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PRODUCER: Gregor Stewart

EDITOR: David Ross

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“FILE ON 4”

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ACTUALITY OF MARCHING

URRY: Iraqi soldiers in training. Although they can march in time, they've not always had the weapons they've needed to protect their country and themselves.

ACTUALITY OF GUNFIRE

URRY: There's been a huge drive, led by the United States to re-arm the Iraqis at a time when the nation is already awash with firearms - and how they've been equipped is at the centre of controversy.

STOHL: I understand the need to provide for the legitimate police and military forces in the country. My problem is that there doesn't seem to be a recognition that it's the same weapons that are killing people, it's the same weapons that are destroying the ability of the Iraqi people to rebuild and move forward and end this conflict.

URRY: Tonight, File on 4 assesses how well the Iraqi arms deals have been handled, and whether there's been enough security around them. We've discovered serious flaws in the audit trails vital to ensure the proper handling and delivery of consignments, we've investigated an export deal involving the UK which is the subject of a criminal investigation in Italy, and, as the shootings increase in Baghdad and beyond, we've found disturbing evidence that some of these guns have fallen into the hands of criminals and insurgents.

SIGNATURE

ACTUALITY WITH MARYAM AND GUN

URRY: Abu Maryam, not his real name, is a middle-aged businessman who lives with his family and his gun in western Baghdad. He says until the security situation improves, he and his neighbours will use their Kalashnikovs to protect themselves.

MARYAM (VIA INTERPRETER): I need a weapon, because I am concerned for my own life and the lives of my family. I think every home here must have a weapon now. It's fairly easy to buy a Kalashnikov. For example, at the Meridi market and other markets around Baghdad. I really can't do without my AK47 just now, because the security situation is getting worse by the day. You see bodies on the roads and areas are inflammable and set to get worse, so I can't do away with my weapon.

URRY: He's right to be concerned. Figures published last month from Iraq Body Count, an independent organisation, show numbers of civilian killings have almost doubled since the fall of Saddam. It's hardly surprising when there are so many guns around.

STOHL: It's estimated that there were approximately enough weapons for every single person in Iraq. So if you estimate a population of about 24 million prior to the initial conflict, you could estimate in the 20 million range of small arms and light weapons in circulation in the country.

URRY: Rachel Stohl, senior analyst at the Centre for Defence Information in Washington, says when coalition forces overcame Saddam, huge stockpiles were left lying around.

STOHL: Prior to the initial invasion, weapons were actually handed out to civilians in preparation for this huge invading force of Americans. Government forces would give tribal leaders predominantly AK47s and they'd literally distribute them off the back of trucks. You had Iran arming the Shia rebel group in the country. You had looting in 1991 after the first Gulf War, where civilians got their hands on weapons in government arsenals. Throughout the country, especially in the Kurdish areas, you had very sophisticated arms bazaars where you could buy any kind of small arm or light weapon that you wanted.

URRY: Paradoxically, with Iraq awash with weapons, the country's emerging security forces were struggling to get guns and ammunition for themselves. In 2004, Brigadier General Nigel Alwyn Foster was Deputy Commander of the Coalition organisation responsible for manning, training and equipping those forces.

FOSTER: When this whole business started, ie the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq, at that stage there was not a firm plan for how the Iraqi security forces were going to be reshaped. So we were, to some extent, trying to build an aeroplane whilst it was in flight. And certainly one aspect of that was that the equipping of the forces that we were training was always on the critical path.

URRY: What sort of guns and ammunition were available to the Iraqis at that stage then, the people you were trying to train?

FOSTER: We had available equipment that had previously been held by Saddam's old army, and some of that really was frankly useless for the purposes of a professional modern military force. At that stage I don't believe that it mattered significantly to the coalition campaign, because at that stage the Iraqi army was not involved in the counter-insurgency campaign. From about the middle of 2004 it became of critical importance because the decision was taken that the Iraqi army needed to be involved in the campaign against the insurgency. So that again added impetus to the requirement to get these guys equipped.

URRY: There were other problems. A major international contract to supply the Iraqi army had fallen through, slowing the programme down, and insurgents had begun to target supply lines. But America fought back. It scaled up, industrialising the international process of weapons and equipment supply. To achieve that, billions of dollars of defence contracts were awarded to private companies, which formed the backbone of US military procurement efforts. These companies began scouring the world for suitable weapons.

ACTUALITY IN WAREHOUSE

BERBIC: We're actually going to see one of the weapons that's inside and we will ask a soldier to open the door for us.

URRY: And this is where they came - to a country with one of the largest stockpiles of arms anywhere in Europe: Bosnia. More than half a million weapons were held in warehouses like this one north of Sarajevo, following the Balkans conflict in the 1990s. However, humanitarian organisations already had a programme underway to destroy these stockpiles.

BERBIC: It's cold and dark, isn't it?

URRY: Well it's quite large as well and there's lots and lots of wooden crates here. Are these mainly small arms?

BERBIC: Yes, these are small arms up to let's say something like 62mm calibre infantry ...

URRY: Amna Berbic, project officer for the United Nations Development Programme, is tasked with the job of trying to get these firearms decommissioned.

BERBIC: We at the United Nations Development Programme have a three year project, paying \$11.5 million to destroy all surplus weapons and ammunition in Bosnia.

URRY: So you'd like to see warehouses like this completely empty actually, not stacked to the rafters with all these wooden crates with guns in?

BERBIC: Absolutely, absolutely, we are working to see them empty and we will empty them hopefully in a year. Our weapons are then destroyed at the furnace.

URRY: What, melted down?

BERBIC: Melted.

URRY: Melted down completely.

In fact, the bulk of Bosnia's stockpiles have not been melted down. Instead, the US cut a deal behind the scenes with the Bosnia Herzogovena authorities to ship them out to Iraq. But Adrian Wilkinson, who's head of the UN's disarmament initiative for this part of Europe, called SEESAC, says his people weren't told about it.

When did you first become aware that there were systematic efforts to export some of those weapons to Iraq?

WILKINSON: Well this came as a result of the survey in 2004, when we established a programme in Bosnia to try and help the Bosnian governments place in effect a small arms control policy. It was at that time the NATO stabilisation force, SFOR, indicated to us that there were these weapons and that some form of export was taking place. A moratorium to prevent export of surplus weapons was going to be implemented, but of course that moratorium has consistently been delayed over the last two years to allow these weapons to be exported to equip the new armed forces of Iraq and Afghanistan.

URRY: So you didn't really know that was going on until fairly late on in the process?

WILKINSON: Well there was no consultation with us at any stage in this operation. We found out through our normal sources. And of concern to us has been the lack of transparency in the whole operation and we have a range of projects in the

KAUER: Up to 290,000 pieces of small arms have been exported and ammunition in the figure of 64 million rounds. So a significant amount of weapons and ammunition as well. And it can be considered as the biggest export of arms since after the Second World War. At least 60% to 70% of this total went to Iraq.

URRY: But the operation to achieve that involved a complex web of deals. At its apex sat the primary contractor in the Bosnia transfers, TAOS Industries of Alabama. With a staff of just 27, they've won a small business of the year award from the Huntsville, Alabama Chamber of Commerce. But there's nothing small about the value of the contracts they've secured with the US Government to equip Iraq - nearly \$400 million, according to their website. Amnesty International's arms control expert, Brian Wood, says TAOS then dealt with a succession of middlemen, traders and brokers which, in his view, increased the risk of weapons going astray.

WOOD: In the case of Bosnia, they contracted a Bulgarian company to do some of the freight forwarding and to organise the cargo flights. They then dealt with a small brokering company in Croatia that had control over the stocks in Bosnia.

URRY: How small?

WOOD: Well, that company operates from a fifth floor apartment building. It describes itself as a travel agency and various other things.

URRY: A travel agency?

WOOD: Yes. At the bottom of the list of things that it says it does is small arms and ammunition, and that was the company that apparently had control over the Bosnian stocks at the depots and the US contractors had to deal with that company.

URRY: How has that system come about then? Why is it that this isn't dealt with government to government, military to military?

WOOD: Well, sometimes in the arms industry it's conducted on the basis of who you know, but the process of doing that is lax and the criteria that are being used are opaque, so Amnesty International is concerned that these weapons may be reaching human rights abusers and they may easily be diverted to human rights abusers because the supply chain is so poorly regulated.

URRY: But the safeguard mechanism for the Bosnian arms movements is the military force, EUFOR. Major Erwin Kauer says they checked all the paperwork and permissions, retained copies, and satisfied themselves that all the documents were in order before sanctioning any guns for release and shipment.

KAUER: The form was issued, stamped and signed by the authorised officers in Baghdad and we received it three weeks after the shipment.

URRY: So at least you're getting the paperwork back?

KAUER: Of course, yes.

URRY: There is concern that the shipments or some of the shipments might have been diverted in some way. Is there any evidence that that's happened?

KAUER: I only received the signed and stamped paperwork, me personally I have no other possibility to follow up such shipments, except I involve the US intelligence service, and in this case we have done.

URRY: So the intelligence services have been tracking these shipments?

KAUER: Hopefully, because I got green light for such shipments.

URRY: Amnesty International say they are not confident about some of these audit trails, and we've discovered discrepancies when we tried to track a consignment of weapons sent to the UK.

ACUALITY IN EUFOR OFFICES

URRY: In the offices of EUFOR's Joint Military Affairs, Major Erwin Kauer has kept meticulous records of who's been trying to buy what, and where it's gone. In one example he showed us, a company called York Guns Limited from the North of England applied to move more than 22,000 7.62mm AK47-type assault rifles and hundreds of light machine guns.

KAUER: We're talking about York Guns. York Guns shipped to UK as the country of final destination, 11,400 pieces of automatic rifles, ... AK47, and 355 pieces of light machine guns below 9mm calibre. Then there is another shipment in June, 8,558 pieces of automatic rifles and 100 pieces of light machine guns.

URRY: So we are getting up to around 20,000 here, aren't we?

KAUER: More or less, yes.

URRY: Information was specially declassified for File on 4. Major Kauer was even able to call up specific shipping records on his computer. You've found it?

KAUER: There was an extra transport conducted, an export on 27th June, Mostar to Ploce port, which is located in Croatia, and international ship freighted over there to be loaded by those stuff, and then they shipped to UK after that.

URRY: How do you know it actually arrived?

KAUER: In this case we involved the military personnel to follow up if this ship or this transport is good or not good and if the stuff really reached UK or not. And in this case I didn't receive any negative response.

URRY: So you're satisfied that it arrived in the port, which I think was Immingham, wasn't it?

KAUER: More or less, yes, but it is my job.

URRY: We wanted to know why York, who advertise themselves as dealers of sporting rifles and shotguns, had, according to Major Kauer, imported 20,000 military assault rifles into the UK last summer. But when I contacted managing director, Gary Hyde, he flatly denied having done so. Mr Hyde wouldn't be interviewed for this programme, but responded to my questions by telephone. His account was that York Guns passed over the deal to a third party, who did import them, and that the weapons arrived safely and with the proper permissions of the UK authorities. He insisted this was nothing to do with York Guns, but when pressed he accepted his wife was a shareholder of the third party dealership. We checked with the Department of Trade and Industry, which issues import licences. All they could tell us was:

READER IN STUDIO: DTI has no record of any imports made by York Guns Ltd of assault rifles.

URRY: So at the very least it's still not clear where the weapons are, or where they are to go from here. For Amnesty International, such confusion is characteristic of the inaccuracies surrounding the some of the Bosnian audit trails. Amnesty tried to track another consignment of tens of thousands of AK47s and millions of rounds of ammunition said to have gone to a small gun shop in Switzerland. Once again the owner denied having received them and, according to Amnesty's Brian Wood, the Swiss authorities have no records of those arms arriving in their country.

WOOD: This is the same as the Swiss company. Their names are on the documents in Bosnia and on the documents that EUFOR have authorised, but they say that they're not aware of it.

URRY: Have you been able to establish what's gone wrong then?

WOOD: Well, that is still the subject of an investigation, it's not known where all of those Kalashnikovs and the ammunition went. Companies should not have their names on official arms export documents in the Balkans if they've not been

DIFEO: They arrived at the newspaper about 7pm. They showed an order by the prosecutor asking them to search in all Corriere della Sera. That was never seen before, because they usually ask to search just in the office or one journalist, not in all the Corriere della Sera, which has got about 350 journalists. And then I said, 'I'm the man who made this job, please just search my office and just question me,' because otherwise they would have stopped the newspaper, it would have been impossible to have the newspaper ready for the night. And then they started searching in my office, they searched everything, they searched the mail, they scanned everything, and then they questioned me. It was until, I think, five o'clock in the morning, something similar.

URRY: What the police were looking for was information about sources who had leaked the story to the newspaper. The Italian courts were investigating Beretta for alleged breaches of Italy's export and firearms regulations. Police had already raided the Beretta factory and discovered that a UK company had bought from them more than 20,000 refurbished pistols. The UK company which bought the pistols insists everything it did was legal and approved by the British authorities. It's a small defence supplier based in London, called Super Vision International. Managing Director Chris Bradbury says, as far as he's concerned, it was a straightforward purchase of a widely used gun - the Beretta 92 S.

BRADBURY: It's a 9mm pistol, which is very very popular with the forces, with the police forces, should I say, but it's also used worldwide. I believe American forces have them as well. It's a very reliable weapon and it's been around for a long time. In its normal form it's called a 92F actually. The 'S' is a slightly modified version, which was modified for police use.

URRY: And these refurbished 92Ss were to be put to similar use - they were flown to Baghdad from Britain for the Iraqi police, Ministry of Oil and security forces. The deal was part of the bigger US-led drive to re-equip Iraq, and there was a familiar name involved in the procurement - TAOS Industries of Alabama, who'd had a leading role in the Bosnia arms transfers. Chris Bradbury's London company was subcontracted to buy the Berettas.

URRY: Why do you think it is that the magistrates in Italy are investigating the legality of this deal?

BRADBURY: I really don't know, to be honest. The first I knew about all this was when an Italian journalist contacted me. This deal was completed two years ago. I suspect that there was some wrongdoing at some point, but certainly not during the course of our dealings with the contract or as far as the British government were concerned.

URRY: TAOS have written to us, their lawyer, rather, has written to us saying that the company complies with all export and import laws of all the countries it's dealing with.

BRADBURY: I'm absolutely sure that's the case, yes. It's a very reliable company, very reputable company as well.

URRY: And yet there is a suggestion here from Italy anyway, from the Prosecutor's Office that they're concerned that some law might have been broken, so somebody has not complied somewhere.

BRADBURY: This, I'm afraid, I have to say that I think this is a matter of trying to pass the buck. I cannot see how the Americans could possibly have done anything illegal or wrong. We have all the documentation, which you've had sight of, and we have had all our documentation and all our activity checked by the authorities in the UK, very thoroughly checked. I can assure you, and you've seen some evidence of it, that both the DTI and our security people did everything they possibly could to ensure that we complied with the regulations.

URRY: No-one from Beretta would be interviewed. But in a statement they told us the shipment was arranged once they had all the due export and transportation licences, and that the chief of Italian Police was told the weapons were going to Iraq. But if Britain's trade laws were observed, did the UK also fulfil its arms control obligations? Some MPs don't think so. Plaid Cymru's Trade spokesman, Adam Price, believes the government has failed to follow international protocols it's signed up to.

PRICE: We've asked the British government what discussion they've had with the Italian authorities and they're not prepared to confirm or deny that there have been any discussions, so we've drawn a blank there. There's complete lack of transparency and accountability. But there's very particular concern here, because the government is signed up to the Wassenaar Arrangement of the main arms exporting countries in the world and it's very clear there in the guidelines that we've signed up to that you have to inform any country from which you've had an import of guns if you intend to then re-export them to a third country, and that's there for a very good reason, of course, to prevent companies from getting round arms embargos or more stringent rules on recipient countries by shipping them via a complicit third country.

URRY: But the answer you were given from a minister when you asked the question, and I've read the answer, suggested that there was no obligation in this particular case for the British authorities to tell the Italians where these guns were actually going to go for re-export.

PRICE: And it's a very curious answer, isn't it, precisely for that reason, because they have admitted that these guns came from Italy, came from Beretta, had an import permit from Italy, and yet the rules are very clear, you should inform the originating country that you're going to re-export them, but the British government tells us that they didn't have to without giving a reason.

URRY: But what were the security arrangements for these pistols once they reached Iraq? They left the UK in July 2004, but we've seen a verification certificate for them which says they weren't delivered and accepted by the authorities in Iraq until "April 18th 2005 or earlier." That suggests they fell into an administrative black hole for up to nine months. It was during that time that American secret services began to report concerns that some had been found in possession of insurgents. Editor Gianluca DiFeo says that's now become the main question, because the pistols have been turning up in areas nowhere near those in which Italian troops carrying Berettas have been stationed. Have you been able to establish how these guns found their way into the hands of the insurgents?

DIFEO: People from the Iraqi police sell weapons to insurgency and many times they sell ... many times they have been stolen. Especially, according to our information, during the big Shi'ite insurgency, in summer 2004 there have been many weapons stock from the CPA authority has been stolen.

URRY: And so it's the Italian police issued guns that have found their way into the insurgents' hands, is it?

DIFEO: Yes, and if you think the amount that 31 Italian troops are killed in Iraq, about 25 were coming from the Italian military police, the so-called Carabinieri, and so it is something that made the family of the victims be very angry, because they lose husbands and sons to give over to Iraq and they discover that people fighting towards international troops were hammered with weapons coming from the police.

URRY: In a Statement the Foreign Office told us they assess all export licences rigorously, including taking into account the conditions in the destination country and the risk of diversion to an undesirable end use. The statement said staff in Baghdad found no firm evidence to support the concern about the weapons falling into the wrong hands. But magistrates in Italy have confirmed to File on 4 that Berettas were recovered from hostile forces with serial numbers which matched part of the consignment of 20,000 which was flown from Italy, via the UK, to Baghdad. Much of this is of little surprise to Amnesty International's arms controls expert, Brian Wood, who says weapons are being send to a country where auditing is questionable and corruption is rife.

WOOD: The problem in Iraq has been the collapse of the government and the formation of a new transitional government with an Iraqi MOD, which had hundreds of millions of US dollars thrown at it without an ability to control and account for the spending of that money on arms, so examples abound of equipment that was supposed to be bought that cannot be found. Transfers of money that are questioned, the United States government sending out auditors to try and find what happened. There is a lot of corruption and there are also middlemen wheeling and dealing with the Iraqi MODs, so if consignments are going in and they're not very strictly tracked, there is a

WOOD cont: danger that they're going to go missing or might go onto onward shipments, and that's really what we're asking the authorities to button down and to provide evidence for each of the consignments.

URRY: It's not unusual, is it, for the military to be confused about its own stock-taking processes though. A lot of this is just the sort of chaos that you would usually expect to have in a country as unstable as Iraq.

WOOD: Well, that would appear so at one level, but there might be other clients that are waiting to receive arms or are receiving them. Arms should not be given to anyone where there's a likelihood that they are going to use them for violations of the Geneva Conventions or the International Human Rights Treaties, and certainly that's happening in Iraq.

URRY: We wanted to question Dr Kim Howells, the Foreign Office Minister, about the Beretta shipment, but he refused. According to the chairman of the Quadripartite Committee, the Parliamentary body which oversees arms exports, when MPs have asked him questions, he's not told them much either. Labour's Roger Berry says he's not happy with the answers he's had so far.

BERRY: I wasn't satisfied with the response to our questions at the public evidence session. That's why I'm pursuing the matter further with the Foreign Office. I would feel much happier, and I'm sure that most people would feel much happier if the government indicated very specifically that in Iraq there was a clear monitoring of the use of the weapons that have been exported from the UK. Now at present we haven't yet had from government a clear explanation about the nature of monitoring that takes place in Iraq.

URRY: Why the lack of clarity from the government, do you think?

BERRY: I don't know. All I can say is, it is a matter that we need to pursue and it's a matter that we are taking up. I mean, the assurance we were given was that everything was under control and so on and so forth, but I want to see the evidence that that is in fact the case, obviously.

URRY: You see, there are those we've spoken to also who say, well, in the end this is an irrelevance because Iraq is so awash with weapons that if some leak out into the hands of insurgents, well it makes very little difference anyway, because they've got all the weapons they need.

BERRY: I don't think that people in the UK would want the UK government to agree to export licences that would result effectively in weapons going through the Iraqi police, into the hands of insurgents and then being used to kill UK soldiers. The question I want to ask is, what measures the UK government has or has not taken in relation to the allegation that weapons have been diverted from the Iraqi police to insurgents. That for me is the number one question.

URRY: Now File on 4 has uncovered evidence that weapons supposed to be for Iraq's armed forces have moved beyond the country's borders and been used to kill elsewhere.

ACTUALITY IN VIENNA

URRY: In Vienna, Austria's cultured capital city, tourists are riding in horse-drawn carriages past the Parliament buildings behind me, where a member of the country's National Security Council has been asking awkward questions, trying to find out more about another US-backed procurement deal to supply the Iraqi authorities with Austrian-made Glock pistols. Dr Peter Pilz, the security spokesman for the Green Party, has been an MP for twenty years. He says one of the guns was used in a sectarian murder in Turkey.

PILZ: There was a case of an Italian priest, name of Andreas Santoro, who was shot in the Turkish city of Trabazon this year by a 16 year old Turk with a Glock pistol. And I was informed by our Ministry of Interior that the serial number of this Glock makes it a Glock which was exported to Iraq and was part of a shipment of 211,980 Glock pistols to Baghdad.

URRY: Dr Pilz says he's worried about further leakage following the discovery of two other caches of pistols seized by the Turks.

PILZ: I found at least two major cases of Glocks having been smuggled into Turkey from Iraq. Turkish police found 44 illegal guns and 34 out of them were from the company Glock. The second case were 28 Glock pistols having been imported illegally into Turkey - that's a report from newspapers. Our Ministry of Interior is informed about that, they say they consider those informations as reliable and they have informations from Turkish police too, but there's no official investigation going on, because there is no criminal case.

URRY: But you don't know whether those Glocks that have been reported as turning up in Turkey are the ones from the Iraqi consignment that concerned you?

PILZ: No, they are supposed to be, but I hope this is going to be checked by our Ministry of Interior, but it hasn't been checked yet. I think it's very likely, and if you know the border between Northern Iraq, which is Kurdish Iraq, and Turkey, you know it's very easy to cross that border because it never can be controlled completely by the Turkish military, so there's a lot of smuggling going on.

URRY: And that's what worries Rachel Stohl, senior analyst at the Centre for Defence Information in Washington. She says there are early warning signs of a black market trade in weapons from Iraq to other countries in the region, further destabilising the Middle East and she fears Coalition guns are adding to that.

STOHL: When we're talking about either two thousand weapons or twenty thousand weapons, whether they're Berettas or AK47s, moving from the security forces into the civilian population, even a very small number can have a very destabilising effect. And maybe people from neighbouring countries are going to come in and purchase weapons, or maybe those weapons are going to be sent out of the country and go to other areas in the region, and that region is not particularly stable. Very close by you have Israel and Palestine, also having tremendous difficulty with surplus small arms and light weapons in those countries, you have those weapons. Once they're out of Iraq can easily flow to other conflict zones around the region, so it may not just affect the individuals and the situation in Iraq, but it can then leak out and spread across the world.

URRY: But is there evidence that Iraq itself has effectively become a stockpile for the Middle East then?

STOHL: I think we're starting to see some anecdotes where weapons are moving between Iraq and Iran and through the Kurdish areas as well. I think only time will tell. It's very difficult to track these things in the short term. It's usually, you know, much further down the road.

URRY: By that time it's too late?

STOHL: Exactly.

URRY: File on 4 wanted to interview the United States Department of Defence, The US Army, the military procurement company TAOS Industries of Alabama, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, the weapons manufacturers Beretta and Glock, the UK dealership York Guns Limited, and the Foreign Office Minister, Dr Kim Howells. None was prepared to take part in this programme.

SIGNATURE TUNE