes.¹⁴⁶ He denied being involved in arms trafficking. Yet, during the search of a house where Bendrer was staying in December 2014, police discovered a large number of firearms: an automatic assault rifle,¹ a Colt .45 pistol, a Glock pistol, a double-barrelled Franchi hunting rifle, several magazines of cartridges, and ammunition of various calibres.¹⁴⁷ Police investigations further revealed that Bendrer had probably stolen some of these weapons from one of his criminal connections, who had acquired the weapons for protection during his criminal activities some time “between 2010 and 2013”. According to a witness, the weapons had been in a bag that contained two Kalashnikov-type rifles, a pump-action shotgun, a Glock pistol, a Colt .45 pistol and ammunition. According to the same witness, Bendrer confessed to being the thief and stated that he intended to return the weapons, but never did, because the criminal connection had been fatally shot in 2014.¹⁴⁸

¹ The *acte d'accusation* refers to “un fusil automatique BZ58 (type ‘Kalashnikov’) avec crosse repliable”. Since such a weapon does not exist, we assume this is a typing error and should be “VZ58”.

3.15 Tirana (Albania, November 2014)

In the early hours of 14 November 2014, Konstandin Xhuvani killed four people at a nightclub in Tirana, Albania. Xhuvani, who had been using cocaine and alcohol throughout the night, was kicked out of the Ante Grande nightclub after an altercation involving two fellow club patrons. After his expulsion from the club, Xhuvani and a friend returned to the premises, each armed with a pistol. There they had a second confrontation with the two men.¹⁴⁹ During this confrontation Xhuvani and his friend each pulled out a pistol and tried to open fire. While his friend's pistol jammed, Xhuvani was able to fire a number of rounds, killing the two men. A third victim, an Italian man unconnected to the altercation, was also shot (and later died in hospital). Xhuvani and his friend quickly fled the nightclub and went towards a Mercedes Benz parked nearby. Between the entrance to the club and the car Xhuvani shot his friend. Shortly afterwards Xhuvani was arrested by a police officer who had arrived on a motorbike.¹⁵⁰

On 10 March 2015, a Tirana court sentenced Xhuvani to 35 years in prison without the opportunity for parole or a later pardon for murdering four persons and for the possession of illegal weapons and military ammunition.¹⁵¹ Moreover, he was to serve his entire term in a high-security prison.¹⁵² Xhuvani had already been known to the Albanian public and authorities after killing another young man in 2011, then being on the run for three months, and subsequently surrendering to the police. For the previous killing he only received a three-year sentence and served about half that time in prison before being freed again. Many Albanians were angry at this and believed that he had received preferential treatment because he was the son of a famous movie director and an actress; the latter was also a member of parliament.¹⁵³

Ballistics analyses indicate that Xhuvani and his friend were both armed with Type 54 pistols. This is a Chinese copy of the Tokarev TT-33 pistol. Both guns were in good condition and were suitable for shooting. The pistol that Xhuvani used, which had had its serial numbers erased, was found outside the club, together with an empty magazine. The other pistol was found inside the club near the bodies of the first two victims.¹⁵⁴ The source of these firearms is unknown.

3.16 Paris (France, January 2015)

Between 7 and 9 January 2015, several connected terrorist shooting incidents took place in the Île-de-France, the region around Paris, in which three perpetrators used firearms to kill 17 people. The wave of shootings began in the morning of 7 January 2015 when the brothers Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, both heavily armed with assault rifles, entered the editorial office building of the weekly French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and started shooting at those present. Eleven people, including the famous cartoonists Charb, Wolinski and Cabu, lost their lives in this attack, while 11 others were wounded. On exiting the building the brothers shot a police officer dead and then fled. French law enforcement agencies initiated a large-scale manhunt to catch the perpetrators, but they were able to evade the police. On the following day the brothers were identified on the N2 highway at Villers-Cotterêts, where they raided a petrol station. In the early morning of 9 January an exchange of fire took place between the police and the brothers in which one of the brothers was wounded in the head. However, the brothers managed to escape on foot, and around 9.30 am they walked into a small printing company in Dammartin-en-Goële, a small municipality 45 km north-east of Paris. There they took the owner of the company hostage. The brothers allowed one employee to leave, and another employee hid in the premises for the entire time that the brothers occupied the building.¹⁵⁵

On 9 January 2015 a third man, 32-year-old Amédée Coulibaly, armed with two automatic assault rifles and two pistols, entered a Jewish Hypercacher supermarket at the Porte de Vincennes in the east of Paris. He shot four people dead and held more than 20 supermarket customers and employees hostage for several hours. The police cordoned off the area around the supermarket and started preparing for an operation to free the hostages. In a telephone interview with a French news channel, which took place during the hostage-taking situation, Coulibaly explained that he and the Kouachi brothers had "synchronised" the start of their actions: the brothers' target was Charlie Hebdo and his was police officers. This was also apparent in a video he made containing his demands, which was posted online two days after the hostage-taking incident.

It quickly became apparent that Coulibaly had already started his deadly attacks a few days earlier. On 8 January, the day after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, he shot a young female police officer dead in the Paris suburb of Montrouge and wounded someone working in the street. According to eyewitnesses, he was firing a Kalashnikov and was also armed with a pistol.¹⁵⁶ On the previous evening, on the day of the Charlie Hebdo attack, a jogger was shot in Fontenay-aux-Roses, a municipality a few kilometres west of Paris and the place where Coulibaly lived. The young man was seriously wounded after being shot several times in the leg and back, and fell into a coma. A ballistics investigation ascertained that the man was shot with one of the Tokarev pistols that Coulibaly had with him in the supermarket. At the time of writing it remains unclear why the jogger was shot and who shot him.¹⁵⁷

The two hostage-taking incidents came to an end around the same time on 9 January. At about 5.00 pm the French security services began their operation to free the hostages in Dammartin-en-Goële, and an exchange of fire took place between security personnel and the Kouachi brothers in which both brothers died. Shortly after 5.00 pm the French security services also stormed the supermarket and an exchange of fire took place in which Coulibaly was shot dead.¹⁵⁸

The perpetrators of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack were armed with two Zastava M70 AB2 assault rifles and two Zastava M57 pistols.¹ The two assault rifles were manufactured in the former Yugoslavia in 1983 and 1987, respectively.¹⁵⁹ They were the Yugoslav versions of the familiar AKM assault rifle (the modernised version of the AK-47) that was produced for the Yugoslavian army and for export.¹⁶⁰ One of the two M57 pistols was a reassembled weapon whose breech was produced in the Soviet Union in 1946 and which carried the emblem of the former Yugoslavian army. The other pistol was not dated, but also carried former Yugoslavian army symbols.¹⁶¹ It is therefore highly probable that these weapons had once belonged to the former Yugoslavian army, but had ended up in the illicit market following the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The perpetrator of the Jewish supermarket attack had at least nine firearms in his possession. During the hostage-taking incident he was armed with two Vz.58 assault rifles (one in the shorter sport compact version) and two Tokarev 33TT pistols. Following the incident, four additional Tokarev 33TT pistols were found in the apartment that Coulibaly rented in Gentilly, where the police also found a Nagant revolver dating from 1932.

After the attacks in Paris, numerous media reports repeatedly stated that the firearms used in the attacks had been bought in Belgium. It was suggested that Coulibaly had bought several firearms¹¹ in the area around the Brussels South railway station for less than €5,000 and that the Kouachi brothers had later used them during the attacks.¹⁶² Immediately after the attacks, Metin Karasular, a man from Charleroi (Belgium), reported to the police that he had been in contact with Coulibaly in the previous months and had intended to defraud him in the sale of a car. During a search at Karasular's house the police found documents that also indicated a possible sale of firearms and ammunition to Coulibaly. However, Karasular denied having supplied any weapons, and none was found in the house during the search. Karasular was suspected of illegal weapons trading, but was unconditionally released on 31 March 2015.¹⁶³

A striking fact is that Coulibaly's Vz.58 assault rifles and Tokarev pistols all originated from the same Slovakian firearms retailer. The two Vz.58 assault rifles were produced in 1961 and 1964, respectively, and were deactivated in 2013–2014 by the company Kol

¹ Crvena Zastava was the name of the state-owned company that supplied firearms to the army and police force of the former Yugoslavia. Zastava still exists and currently produces firearms under the name Zastava Arms.

¹¹ It was reported in the media that the weapon in question was a Scorpio machine gun. However, from later investigations it appeared that Coulibaly did not own a Scorpio machine gun, but a Vz.58 sport compact assault rifle (which is similar in appearance).

Arms. They were subsequently sold by the Slovakian firearms retailer AFG Security, which is situated in the town of Partizánske. The six Tokarev pistols in Coulibaly's possession were produced between 1942 and 1952. These pistols had also been converted to blank-firing guns in Slovakia by Kol Arms (in 2014), and were sold by AFG Security for around €300 apiece. A few months before their deadly use in Paris, the weapons were reactivated by simply removing two metal pins from the barrels.¹⁶⁴

Most of the firearms sold by AFG Security had been part of the arsenal of the Slovakian armed forces. After being decommissioned by the army, large quantities of these weapons were deactivated and converted to acoustic weapons. They were then legally sold in Slovakia through retailers such as AFG Security to adults on the simple presentation of an identity card. In recent years similar converted weapons were found in illicit milieus throughout Europe. According to the German Federal Criminal Police, in recent years more than 14,000 similar guns were sold to customers abroad.¹⁶⁵

Coulibaly obtained his assault rifles and pistols in at least two ways. One of AFG Security's customers was Patrick H., a Belgian living in Marcinelle, Belgium. An investigation ascertained that between June 2013 and May 2014, Patrick H. legally bought around 170 demilitarised firearms from the Slovakian firearms retailer, including one of the Vz.58 assault rifles that Coulibaly later used during the hostage-taking incident at the Jewish supermarket. Patrick H. subsequently offered this weapon for sale on an online auction site. Patrick H. admitted that he sold on weapons for profit in this way, but denied that he had sold a weapon to Coulibaly. According to him, the weapons were sold to "*Européens du Nord*" (Northern Europeans). Furthermore, he denied that he converted the weapons that he sold in this way for lethal use, but during another search of his house in May 2014 the police apparently found materials that could be used to convert such weapons.¹⁶⁶

Another customer of AFG Security was Claude Hermant, a 53-year-old Frenchman living in Comines, Belgium, who is known as a militant right-wing extremist and who in the 1990s was part of the security team of the French *Front National* political party. From his survival shop near Lille, France, Hermant ordered dozens of demilitarised firearms (including pistols, machine guns and Vz.58 assault rifles) from AFG Security. It was confirmed that at the time when Hermant bought these weapons in 2014 he was a registered French police informer. According to him the French police were aware of these purchases and they formed part of an investigation into illegal weapons trafficking. In his workshop near Lille Hermant converted weapons for lethal use and sold them on, including to criminals from Roubaix.¹ After investigations, it appeared that Coulibaly used three of the weapons that Hermant had ordered (one of the Vz.58 assault rifles and the two Tokarev 33TT pistols) in the supermarket attack. Hermant told the police that he had sold a total of 40–50 firearms (for between €600 and €800 apiece), but not to Coulibaly.¹⁶⁷ Currently Hermant is in prison for arms trafficking in Lille.¹⁶⁸

¹ During a search of Hermant's house after the attacks in Paris the police found around 20 firearms (including 15 Vz.58 assault rifles) and 4,239 firearm components and cartridges.

Several other suspected intermediaries were arrested for their potential role in supplying firearms to the perpetrators of the Paris attacks. One of them was Antoine Denevi, a 27-year-old Frenchman from Pas de Calais in the north of France who is known in right-wing extremist circles and who had worked in Hermant's chip shop. Denevi was said to have had ties to Serbs who may have provided him with arms and ammunition.¹⁶⁹ In April 2016 Denevi was arrested by Spanish police on a European arrest warrant during a joint Spanish-French police operation in the vicinity of Malaga. According to a Spanish police communiqué, the man was identified as the responsible for an illicit arms trafficking network that supplied firearms to Coulibaly. The Spanish police also noted that Denevi left France weeks after the Paris attacks and subsequently established himself in Malaga, where, using false documents, he continued his illegal arms-trading activities. No weapons were found in the house where Denevi was staying and he denied the allegations made against him.¹⁷⁰

In December 2018 the Paris prosecution office announced that it would like to bring 14 suspects, among them Metin Karasular, to trial for assisting in the preparations for the January 2015 attacks in Paris. Another suspect is Ali Riza Polat, who has been detained since March 2015. The prosecution office believes he accompanied Coulibaly in Belgium and France when Coulibaly obtained the arsenal used in the attacks on the Hypercacher supermarket and in Montrouge, as well as the firearms used in the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings. Police found a note at Karasular's home (in part reading "*Prix des détonateurs en plus ? Balle de kalash 500 pièce ? ... 3 chargeur de kalash prix?*") that Polat had written. He is also suspected of trafficking weapons from Charleroi to Paris in August 2014. Polat denies these allegations of arms trafficking; he has, however, confessed to being an intermediary in the sale of a vehicle. He has also admitted that he committed several frauds concerning cars. The investigation believes that these activities were designed to provide the finance needed to acquire the firearms.¹⁷¹

Other persons suspected of playing a role in the supply of firearms for the January 2015 attacks are Willy Prevost, Nezar Pastor Alwatik (also known as Michaël Alwatik), Mohamed Fares and Christophe Raumel. Prevost is suspected of buying tactical vests, several knives, a Taser and tear gas for Coulibaly from a Paris weapons store in December 2014.¹⁷² Alwatik and Fares are accused of "*association de malfaiteurs terroriste criminelle*" and of "*acquisition, détention, cession d'armes*". Alwatik's DNA, for example, was found on all the arms that were hidden in Coulibaly's home.¹⁷³ Raumel is accused of "*association de malfaiteurs*", but not of associating with terrorists. He is suspected of participating in the supply of a car to Coulibaly and of being part of a "group" with Prevost, who bought equipment for Coulibaly.¹⁷⁴ The trials are expected to be held in 2020.¹⁷⁵

3.17 Uherský Brod (Czech Republic, February 2015)

At around 12.30 pm on 24 February 2015, 63-year-old Zdeněk Kovář, armed with a pistol and revolver, walked into the Družba restaurant in Uherský Brod, a small town in the south-west of the Czech Republic. In the restaurant he began shooting indiscriminately. Eight people were killed and a woman was seriously injured. Kovář fired a total of more than 20 shots. Several people present were able to escape and one person was able to hide in a toilet.¹⁷⁶

At 12.38 pm the local police were alerted that an unidentified man was shooting in a restaurant. A local police patrol arrived at the restaurant at 12.47 pm, but Kovář immediately opened fire on them. The patrol then called for back-up.¹⁷⁷ It took around an hour for the police intervention team to arrive from Brno, approximately 100 km away.¹⁷⁸

While the intervention team was on its way Kovář called a Czech television station at 12.56 pm, stating that he was being harassed and that he had taken several people hostage. A few minutes later the police made contact with him. He told them that he had five hostages, whom he would release in exchange for access to a television crew. After contact with him had been broken off the police decided to send in the intervention team. At 2.23 pm the team entered the restaurant, at which point Kovář shot himself dead. No hostages were found in the restaurant.¹⁷⁹

Kovář was armed with two Czech-made handguns: a CZ 75B pistol and an Alfa 820 revolver. The pistol is a 9 mm weapon manufactured by Česká zbrojovka, which is headquartered in Uherský Brod. The revolver that Kovář used was a small, light and inexpensive weapon primarily intended for self-defence. This model is produced by Alfa-Proj, a Czech company in Brno that has been manufacturing firearms since 1993. The company is currently the second-largest Czech producer of small arms.

Kovář owned both weapons legally.¹⁸⁰ Despite a history of mental problems, he had held a firearms licence since 2000. After the shootings a spokesman from the Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that several people in Kovář's circle knew that he did not meet the requirements for the legal possession of weapons. On 19 January 2015 he applied for an extension of his firearms licence, providing a medical certificate that only specified that he required glasses. The police checked his criminal record and extended the licence. Nevertheless, one of Kovář's family members contacted his doctor and asked him not to issue a medical certificate to support Kovář's firearms licence application, given his mental health issues and the fact that family members felt threatened by him. After the licence had been issued the man's family contacted the police, who in turn had a discussion with Kovář's doctor and psychiatrist. The police then stipulated that Kovář must undergo a second medical test. Kovář collected the summons for this second medical test on Friday, 20 February. Four days later the deadly shootings took place in the restaurant.¹⁸¹

3.18 Naples (Italy, May 2015)

In May 2015, four people were killed during a public mass shooting that started as a disagreement over laundry. For the 48-year old Giulio Murolo, long-standing arguments with his brother, who lived next door to him, boiled over into murderous rage. Murolo first killed his brother and sister-in-law with one of his guns. He then walked to the balcony and started shooting at random passers-by. A municipal police lieutenant and a florist driving by on a scooter were among the victims. After a tense standoff during which fire was exchanged with police, Murolo retreated into his apartment and threatened to blow up the building with gas cylinders.¹⁸² After 40 minutes on the phone with a police negotiator, Murolo decided to surrender to the police without a fight. The shooting left four people dead and six others injured.¹⁸³

In the days after the massacre, through his lawyer, Murolo sought forgiveness from his family for his actions, claiming simultaneously that his brother had attacked him with a knife and that he did not remember what happened.¹⁸⁴ A few days later he died of a deliberate overdose.¹⁸⁵

Murolo fired at least 16 shots.¹⁸⁶ Some media reports stated that he was armed with up to three different firearms (a 9 mm Beretta pistol, a rifle and a pump-action shotgun),¹⁸⁷ but it remains unclear which firearm(s) he used in the shootings. After the incident numerous firearms were seized from Murolo's home. It was stated that the gunman was passionate about hunting and target shooting. Apparently he secretly kept an arsenal of firearms that included rifles, three pistols, a Kalashnikov-type assault rifle with an erased serial number, large quantities of ammunition and even two machetes. His hunting weapons were legally owned and kept in secure lockers. The Kalashnikov assault rifle was illegal and was kept in his bedroom.¹⁸⁸

3.19 Roye (France, August 2015)

On the afternoon of 25 August 2015, 73-year-old Marcel Ruffet went on a shooting spree at a gypsy community campsite in Roye, in the Somme region of northern France. At approximately 4.30 pm, Ruffet, who was himself a member of community, opened fire with a hunting rifle on fellow members of the community. He killed three members of the same family, including a six-month-old child and the child's 19-year-old mother.¹⁸⁹ When the police arrived at the scene, an exchange of gunfire took place during which a police officer was killed. Another policeman and a child aged three were injured in the attack. The police were able to shoot and injure Ruffet before he was able to cause further damage, and arrested him immediately afterwards.¹⁹⁰

The court of the Somme region found Ruffet to be an alcoholic and a loner whose family had left him because of his aggressiveness. He had a passion for hunting and fishing, while his family members described him as an abusive husband and father. Due to his admitted hatred of the community, Ruffet did not express any regrets for murdering the three members of the camping community, but did express regret for killing the police officer.¹⁹¹ In May 2017, after a trial lasting a week, he was sentenced to 30 years in prison for multiple counts of manslaughter and attempted murder.¹⁹²

Ruffet carried out the shooting with a semi-automatic Beretta calibre 12 hunting rifle.¹⁹³ According to ballistics reports, 40 spent cartridges were found at the crime scene: the perpetrator fired 39 rounds using standard ammunition, while one other shot was fired with a high-impact Balle Flèche Sauvestre-type round, which killed the police officer.¹⁹⁴ It is unclear if the firearm was legally or illegally owned and how Ruffet acquired it.

3.20 Paris (France, November 2015)

On the evening of Friday 13 November 2015, Paris was shaken by a series of very lethal terrorist attacks in which 130 people were killed and more than 400 wounded. Ten perpetrators divided into three groups struck several places in the French capital in a coordinated series of attacks. These came a few months after the attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices and the Jewish Hypercacher supermarket in Paris, and were the deadliest terrorist incidents in Europe since the attacks on the Madrid train network in 2004. The perpetrators were six Frenchmen (three of whom lived in Belgium),ⁱ two Belgiansⁱⁱ and two men who have not yet been formally identified.ⁱⁱⁱ Several of them had fought in Syria and/or Iraq.¹⁹⁵

The coordinated attacks began that evening at the Stade de France (the national football stadium), where a friendly football match was taking place between France and Germany, at which the French president, François Hollande, was present. Salah Abdeslam dropped off three men in the vicinity of the stadium, where they carried out a suicide attack using TATP, a home-made explosive the raw materials for which are relatively easy to obtain.¹⁹⁶ Around 9.20 pm the first explosion occurred at the entrance to the stadium. When one of the perpetrators attempted to enter the stadium a security agent discovered his suicide vest. The perpetrators then blew themselves up. A second explosion followed ten minutes later and a third at 9.53 pm. Apart from the three terrorists, only one person died as a result of this series of suicide attacks.¹⁹⁷

Simultaneously the second team also began their attack. Three men were driving in a black Seat around the 10th arrondissement in Paris. Around 9.25 pm, between the first two explosions at the Stade de France, the men began shooting at people sitting on the terrace of the Le Carillon bar and the Petit Cambodge restaurant. Fifteen people lost their lives and ten others were seriously wounded. At 9.32 pm the attackers began shooting 400 metres away at the La Bonne Bière bar, where five people were killed and eight others wounded. A few minutes later 19 people sitting on the terrace of the La Belle Equipe restaurant were shot dead and nine others were wounded. The black Seat stopped a kilometre away. One of the men got out, went inside the Le Comptoir Voltaire restaurant and blew himself up, but except for the perpetrator there were no fatal victims, although one person was seriously wounded. The two other gunmen parked their car 3 km away in the vicinity of the Croix de Chavaux metro station, took the metro to an unknown destination and disappeared.¹⁹⁸ In barely 15 minutes the group had shot dead a total of 39 people.

ⁱ Foued Mohamed-Aggad, Samy Amimour and Ismael O. Mostefai, who lived in France, and Bilal Hadfi, Brahim Abdeslam and Salah Abdeslam, who lived in Belgium.

ⁱⁱ Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Chakib Akrouh.

ⁱⁱⁱ These two men are currently only known as "Ahmad al-Mohammad" and "Mohammad al-Mahmod". These names are based on the names written in the Syrian passports they were carrying. The investigation also identified their so-called "war names" – Ukasha al-Iraki and Ali al-Iraki, respectively.

Around the same time of the suicide attack in the Le Comptoir Voltaire restaurant, the three members of the third team, heavily armed with assault rifles, entered the Bataclan concert hall, where the rock group Eagles of Death Metal were giving a concert. Two of the perpetrators entered the building through the main entrance and immediately started shooting. The third entered via the emergency exit and also began shooting. For a period of 20 minutes concert audience members were shot in large numbers. According to eyewitnesses, grenades were also thrown at the concert-goers. Those who were unscathed tried to escape or pretended to lie dead among the corpses. Around 10.00 pm the three men, who were all wearing explosive belts, began to gather together the many people who could not escape and held them hostage. Around midnight the perpetrators contacted the police and demanded that France cease its military actions in Syria. Approximately 20 minutes later the police stormed the concert hall in an attempt to free the hostages. One of the perpetrators was shot in the process and detonated his explosive belt. The two other perpetrators opened fire at the police officers. One was shot dead before he could detonate his explosive belt, but the third was able to detonate his explosive belt. This effectively concluded the attack on the Bataclan. In total the perpetrators killed 89 people in the concert hall, predominantly by shooting them. Dozens of wounded people were taken to hospital.¹⁹⁹

After the attacks of 13 November the police initiated a large-scale manhunt for the perpetrators who had escaped. It later transpired that the two perpetrators of the second team that were still alive were hiding in bushes in Aubervilliers, a suburb of Paris. After a few days they were picked up by the cousin of one of them, Hasna Aït Boulahcen, who provided them with food and drink during this period. She brought the two men to a new hiding place in Saint-Denis, a suburb of Paris. In the early morning of 18 November the police raided an apartment in Saint-Denis where they suspected the men were hiding. Around 110 specialist police officers were involved in this operation. In just a few hours more than 5,000 shots were fired and the police threw dozens of grenades into the apartment, where Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Chakib Akrouh and Hasna Aït Boulahcen were indeed hiding. During this raid one of the men blew himself up.¹ After the police raid the last gunman and his cousin were found dead in the apartment, while eight others were arrested.²⁰⁰ Five police officers were wounded during the operation.²⁰¹

Salah Abdeslam, the last fugitive perpetrator, was only caught in March 2016. According to the French public prosecutor, Abdeslam confirmed during his hearing that he was part of the team of suicide terrorists who blew themselves up at the Stade de France, but changed his mind at the last minute.²⁰² According to a number of witness statements, however, he was also one of the perpetrators who shot at the people in the bars and restaurants of the 10th and 11th *arrondissements*.²⁰³ On 15 March 2016 Abdeslam was able to escape from the police after a shootout in Vorst, a borough of Brussels, but three days later he was caught in Molenbeek, another Brussels borough.²⁰⁴ A few days after his arrest various people who were part of the network of the perpetrators of the 13

¹ A DNA investigation later confirmed that he was one of the perpetrators of the attacks on the restaurants in the 10th and 11th *arrondissements*, since his DNA was found on one of the assault rifles, which was later found in an abandoned Seat in the vicinity.

November 2015 attacks carried out suicide attacks at the Belgian national airport in Zaventem and on the Brussels metro.²⁰⁵ Although the perpetrators had access to various firearms, no firearms were used in these last attacks.²⁰⁶

During the 13 November 2015 attacks in Paris the perpetrators used at least six firearms. All of them were Kalashnikov-type assault rifles. After the shootings the police found three Zastava M70 AB2 assault rifles in the Seat used by the second team, which was parked in Montreuil-sous-Bois. In the attack in the Bataclan a Serbian Zastava M70, a Bulgarian AKS47 and a Chinese Norinco 56-1 were used.²⁰⁷ After the raid on the perpetrators' hiding place in Saint-Denis on 18 November 2015 also a Browning HP-35 pistol (9 mm) with an empty magazine was found in the apartment. This pistol was manufactured in Belgium by FN Herstal and was intended for export.¹ However, the serial number had been made illegible, meaning that it is very difficult to trace the earlier history of the weapon. A striking fact is that Abaaoud's fingerprints were found on the inside of the pistol, which suggests that at some stage he had put the disassembled weapon together.²⁰⁸

According to a German tabloid newspaper, four of the Kalashnikov-type firearms used in the Paris attacks were sold online on the dark web by Sascha W., a 34-year-old German illegal arms dealer from Magstadt (Baden-Württemberg). The newspaper stated that documents from the public prosecutor's office and German investigating authorities show that on 7 November, six days before the attacks, Sascha W. sold two AK-47 assault rifles made in China and two Zastava M70 assault rifles made in Yugoslavia to a buyer in Paris who was allegedly of Arab origin. During a search of the suspected supplier's home police reportedly found 16 weapons, and sources stated that the man "*was allegedly converting non-lethal weapons to firearms and then selling them online*". A spokeswoman for the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, however, stated in a report dated 27 November that there was "*currently no valid indication that weapons had been sold for the Paris attacks in Germany*".²⁰⁹ So far, a tangible connection between the suspected German arms dealer and the perpetrators of the Paris attacks has not been established.

The head of the firearms manufacturer Zastava confirmed after the attacks that several weapons that were used in or found to be linked to the attacks were produced by Zastava^{II} and were subsequently legally sent to military depots in Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia, among other places.²¹⁰ Very little public information is available about the M70 AB2 assault rifles used by the second team. It is only known that Zastava produced two of them in 1987. More information is known about the firearms used in the Bataclan concert hall. From the French ballistics investigation it was ascertained that the M70 assault rifle used in the Bataclan attack was produced by Zastava in its factory in

^I Both "Made in Belgium" and "Browning S.A." appear on the weapons. These two inscriptions do not appear on weapons of the same type produced for the Belgian market.

^{II} In the original media report the press agency Associated Press stated that one of these weapons had been exported to a firearms retailer in the United States. This report turned out to be erroneous and Associated Press rectified it the following week.

Kragujevac in the former Yugoslavia and was delivered on 26 May 1981 to the *Republički štab teritorijalne odbrane* (the Bosnian self-defence forces), which during the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s became the regular Bosnian army. The Norinco 56-1 assault rifle used in the Bataclan attack was of Chinese origin, was produced under Chinese licence in Albania during the Cold War and was part of the arsenal of the Albanian army. The third firearm used in the Bataclan, the Bulgarian AKS47 assault rifle, was produced in 1985 by the Bulgarian state-owned company Arsenal in its factory in Kazanlak.²¹¹

It is unclear how exactly the assault rifles used in the attacks ended up on the illicit firearms market and how they subsequently came into the hands of the perpetrators. In 2019, Dutch police arrested two men, aged 29 and 31. They are suspect of being involved in the delivery of weapons to the perpetrators of the Paris attacks. The investigation has not disclosed any further details regarding the case.²¹²

According to an article published in *Dabiq*, the official English-language online propaganda magazine of the so-called Islamic State, the El Bakraoui brothers (who blew themselves up in March 2016 in the suicide attacks in Brussels) were responsible for the acquisition of the firearms and explosives used in the Paris attacks in November 2015. It is believed that the brothers, who had a history of criminal activities involving Kalashnikov-type assault rifles and were part of a network of violent criminals that used firearms to carry out armed robberies and carjackings, were able to turn to their previous criminal networks to obtain their weapons. While the members of this network initially used pistols in their criminal activities, they later started to use Kalashnikov-type assault rifles.²¹³ In November 2016 two people who belonged to this criminal network were convicted in Belgium for supplying Kalashnikov magazines to the El Bakraoui brothers and two other members of this network were convicted for acting as intermediaries in these deliveries.²¹⁴

3.21 Žitište (Serbia, July 2016)

At around 1.40 am on 2 July 2016, in a Serbian village called Žitište, 38-year-old Siniša Zlatić walked into Makijato, a local club, and shot his ex-wife and her friend with an assault rifle. Afterwards he started randomly shooting other people in the club.²¹⁵ According to witnesses' statements, Zlatić only calmed down after he had emptied the second magazine of his rifle.²¹⁶ The Serbian authorities stated that people in the club managed to stop the gunman from escaping. He was then arrested by police officers who had been close to the club and had run in as soon as they heard the shots. Zlatić did not resist arrest.²¹⁷ As a result of the shootings, five people were killed and 22 were wounded, including at least three minors.²¹⁸ Investigations later found that at least 26 shots were fired.²¹⁹

Jealousy is generally considered to be the main motive for the shootings.²²⁰ Zlatić received a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison for murder with aggravating circumstances, as well as for the illegal possession and use of firearms and ammunition. During the trial, Zlatić expressed his regret for his violent actions and apologised in court.²²¹

Zlatić carried out the shootings with an illegally owned²²² Kalashnikov-type automatic assault rifle.²²³ The Serbian minister of the interior stated that law enforcement officers found an automatic rifle, a semi-automatic rifle and ammunition in the attic of Zlatić's home after the shootings.²²⁴ The Serbian authorities suggested that these weapons could have been left over from the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.²²⁵ Some sources also stated that Zlatić's family illegally owned a "whole arsenal of weapons" that had been transported from Croatia, from where the family fled to Serbia as refugees.²²⁶

Soon after the shootings, the minister of the interior proposed a new surrender programme for Serbian citizens who still owned illegal weapons left over from the wars in the 1990s.²²⁷ They were given the opportunity to hand in weapons and ammunition to a police station without providing information on their origins and without being charged with their unauthorised acquisition and possession.²²⁸

3.22 Munich (Germany, July 2016)

On 22 July 2016, 18-year-old Ali 'David' Sonboly went to a McDonald's restaurant in Munich by bicycle to meet a friend. After his friend left, he walked into the restaurant's toilet and took a pistol out of his backpack. At 5.51 pm he walked out of the toilet, approached a group of six teenagers and fired at least 18 shots into the group, killing five of them. He then walked out of the restaurant's main exit while firing in the direction of the Saturn electronics shop. Between the restaurant and the electronics shop he fired another (at least) 16 shots, killing another person. Sonboly then crossed the street to continue his rampage at the OEZ shopping mall. After killing one person near the escalators, he fled the mall via the northern parking garage. He continued to fire at empty cars without killing anyone. At 5.59 pm, eight minutes after the start of the shooting, Sonboly reached the roof of the parking garage, where he got into an argument with a man in a nearby residential complex. The vulgarity-laden argument, which was recorded and later posted online, ended after the perpetrator fired two shots in the direction of the residential complex. Five minutes later the police got their first shot at Sonboly. At this time the police believed that he was one of several gunmen. Sonboly fled and hid in a stairwell. When he was again confronted by police, he committed suicide with the same pistol he had used in the shootings.²²⁹

Munich's police chief described Sonboly as being "obsessed" with mass shootings, including the massacre on Utøya island and a school shooting that occurred in 2009.²³⁰ It was later revealed that Sonboly identified himself as "Aryan" from his Iranian heritage and had a hatred for immigrants. The choice of 22 July for the rampage may have been a deliberate decision to mark the fifth anniversary of Anders Breivik's attack in Norway.²³¹

Sonboly used one weapon – a 9 mm Glock 17 pistol.²³² It later became clear that he had practised firing the gun in his basement in the period leading up to the shooting.²³³

In 2017 a Europol official stated that, before ending up in the hands of the gunman, the pistol had previously been sold as a Flobert weapon in Slovakia.²³⁴ These firearms have limited firepower and use rim-fire ammunition of a small calibre (generally 6 mm or 4 mm). In Slovakia such weapons can be sold without restriction, yet many of them can easily be converted to fire more powerful ammunition. This was the case in Munich. It is currently still unclear where and by whom the weapon was converted. The Slovakian Interior Ministry stated that the weapon had changed hands multiple times before the killing.²³⁵ At some point, however, the pistol came into the possession of the 32-year-old Philip K. from the Frankfurt area, who was involved in illicit firearms trafficking on the dark web.²³⁶

Sonboly and Philip K. met online via a now-defunct dark web forum known as Deutschland im Deep Web. The website was not dedicated to selling firearms, but consisted of a series of discussion boards dedicated to everything from politics to pornography. Some reports indicate that Sonboly may have tried to buy firearms online

from at least four other online dealers, possibly on other dark web sites and forums, before settling on Philip K. as his eventual dealer.²³⁷ Some of Sonboly's messages on these discussion forums were visible to other users: "Hi, I'm looking for a Glock 17 with a total of 250 rounds of ammunition", the 18-year-old wrote in one post requesting an arms dealer to contact him. Soon after this post, Philip K. contacted Sonboly and the two switched to private communications.²³⁸ According to media reports, the arms dealer sold Sonboly a Glock 17 pistol and approximately 450 rounds of ammunition for €4,000.²³⁹ Sonboly met Philip K. twice at a bus station in Marburg: in May 2016 to supply the gun itself and on 18 July to supply the ammunition.²⁴⁰

The authorities arrested Philip K. in Marburg, about 100 km north of Frankfurt, in 2016, after a sting operation during which they contacted him on the dark web posing as potential buyers of an automatic weapon and a Glock 17 pistol for €8,000. The Munich public prosecutor's office charged Philip K. with nine counts of negligent homicide, and five counts of negligently causing grievous bodily harm and selling weapons illegally. Philip K. was sentenced to seven years in prison for selling the weapon to Sonboly.²⁴¹ The German police investigation discovered that Philip K. had trafficked weapons on other dark web marketplaces, and had bought at least 19 lethal weapons from various dark web sites. The investigation further showed that he had sold or exchanged 12 firearms, including Sonboly's Glock 17 pistol.²⁴² He purchased firearms cheaply from the Czech Republic and resold them to German customers. Apparently he always met his customers in person when he sold the weapons. The investigation showed that he sought to make quick money through his deals, but was also fascinated by weapons and the ideology of right-wing extremism.²⁴³

3.23 Strasbourg (France, December 2018)

On the evening of 11 December 2018, the 29-year-old Chérif Chekatt opened fire near the Christmas market in the city centre of Strasbourg.²⁴⁴ He was first seen to be armed on the Rue des Orfèvres before 8.00 pm,²⁴⁵ and started shooting on Place Kléber at around 8.00 pm. He continued to shoot and use a knife to kill and injure people on the Rue des Grandes Arcades, Rue du Saumon, Rue des Chandelles and Rue Sainte-Hélène, before going on to the Rue du Pont Saint-Martin.²⁴⁶ Official sources stated that the shootings took place between 8.00 and 9.00 pm, during which Chekatt continually shouted "Allahu Akbar". In total, five people were killed and 11 were seriously injured.²⁴⁷ During his rampage he was confronted by patrolling soldiers, who wounded him in the arm. He then managed to leave the site of the crime by taxi. According to the taxi driver, Chekatt was armed and wounded,²⁴⁸ and asked to go to the Neudorf district, without giving a precise address.²⁴⁹

Soon after the shooting, a mass police operation started involving more than 700 officers.²⁵⁰ After 48 hours Chekatt was found at 74 Rue du Lazaret. As soon as he saw the police he opened fire at them and was killed when the police returned fire.²⁵¹

Chekatt was known to the French authorities because of his previous offences, which included in total 27 convictions for offences in France, Germany and Switzerland, mostly for theft and robbery with violence. He had been imprisoned multiple times. He was also known to the French national security services and placed on the "Fiche S" – the list of people considered to be potential threats to security, monitored by the French domestic intelligence agency (DGSI).²⁵² After the shooting, law enforcement officials found a flashdrive on which there was a three-minute video recording that included a declaration of Chekatt's commitment to Islamic State and its ideology.²⁵³

Chekatt was armed with a Lebel 1892 8 mm revolver, a knife and some ammunition. The revolver is an old type used by the French army during the First World War.²⁵⁴ On 17 December 2018, police arrested 37-year-old Audrey Mondjehi, a local rap artist, on suspicion that he had provided Chekatt with the revolver.²⁵⁵ The two men are believed to have met in prison in 2012. Mondjehi is also very well known to the authorities, particularly for his multiple acts of violence, including attacks on a public transport employee and domestic violence.²⁵⁶

According to Mondjehi, Chekatt contacted him in September 2018 and asked him to provide firearms for a robbery. Mondjehi stated that he used both artificial and real guns in his rap videos. The two men communicated in October and November, and Mondjehi facilitated contact between Chekatt and someone from the "travellers community". In total, two meetings were held with a basket-maker (*vanniers*) family who were also known for their involvement in arms trafficking and lived in Sélestat, 30 minutes' drive south of Strasbourg. The first meeting took place at the end of November, while the second occurred on the parking lot of a furniture shop located north of Colmar on the

morning of 11 December – the day of the shooting. The investigation still has no information about any transactions that occurred during that day.²⁵⁷

On 29 January 2019, the Sous-Direction Anti-Terroriste arrested the 78-year-old Albert B., who is suspected of supplying the firearm used in the attack. The man is well known to police for the possession, acquisition and sale of weapons. It is believed that Albert B.'s nephew, Stephane, was an intermediary between Albert B. and Mondjehi. Stephane was also taken into custody. Mondjehi admitted that he visited Stephane together with Chekatt, but stated that this visit had no criminal purpose. After their arrest the men were transferred to Paris for further investigation and court procedures.²⁵⁸

4

Comparative analysis

In the 23 identified public mass shootings that occurred in Europe between 2009 and 2018, a large variety of firearms were used. Our analysis indicates that the perpetrators of these shootings acquired the firearms they used in a variety of ways, both legally and illegally. In the following sections we will provide an overview of the main characteristics of the various firearms used and the ways in which they were acquired. These factors differ significantly depending on the motive for each attack. After providing a general overview of the characteristics of the firearms used in these public mass shootings, we will analyse the acquisition of the firearms used in terrorist attacks separately from mass shootings that had no terrorist motives.

4.1 General characteristics of the firearms used

As we have seen earlier, most public mass shootings in Europe in the period in question were carried out by a single gunman who usually used one or two firearms during the shooting incident (see Table 2). Only five public mass shootings between 2009 and 2018 were carried out with more than two firearms per perpetrator. This figure includes the two terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015, which were carried out by three and six perpetrators, respectively.

In total, at least 49 firearms were used by the various perpetrators of the public mass shootings that occurred in Europe in the period under study and we were able to identify 45 of the firearms used in these shootings. Details of the firearms used in the Smilkovci shooting (2012) and the Naples shooting (2015) were not found during our analysis and will therefore not be analysed in the sections below.

Table 2: Overview of the number and types of firearms used in public mass shootings in Europe, 2009-2018

Number of firearms used during the shooting	Types of firearms used
1	Pistol (7 cases) Revolver (Strasbourg, 2018) Semi-automatic rifle (Roya, 2015) Automatic rifle (Zitiste, 2016)
2	Pistol + revolver (Uherský Brod, 2015) Pistol + semi-automatic rifle (Utøya, 2011) Pistol + sub-machine gun (Toulouse-Montauban, 2012) Semi-automatic rifle + shotgun (Cumbria, 2010) Revolver + automatic rifle (Liège, 201; Brussels, 2014)
3	Semi-automatic rifle + two pistols (Devínska Nová Ves, 2010) Two semi-automatic rifles + pistol (Annaberg, 2013) Semi-automatic rifle + pistol + revolver (Alphen aan den Rijn, 2011) Unkown (Smilkovci, 2012)
At least 1	Unkown (Naples, 2015)
8 (3 perpetrators)	Four pistols + four automatic rifles (Paris, January 2015)
6 (6 perpetrators)	Automatic rifles (Paris, November 2015)

Table 3 gives an overview of the different types of firearms used in the identified mass shootings – more than 30 different types and models in total. Given the wide variety of firearms types, it is not surprising that these weapons originated from a wide variety of producer countries: among others, there were pistols, revolvers and rifles of Austrian, Belgian, Brazilian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, former Yugoslavian, French, German, Israeli, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Swiss and US origin. The most popular brands of firearms used by public mass shooting perpetrators are Zastava (at least nine firearms, especially M70 rifle variants) and CZ (at least six firearms, especially pistols). Despite the variety of makes and models that can be observed, it is clear that the perpetrators of these shootings primarily used pistols and rifles. Shotguns and sub-machine guns were not used often. This observation is in line with the results of previous analyses of the types of firearms used in mass shootings in Europe²⁵⁹ and the United States.²⁶⁰

¹ Winnenden (2009), Espoo (2009), Chevaline (2012), Menznau (2013), Velika Ivanča (2013), Tirana (2014) & Munich (2016)

Table 3: Overview of the types of firearms used in public mass shootings in Europe, 2009-2018

Pistols		
9 mm		
1	Beretta 92	Winnenden (2009)
1	CZ 75	Espoo (2009)
1	CZ 75B	Uherský Brod (2015)
1	CZ 85	Devínska Nová Ves (2010)
1	CZ 88	Velika Ivanča (2013)
2	Glock 17	Annaberg (2013), Munich (2016)
1	Glock 34	Utøya (2011)
.380		
1	Sphinx AT 380	Menznau (2013)
.45		
2	Colt .45	Alphen aan den Rijn (2011), Toulouse (2012)
7.62		
1	CZ 52	Devínska Nová Ves (2010)
2	Tokarev TT-33	Paris (November 2015)
1	Type 54	Tirana (2014)
2	Zastava M57	Paris (January 2015)
7.65		
1	Luger P06	Chevaline (2012)
Revolvers		
.367		
1	Taurus 66	Alphen aan den Rijn (2011)
.38		
1	Alfa 820	Uherský Brod (2015)
1	Llama (.38 Special)	Brussels (2014)
.41		
1	Smith & Wesson .41 Magnum	Liège (2011)
8 mm		
1	Lebel 1892	Strasbourg (2018)
Semi-automatic rifles		
.22		
1	CZ 452-2E	Cumbria (2010)
1	Smith & Wesson M&P15-22	Alphen aan den Rijn (2011)
5.56		
1	Ruger Mini-14	Utøya (2011)
1	STG-77	Annaberg (2013)
7.62		
1	Vz.58	Devínska Nová Ves (2010)
Calibre 12		
1	Beretta, unknown model	Roye (2015)
Unknown calibre		
1	Mauser, unknown model	Annaberg (2013)
Automatic rifles		
7.62		
1	AKS47	Paris (November 2015)
1	FN FAL	Liège (2011)
1	Norinco 56-1	Paris (November 2015)
2	Vz.58	Paris (January 2015)
1	Zastava M70	Paris (November 2015)
1	Zastava M70 AB	Brussels (2014)
5	Zastava M70 AB2	Paris (January 2015; November 2015)
1	Unspecified "Kalashnikov-type"	Žitište (2016)
Sub-machine gun		
1	Uzi	Toulouse (2012)
Shotgun		
1	12 gauge, unknown type and model	Cumbria (2010)

Our analysis further demonstrates that perpetrators of public mass shootings in Europe are almost always armed with at least one handgun. In 17 of the 21 public mass shootings for which information about the types of firearms used is available, at least one handgun was used. In about half of these shootings the perpetrator was armed only with a handgun or handguns. In the other shootings the perpetrator combined the use of a handgun with another type of firearm (most often a rifle or rifles). In total, 23 of the 45 identified firearms used in public mass shootings in Europe are handguns, mainly pistols (18), but also revolvers (five). Most often 9 mm and 7.62 calibre pistols were used.

In half of the public mass shootings in Europe between 2009 and 2018 a rifle was used by the perpetrator(s). In total at least 19 automatic and semi-automatic rifles were used in these shootings: 13 automatic rifles, mainly Kalashnikov-type rifles, were used in five different shootings, while seven semi-automatic rifles were used in six different shootings. While automatic firearms were mainly used in public mass shootings with a terrorist motive, semi-automatic firearms were mainly used in shootings without a terrorist motive.

4.2 Firearms acquisition by perpetrators of non-terrorist public mass shootings

Between 2009 and 2018, perpetrators who did not have terrorist motives carried out at least 14 public mass shootings, resulting in a total of 96 fatalities. This means that on average 6.9 people died in each of these mass shootings. In each of these non-terrorist shootings there was only one perpetrator.

In total, at least 23 firearms were used in these shootings. In seven of them the perpetrator in question used only one firearm (a pistol five times and a rifle twice). In three shootings the perpetrator used two firearms and in three shootings three firearms were used. In one of the shootings (Naples, 2015) it is still unclear which firearms the perpetrator used. This last shooting will therefore not be included in our further analysis.

We were able to identify 22 different firearms that were used during public mass shootings without a terrorist motive in Europe in the period under study (see Table 4). The majority of these firearms were handguns (59%). Pistols, especially 9 mm pistols, were popular among the gunmen, but different kinds of revolvers were also used. Rifles – mainly semi-automatic rifles – were also frequently used (36% of all identified firearms). Military-grade automatic firearms were only used in two of the 14 non-terrorist public mass shootings in the period in question (Liège, 2011; Žitište, 2016).

In total, the perpetrators themselves legally obtained about half of the identified firearms that were used. These firearms (which include pistols, revolvers, semi-automatic rifles and a shotgun) were purchased using the required permit or licence,

sometimes specifically for sport shooting. In some cases the perpetrators purchased the firearms a couple of months before the shooting (e.g. Alphen aan den Rijn, 2011), while in other cases the firearms had been in the perpetrators' possession for more than three decades (e.g. Devínska Nová Ves, 2010; Velika Ivanča, 2013). What is remarkable is that some of the perpetrators who legally owned the firearms they used in the shootings had mental health problems, often of a long-term nature (e.g. Alphen aan den Rijn, 2011; Menznau, 2013; Annaberg, 2013; Uhersky Brod, 2015).

Table 4: Overview of the firearms used in non-terrorist public mass shootings in Europe, 2009-2018, and how they were obtained

Shooting incident	Type(s) of firearm(s) used	Acquisition
Winnenden (Germany, 2009)	Beretta 92 pistol (9 mm)	Taken from legal gun owner
Espoo (Finland, 2009)	CZ 75 pistol (9 mm)	Illegally acquired (theft from legal gun owner)
Cumbria (United Kingdom, 2010)	Shotgun (12 gauge) Semi-automatic CZ 452-2E rifle (.22)	Legally acquired (shotgun certificate) Legally acquired (firearm certificate); barrel illegally sawn off
Devínska Nová Ves (Slovakia, 2010)	Semi-automatic Vz.58 rifle (7.62) CZ 85 pistol (9 mm) CZ 52 pistol (7.62)	Legally acquired (sport shooting) Legally acquired (sport shooting) Legally acquired (sport shooting)
Alphen aan de Rijn (The Netherlands, 2011)	Semi-automatic Smith & Wesson M&P15-22 rifle Colt .45 pistol Taurus 66 revolver (.367)	Legally acquired (sport shooting) Legally acquired (sport shooting) Legally acquired (sport shooting)
Liège (Belgium, 2011)	Automatic FN FAL rifle (7.62) Smith & Wesson revolver (.41 Magnum)	Illegally acquired (components diverted from the Israeli Defense Forces) Illegally acquired (theft from legal arms dealer)
Menznau (Switzerland, 2013)	Sphinx AT 380 pistol (.380)	Gift from legal gun owner
Velika Ivanča (Serbia, 2013)	CZ 88 pistol (9 mm)	Legally acquired (firearm permit)
Annaberg (Austria, 2013)	Semi-automatic STG-77 rifle (5.56) Glock 17 pistol (9 mm) Mauser hunting rifle	Illegally acquired (components diverted from the Austrian military stockpile) Unclear Unclear
Tirana (Albania, 2014)	Type 54 pistol (7.62)	Illegally acquired
Uherský Brod (Czech Republic, 2015)	CZ 75B pistol (9 mm) Alfa 820 revolver (.38 Special)	Legally acquired (firearm licence) Legally acquired (firearm licence)
Roye (France, 2015)	Semi-automatic Beretta rifle (calibre 12)	Unclear
Žitište (Serbia, 2016)	Automatic "Kalashnikov-type" rifle (7.62)	Illegally acquired

In seven of the non-terrorist public mass shootings, the perpetrator used a firearm that he had obtained illegally. In some cases the available information does not clarify how the weapon was acquired. In other cases the firearm or some of its components could successfully be traced to their point of diversion. Firstly, family members of the perpetrators legally purchased two of the firearms used in the non-terrorist public mass shootings. The perpetrators either illegally received the weapon from their relatives (Menznau, 2013) or took the weapon without consent (Winnenden, 2009). In the latter case the perpetrator's father was a sport shooter and legally owned 15 firearms. The pistol taken and used by his son was the only one that the father had not securely stored in a gun cabinet, but kept in his bedroom. In two other shootings, the firearm was stolen from a legal gun owner or arms dealer unrelated in any way to the perpetrators (Espoo, 2009; Liège, 2011). It is unclear if the perpetrators stole the firearms themselves or if they bought them after the stolen firearms had ended up on the illicit market.

Finally, some of the firearms used in public shootings were later found to have been assembled from components that were diverted from armed forces (Liège, 2011; Annaberg, 2013). It is unclear if these firearms were assembled by the perpetrators themselves or obtained in this state. It is obvious, however, that some perpetrators of public mass shootings illegally modified their firearms, for example by sawing off the barrel of a firearm (e.g. Cumbria, 2009).

Not surprisingly, the perpetrators illegally obtained the few automatic firearms used in these non-terrorist shootings. Given that firearms of this type are "prohibited weapons" in Europe (Category A weapons in the EU Firearms Directive 91/477/EC), it is very difficult to acquire them legally. It is therefore likely no coincidence that automatic firearms were only used by the perpetrator of the Liège shooting in 2011 (who was a criminal known for firearms-related and drug-related offences) and by the perpetrator of the shooting in Žitište in 2016 (given that large numbers of military-grade firearms from the Yugoslav wars were still not under the control of the Serbian authorities).

4.3 Firearms acquisition by perpetrators of terrorist public mass shootings

Between 2009 and 2018 perpetrators with terrorist motives carried out at least eight public mass shootings in Europe. These attacks resulted in approximately 236 fatalities as the result of gunshot wounds, and many other injured victims. This means that on average approximately 30 people died in each public mass shooting. This high average of gun deaths per incident is caused by a few extremely lethal terrorist attacks. In fact, terrorists perpetrated the three most lethal public mass shootings of the last decade: the Paris attacks in November 2015 (approximately 130 gun deaths), the mass shooting on Utøya island (67 gun deaths) and the Paris attacks in January 2015 (17 gun deaths). If the two mass shootings with exceptionally high levels of fatalities (Paris, November 2015 and Utøya, 2011) are excluded, the average number of gun deaths per shooting drops to 7.2, which is similar to the average number of gun deaths for non-terrorist public mass shootings in Europe (see section 4.2).

A first observation is that in total at least 22 firearms were used to carry out these eight public mass shootings. Given that the two Paris attacks in January and November 2015 were carried out by three and six perpetrators, respectively, this means that in almost all cases each perpetrator was armed with one or two firearms: generally a handgun, an automatic rifle or a combination of both.

Table 5: Overview of the firearms used in terrorist public mass shootings in Europe, 2009-2018

Shooting incident	Types of firearms used	Acquisition
Jihadi attacks		
Toulouse (2012)	Colt .45 pistol Uzi sub-machine gun	Illegally acquired on the criminal market (previously stolen from a sport shooter) Illegally acquired from a criminal childhood acquaintance
Brussels (2014)	Reactivated Llama revolver (.38 Special) Automatic Zastava M70 AB rifle (7.62)	Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (legally sold as a deactivated gun) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection
Paris (Jan. 2015)	Two automatic Zastava M70 AB2 rifles (7.62) Two Zastava M57 pistols (7.62) Two reactivated Tokarev TT33 pistols (7.62) Two reactivated automatic Vz.58 rifles (7.62)	Illegally acquired (diverted during Yugoslav wars) Illegally acquired (diverted during Yugoslav wars) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (legally sold as deactivated guns) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (legally sold as deactivated guns)
Paris (Nov. 2015)	Three automatic Zastava M70 AB2 rifles (7.62) Automatic Zastava M70 rifle (7.62) Automatic AKS47 rifle (7.62) Automatic Norinco 56-1 rifle (7.62)	Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (diverted during Yugoslav wars) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (diverted during Yugoslav wars) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (diverted during Yugoslav wars) Illegally acquired through a criminal connection (diverted during Yugoslav wars)
Strasbourg (2018)	Lebel 1892 revolver (8 mm)	Illegally acquired through a criminal connection
Right-wing attacks		
Utøya (2011)	Semi-automatic Ruger Mini-14 rifle (5.56) Glock 34 pistol (9 mm)	Legally held firearm (hunting) Legally held firearm (sport shooting)
Munich (2015)	Glock 17 pistol (9 mm)	Illegally acquired on the dark web (converted Flobert weapon)

A second observation regarding the firearms used in terrorist public mass shootings is the high number of automatic rifles and other military-grade firearms that were used. In three of the eight terrorist shootings, the perpetrators used “Kalashnikov-type” automatic rifles (Brussels, 2014; Paris, January 2015; Paris, November 2015), while the perpetrator of the Toulouse-Montauban shooting was armed with a sub-machine gun, which he (unsuccessfully) attempted to use. The perpetrators of these attacks each combined the use of their military-grade firearm with a handgun. Interestingly, the perpetrator of the carnage on Utøya island also wanted to acquire a “Kalashnikov-type” automatic rifle, but failed to do so. Despite the low number of automatic rifles actually used in non-terrorist public mass shootings, this suggests a strong preference for these types of weapons. This observation is supported by the recorded explicit desire of the perpetrator of the public mass shooting in Brussels in 2014 to acquire a “Kalashnikov” (see section 3.14).

Automatic firearms are "prohibited weapons" in Europe (Category A weapons in the EU Firearms Directive 91/477/EC), and their legal possession is limited to small groups of firearms owners. It is obvious that the perpetrators of these shootings therefore obtained these weapons via the illicit market. Our analysis demonstrates that the perpetrators of terrorist public mass shootings obtained their automatic rifles through their criminal connections, often in the criminal underworld of drug trafficking and armed robberies. In recent years several people have been arrested and some have

already been convicted for their roles in supplying the perpetrators of these attacks with weapons. These intermediaries are sometimes people the perpetrators grew up with, were involved with in criminal activities or met while in prison.

This observation is in line with recent research into terrorist access to illicit gun markets across Europe. In recent years significant numbers of firearms have been seized from various terrorist networks. The procurement of these weapons takes place within the context of terrorists preparing their attacks or defending themselves against law enforcement agencies. Terrorists generally rely on their criminal connections – which often pre-date their radicalisation – to acquire firearms from illicit gun markets. While most terrorists seem to have a preference for military-grade firearms, not all terrorists have access to a wide range of firearms. Most illicit firearms markets in Europe are driven by criminal demand and are traditionally rather closed markets with restricted access for people outside criminal networks. Having the right criminal connections and a “good” reputation is considered crucial to gaining access to these markets. Most of the firearms that are available on European illicit firearms markets are handguns. The availability of military-grade firearms is generally more limited than that of handguns, and military-grade firearms are therefore generally not easily available to lower-level criminals. It is believed that this closed character of illicit gun markets has been put under pressure in certain European countries in recent years due to the continued smuggling of military-grade assault rifles into the EU, the conversion of blank-firing guns, the reactivation of deactivated firearms and acoustic expansion weapons, and the emergence of the internet. This has made it easier for terrorists with good criminal connections to acquire military-grade firearms in various EU member states, especially in Western Europe and in countries that are characterised by more chaotic criminal landscapes.²⁶¹

For terrorists, criminal connections are often crucial in obtaining access to illicit gun markets and the desired firearms. Our analysis, however, indicates that not all terrorist perpetrators of public mass shootings have access to automatic rifles. The shootings in Munich (2015) and Strasbourg (2018), for example, were carried out with only a handgun. Yet, not every terrorist has an extensive network that enables him access to military-grade firearms. The perpetrator of the shooting in Strasbourg, for example, was a petty criminal who had been radicalised and acquired his “antique” revolver through a criminal connection from the so-called “travellers” community. While many of the firearms used by the terrorist perpetrators were several decades old, the use of firearms produced before the Second World War to carry out such attacks is rather exceptional.¹ The two public mass shootings inspired by right-wing motives further suggest that established criminal connections are not always needed for obtaining firearms. The perpetrator of the Munich shooting (2015), for example, had no known criminal connections. He acquired his converted 9 mm pistol through the dark web from an illicit arms dealer who was fascinated by weapons and the ideology of right-wing

¹ After the mass shooting at the Jewish Hypercacher supermarket in Paris in January 2015, law enforcement officials also seized a Nagant revolver dating from 1932 during a search of the perpetrator's apartment.

extremism. The perpetrator of the Utøya shooting in 2011 wrote in his manifesto that he attempted to purchase a fully automatic assault rifle in the Czech Republic, but that he lacked the necessary criminal connections to be able to do so. Disappointed that he had not managed to illegally obtain such a weapon, he decided to focus on the legal acquisition of (in his eyes, less suitable) firearms in preparation for his attack. He therefore applied for a licence for a semi-automatic rifle on the pretext of using it for hunting, and in order to increase his chances of acquiring a licence for a 9 mm pistol, he went shooting more often at the shooting club where he was already a member. For potential terrorists without criminal connections, the internet and the legal arms market can thus also be used to acquire weapons. Terrorists have also been able to acquire equipment for their firearms on the legal firearms market. The Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office, for example, suspects that some of the magazines that were used in the public mass shooting in Paris in November 2015 (and possibly also other attacks) were legally purchased by intermediaries, who then transferred them to the perpetrators of the attacks.

It is important to stress that all of the firearms that terrorists acquired on illicit gun markets to carry out public mass shootings in Europe in the period under discussion were legally produced. Most of them, however, were diverted into unauthorised hands during their life cycles and ended up on illicit gun markets. A variety of diversion methods can be observed. Many of the automatic “Kalashnikov-type” assault rifles were produced in the former Yugoslavia and disappeared from the radar during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s and early 2000s. In at least one case a firearm ended up on the illicit gun market after it was stolen from a professional sport shooter.

Some of the automatic rifles and pistols used in public mass shootings were reactivated or converted firearms. In at least two such shootings we were able to identify the use of reactivated firearms. One of the perpetrators of the Paris attacks in January 2015 was armed with two reactivated automatic rifles and two reactivated pistols. Subsequently, several other reactivated firearms were seized from the perpetrator's apartment. These reactivated firearms originated from Slovakia, where they were legally sold as deactivated or acoustic expansion weapons in 2014. (New legislation has since closed off this source of weapons.) Criminals from across the EU became aware that many of these firearms could fairly easily be illegally reactivated, and so bought them, sometimes online. Through a number of intermediaries in Belgium and France, the reactivated firearms ended up in the hands of the gunman. The perpetrator of the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in 2014 also used a reactivated firearm, which was legally sold in Spain and then illegally reactivated. In response to the Paris attacks in 2015, the EU has adopted a common EU deactivation procedure and amended the rules on deactivated firearms and acoustic expansion weapons.²⁶²

Interestingly, a so-called “Flobert” firearm was used in one of the public mass shootings since 2009 (Munich 2015). Firearms of this type have limited firepower and use small-calibre rim-fire ammunition (generally 6 mm or 4 mm). Because this is an unregulated calibre in some EU member states, weapons of this type can be sold without restriction and often even without registration. The problem is that many

Flobert firearms can easily be altered to fire more powerful ammunition and can thus be used in acts of violence. Europol has repeatedly warned that Flobert weapons might become a significant security phenomenon in the coming years.²⁶³

5

Conclusions

In the ten-year period between 2009 and 2018, 23 public mass shootings (each with at least four fatally shot victims, excluding the perpetrator) were committed in Europe and resulted in approximately 341 fatalities. These violent incidents occurred across the continent, but it should be noted that a remarkably high number of these – mainly terrorist – shootings took place in France and accounted for almost half the fatalities (approximately 160). Very often the perpetrators of public mass shootings committed their crimes in commercial or recreational locations such as supermarkets and malls, restaurants, bars and nightclubs, Christmas markets, or even a concert hall. In general, only one (male) perpetrator armed with one or two firearms carried out each of these mass shootings. Two notable exceptions are the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, both of which involved coordinated teams of perpetrators.

The number of public mass shootings carried out by terrorists seems to have increased in recent years in Europe, and these shootings tend to have higher death tolls. Such attacks mostly involve very specific, targeted mass killings (e.g. Jewish targets; the *Charlie Hebdo* offices; a political party's summer camp). Yet, most public mass shootings in Europe are not motivated by terrorism: two-thirds are carried out by gunmen with no specific political or ideological motives. The public mass shootings in Europe the period under study also occurred in a wide range of contexts. While a number of attacks involved specific targets (e.g. the perpetrator's school or workplace), several shootings actually started as domestic disputes that quickly escalated into public violence without specific targets.

Firearms use and acquisition

Our analysis has demonstrated that in total at least 49 different firearms were used by the various perpetrators of the 23 public mass shootings in Europe in the period under discussion. These firearms included a wide variety of types, brands and models. Yet most of them were handguns (especially 9 mm and 7.62 mm pistols) and rifles (both automatic and semi-automatic). Often the perpetrators of these attacks were armed

with a handgun, sometimes in combination with another type of firearm (most often a rifle). Clear differences were also observed in the firearms used by gunmen with and without terrorist motivations: while automatic rifles (especially Kalashnikov-type rifles) are mainly used in terrorist shootings, semi-automatic firearms are mainly used in shootings with no terrorist motivation.

Terrorist gunmen tended to have a strong preference for military-grade firearms, especially Kalashnikov-type assault rifles. Legal access to such firearms is very restricted in Europe. In addition, the procedures for the legal acquisition of firearms include various background checks. Given the fact that they often have criminal records, most terrorist gunmen did not have the option of legally acquiring their firearms. While planning and preparing their terrorist attacks, perpetrators such as these try to avoid any additional government or law enforcement controls on their activities. Our analysis confirms that, with a few notable exceptions, the perpetrators of terrorist public mass shootings acquire their firearms on illicit gun markets through their criminal connections. The use of a revolver that was produced a century ago in the Strasbourg shooting in 2018 underlines that even for terrorists with criminal connections, access to military-grade firearms is not self-evident. Our analysis further suggests that terrorists without criminal connections do not acquire their firearms on the local criminal market. The young perpetrator of the Munich shooting in 2016, for example, obtained his firearm from an illicit arms dealer on the dark web, while the perpetrator of the shootings on Utøya island in 2011 obtained his firearms legally. For these two perpetrators, the dark web and the legal gun market were more feasible ways of acquiring their firearms than through criminal connections.

The picture of firearms acquisition is quite different for the perpetrators of non-terrorist public mass shootings. For these shootings, the perpetrators' legal acquisition of firearms is not the exception: about half of such shootings were carried out with firearms that the perpetrators had obtained legally. In addition, in some cases the legal status of the firearms used remains unclear, since the perpetrators possessed firearms both legally and illegally. This implies that a significant proportion of the perpetrators of these very lethal shootings had legal access to firearms. Despite sometimes long-standing mental health issues, these gunmen were able to purchase their firearms – which included handguns, semi-automatic rifles and a shotgun – using the required permit or licence, sometimes specifically for sport shooting or hunting. The non-terrorist shootings carried out with illegally acquired firearms involved gunmen with a criminal history, such as the Espoo and Liège shootings in 2009 and 2011, respectively, or a perpetrator from a country that is still home to significant quantities of post-conflict legacy weapons, such as the Žitište shooting in 2016. In other cases the firearm used was legally owned by one of the perpetrators' family members, who either did not store the weapon properly (Winnenden, 2009) or illegally gave it to the perpetrator (Menznau, 2013).

In Europe, individuals' ownership of a firearm is not a right, but a privilege. The basic principle of European firearms legislation is that the legal possession of firearms by individuals is limited to people who have an accepted reason for owning a firearm and

who can demonstrate that they are responsible firearms owners who use and store their weapons safely. In general, however, the European policy framework for legal firearms possession functions quite effectively, but this usually passes unnoticed due to the rather limited number of gun homicides and fatal gun accidents in Europe.²⁶⁴

Spectacular incidents such as public mass shootings often dramatically bring firearms legislation and its connected procedures into the societal spotlight, especially if they are committed with firearms that the perpetrators acquired legally. These shootings underline the vital importance of an effective policy framework for private firearms ownership. Developing such a framework is not an easy task: it is difficult balancing act of risk management. The public mass shootings carried out with legally owned firearms between 2009 and 2018 are all examples of situations where something went tragically wrong in this risk-management exercise and its procedures – for example, relevant information about mental-health issues or other problems that did not reach the right agency in time, a father who did not store one of his legally owned firearms safely in his gun cabinet as required, family members who felt threatened but whose fears were heard too late by the relevant agencies, and so on. In addition to the importance of good background checks during firearms licence applications that include checking whether the applicants are mentally and physically competent to own firearms, their previously recorded aggressive behaviour (even if no conviction resulted), or previous misuse of weapons, our findings also underline the importance of the thorough monitoring of an individual's legal ownership of firearms after a licence has been issued. A thorough exchange of information among the agencies involved is therefore crucial and there must be immediate intervention when gun owners no longer meet the legal requirements for owning firearms.

In the aftermath of public mass shootings, often the first policy response of many governments is to make it more difficult to legally acquire firearms by amending the relevant firearms legislation and optimising licensing procedures. One of the main conclusions of our analysis is that the perpetrators of public mass shootings in Europe use firearms that they already own or that they have access to. From a policy perspective, the observation that these gunmen have acquired their weapons legally *and* illegally implies that policy action is required both to strengthen the legislation and procedures for the legal acquisition of firearms *and* to upgrade the fight against illicit firearms trafficking within and into Europe. Since the early 2000s, the EU has developed several policy initiatives aimed at curbing illicit firearms trafficking into and within the EU as a direct consequence of the terrorist attacks across the continent and the apparent increased availability of military-grade firearms among criminals in several EU member states. The illicit trafficking of firearms has in recent years become a security phenomenon that law enforcement agencies have increasingly prioritised. In the weeks immediately after the Paris attacks – the most lethal public mass shootings in European post-war history – the EU proposed to restrict legal firearms access and close existing loopholes (which resulted in the amendment of the EU Firearms Directive in 2017), and adopted an action plan to combat illicit trafficking in and the use of firearms and explosives. The multiple use of reactivated and converted firearms by perpetrators of public mass shootings in Europe underlines the importance of closing legal loopholes to curb the risk that firearms end up in unauthorised hands. Following up

on whether European firearms legislation has been effectively implemented is therefore of the utmost importance. Adopting and implementing new legislation alone, however, will not solve the problem, and much more is needed. Our analysis demonstrates that the firearms that gunmen had illegally acquired had previously ended up on illicit gun markets in many different ways. Firearms are durable products with very long lifespans. While many of the illegally acquired firearms are legacy weapons from armed conflicts in Europe that were smuggled across state borders, other firearms have ended up on illicit gun markets through various diversion methods, such as thefts from legal gun owners. In order to significantly upgrade EU and national efforts to curb the multifaceted and transnational nature of illicit firearms trafficking, it is crucial to move away from an event-driven policy response and instead focus on the implementation of a structural, comprehensive and proactive strategy that simultaneously applies pressure on the various elements of illicit firearms trafficking. In addition to upgrading the regulatory framework, it is crucial to continue to invest in strengthening the operational capacities of the various actors involved (law enforcement agencies, domestic gun control agencies, customs agencies, judicial actors) and to improve cooperation among these actors, both at the national and international levels. In addition, it is important to strengthen cooperation with third countries that are important sources – both in the past and potentially – of the weapons that are being trafficked into and within the EU.

A final point requiring attention is the need to improve the intelligence picture of illicit firearms trafficking and gun violence. A better understanding of these phenomena is an essential prerequisite for the development and implementation of a comprehensive and proactive strategy to effectively combat them. Although several initiatives have been taken to improve this understanding, more is needed. With this report we hope to have contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics of firearms acquisition related to public mass shootings in Europe. We realise that we have focused on one specific aspect of a high-profile type of gun violence that receives a lot of media coverage and political attention, even though these shootings account for a small share of the victims of gun violence in Europe. The existing deficiencies in the policy initiatives to regulate the licit market and combat the illicit market are often the subject of societal debate after spectacular public mass shootings, but we would like to stress that the types of deficiencies we have pointed to claim victims in Europe almost on a daily basis. While the risk of gun violence can never be reduced to zero, it is important to analyse such violence in order to develop adequate policy responses. We would therefore like to end this report with a call for more comprehensive research into different types of gun violence across Europe. The literature on gun violence in Europe is still underdeveloped. We therefore hope to inspire more studies that focus on this important security phenomenon.

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