Dear seminar participants,

Allow me first of all to say good afternoon to all the participants of the seminar on behalf of the main Board of Interior of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad region, and also thank all the organizers of this seminar for the invitation.

During the last years, criminality in the Russian Federation has passed through certain qualitative and quantitative changes. And one of the reasons of the criminal situation worsening is the illicit firearms turnover growth. Contract murders are widely spread many of them are connected with the criminal communities fight, while dividing the legal enrichment channels and fixing the influence spheres. The single terrorist acts are replaced by professional terrorism. The horrible events in Russia during the last two years, and in the United States of America on the 11th of September are the obvious sad examples. Because of the high demand satisfied with the help of the illicit input, and homemade production, the underground weapons business continues to develop.

Saint Petersburg is a megapolis with a developed economy, one of the political centers of Russia. That’s why it attracts the attention not only of investors and tourists but that of the criminal structures of different specification. Industry development, investments including foreign investments growth. The big amount of financial institutions. All these evoke serious attention from organized crime groups. Organized crime groups which deal with money laundering, illegal drugs, and weapon turnover, the preparation and commission of terrorist acts. Given the analysis of the criminal situation in Saint Petersburg, one should mark that this year in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad region, 251 crimes with the application of small arms are registered. 53 of them are murders committed with firearms. In 52 cases the criminals used cold weapons. The statistics on crime commission type shows the growth of the number of murders committed with the usage of household knives. 468 men, 169 women and 12 minors became the murderers’ victims. Most of the victims belonged to the socially unprotected society levels. The majority of intentional murders are committed in the private apartments. Around 20% in public places, the same percentage on the streets. The reasons for most of the cases are domestic conflicts. A little bit less murders are registered based on hooligan and mercenary motives. Out of the 16 registered with so-called “contract typing” this year, the firearms were used in 15 cases. In 95 cases of robberies, the same kind of weapon was used. This year the number of cases causing grave bodily injuries as a result of
firearms usage increased by 30%. In 75 cases, grave harm was caused by the usage of cold weapons. So the problem of illegal firearms and ammunition turnover fighting is still urgent. 1384 criminal cases were initiated for the illicit weapons keeping and wearing during the 8 months of this year. The high armament level is one of the main reasons of the crime situation worsening in Saint Petersburg and Russia in general. During the last 8 months, 498 firearms units and 154 gas weapons units were withdrawn from the illegal turnover in our region. According to the forensic department statistics of the main Board of Interior of the Saint Petersburg and region, 238 firearms units underwent expert examination this year. 25 out of which were seized at the places of murder and assassination. The analysis of the weapons under examination show the biggest amount is the shotgun type, pistols, and revolvers. Most of them are Brown and Walter factory produced models. And also handmade, re-made, national and foreign gas weapons models.

At the present time, the legal basis of the weapon turnover in Russia is the act which entered into legal force the 1st of July 1997, called “Federal Weapons Act.” This legal document does not legalize the armament of citizens, but regulates the legal relationship in the process of civil, professional, and also cold weapon, hand-weapon turnover on the territory of the Russian Federation. The aim of the act is the defense of life and health of citizens of the property, also providing the public security, nature, and natural resources protection. While looking at this act, the foreign countries experience was taken into account, where weapons tracing systems is thoroughly thought through, and what is even more important is not opposing the citizens’ interests. On this basis, the license granting order on storage and carrying of weapons is now better regulated and simplified. On the legal basis, one can purchase without licensing or registration, electroshocking weapons for self-defense purposes, which should correspond to all the regulations. But these regulations can be applied for the combat weapons. That excludes its coming to the civil, professional sphere, private security agencies and security services. More detailed other restrictions for juridical persons who have the trading license for civil and professional weapons. For example, they are forbidden to keep in the same trading hall weapons and other items, excluding sports, hunting, and fishing goods and spare weapons parts. Of importance is the fact that the additional restrictions for the weapons turnover are fixed. For example civilians are forbidden to carry the longbow firearms for self-defense purposes, excluding its transportation.

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…out of the apartment, because the permission is only for possessing, not for wearing. According to the new act, the citizens have the right for their weapons application only for the life and property defense purposes. In the legal acts of the ministry of the interior, Russian Federation, the weapons turnover control regulations are strengthened. In particular the citizens are obliged to pass the examination on the rules for safe handling of firearms at their local administrations. Also the law enforcement agencies are obliged to
organized the annual control of the non-combat weapons possessors according to their residence place, and the heads of district law enforcement agencies to check the weapons stores every three months.

The regulations for the weapons storage places are made more strict. Both administrative and criminal responsibility is provided for violations of the turnover regulations in the acting legislation of the Russian Federation. At present time in St. Petersburg law enforcement system are registered 562 juridical persons using in their activity, 12,406 weapons units, and 175,226 physical persons possessing around 200,000 weapons units. In connection with the fact that the demand for weapons turnover has been made stricter, one can notify the decreasing tendency of the number of crimes committed with the usage of such weapons. Recently in mass media, by different political organizations and certain citizens there was the question raised about free weapons turnover. In my opinion if such free turnover is allowed, it will be a threat to national security because weapons then will be purchased not only by the law-abiding citizens for their interest defense purposes, but in the first turn the weapons will be easily got into hands of people with the crime commission tendency. Moreover, one should take into account the special branch of psychology – the psychology of the weapons usage. People owning the weapons are more often tending to have the persecution mania. And not every person is capable of using the weapons finding himself in an extreme situation. For example when there is a real threat for his life or health. As a result, his weapons can pass into the hands of criminals and the consequences will be unpredictable. In conclusion, I’d like to mark that in spite of the rich experience of the national law enforcement agencies in their struggle against illegal weapons turnover, and in the investigation of crimes commission. But with the growing danger for the whole mankind of the crime becoming international, all our countries should launch to have more close and fruitful cooperation in the sphere of legal support. And I’d like to wish further success of the participants of the seminar in their work. Thank you.