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Interaction of the National Police with other subjects of countering illegal arms trafficking committed by organised groups and criminal organisations

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■ **Abstract.** The relevance of the study is conditioned by the serious threat of illegal arms trafficking carried out by organised groups and criminal organisations to public and national security under martial law and the need for coordinated interdepartmental and international counteraction to this phenomenon. The purpose of the study was to analyse the specifics of interaction between the National Police of Ukraine and other subjects of the fight against illegal arms trafficking and identify ways to improve the effectiveness of such cooperation. The methodological basis was system, formal legal, generalising, logical and analytical, and system and structural methods. The study determined the place of the National Police of Ukraine in the system of subjects of preventing illegal arms trafficking and characterised the main forms of cooperation with other bodies. It was established that information exchange, coordination of joint events, analytical activities, and international cooperation are of key importance. Problems related to insufficient coordination, imperfect information support, certain gaps in legal regulation, and resource restrictions were identified. The results of the study showed that countering illegal arms trafficking requires not only effective activities of the National Police, but also a properly organised system of interaction with other competent authorities. An important factor in improving the effectiveness of such cooperation was the creation of a coordinated mechanism for information exchange, rapid response, and coordination of actions between all participants in the counteraction. The generalisation of certain international practices indicates the expediency of further development of international partnership, in particular through joint operations, information exchange, and cooperation with law enforcement agencies of other countries. The practical significance of the results lies in the possibility of using them to improve legislation, organise interaction between law enforcement agencies, and increase the effectiveness of preventing illegal arms trafficking

■ **Keywords**: interdepartmental interaction; coordination of activities; law enforcement; information and analytical support; criminal proceedings; martial law; public security

■ Introduction

Illegal arms trafficking poses a serious threat to public and national security. Under martial law, the risks of illegal storage, transportation and use of firearms increase significantly, and the firearms themselves can fall into organised criminal groups. This contributes to the commission of serious crimes, worsens the criminal situation, and increases organised crime. The fight against illegal arms trafficking requires joint actions of various state bodies. The main role in this activity is played by the National Police of Ukraine, which detects, stops and investigates such offences. Effective prevention of organised forms of crime is

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possible only through close cooperation between the police and the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU), the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGS), the State Customs Service of Ukraine (SCS), prosecution authorities, the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), the National Guard of Ukraine, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). Despite the existence of a legislative framework, in practice there are still problems of coordinating work, exchanging information, allocating powers, and holding joint events. Therefore, it is important to further improve interaction between all subjects of countering illegal arms trafficking and search for effective mechanisms to prevent this threat considering challenges and international experience. The problem of combating illegal arms trafficking remains one of the most relevant areas of contemporary criminal law and criminological research, especially in the context of martial law and the activation of organised criminal groups.

S.V. Albul & I.P. Katerynchuk (2025) investigated the analysis of the scale of illegal arms trafficking in Ukraine under martial law, and the assessment of trends in the growth of such offences based on official statistics. The main focus was on the importance of effective interaction and coordination of law enforcement agencies, and the role of the Coordination Centre in improving the effectiveness of countering illegal arms trafficking. The monograph by M.H. Shcherbakovskyi & D.V. Andreyev (2021) comprehensively investigated the problems of countering illegal arms trafficking in Ukraine, revealed its legal, scientific, organisational and tactical aspects. In addition, the concepts of "firearms" and "illegal arms trafficking" have been clarified, a methodology for investigating relevant criminal offences has been formed, features of forensic characteristics, planning of investigation and conducting investigative (search) actions have been identified. L.M. Dorofeieva (2024) considered that Ukraine still lacks a clear legislative definition of the system of law enforcement agencies and proper legal regulation of their interaction, which makes it difficult to coordinate activities in countering smuggling and leads to duplication of powers. This is substantiated by the need to differentiate the competence of law enforcement and customs authorities, expand the law enforcement powers of the Customs Service, and make appropriate changes to the legislation to improve the effectiveness of the fight against smuggling.

Research by R.O. Yemelianov & S.V. Tatarenko (2025) was dedicated to defining the features, forms, and principles of such interaction in the process of solving and investigating crimes committed by organised groups, and the role of operational units, investigators, and prosecutors in ensuring effective documentation of criminal activities. O. Zinchuk (2026) noted that illegal arms trafficking under martial law has become one of the key threats to public security, as the activation of organised criminal groups and their use of the latest sales channels make it difficult to control the movement of firearms. The study focused on determining the role of the criminal police in countering illegal arms trafficking, in particular, through the improvement of operational search measures, interdepartmental, and international cooperation. According to I.I. Ishchenko (2023), the interaction of the National Police with other subjects of preventive activity is regulated by administrative and legal norms, coordinated and purposeful joint activities aimed at preventing offences and ensuring law and order. The study revealed the essence, types, and forms of such interaction, in particular, its classification by the number of subjects, directions, level, legal regime, and scope of application. V.V. Kovalev (2023), in turn, noted that the method of committing a criminal offence is a key element of the forensic characterisation of illegal handling of firearms, since it contains important information about the actions of the offender, traces left, and contributes to determining the course of investigation. The study revealed the main methods of illegal acquisition, storage, carrying, transfer, sale, manufacture and repair of firearms, and the specifics of their preparation and concealment, which is important for building investigative versions and effective pre-trial investigation.

V.V. Frankiv & M.O. Gelemei (2025) noted that effective counteraction to illegal trafficking of firearms related to the activities of organised groups and criminal organisations requires a comprehensive combination of organisational, legal, operational, and international mechanisms for interaction between law enforcement agencies. Improving the effectiveness of the National Police's activities is possible through the improvement of legislation, the introduction of modern technologies, the development of international cooperation, and the strengthening of preventive measures. Research by T.O. Markiv (2026) was devoted to the analysis of legal regulation of information and analytical support for the activities of the State Bureau of Investigation bodies in the field of countering organised crime and identifying the problems of the current regulatory framework. Special attention was paid to identifying the shortcomings of legal regulation, in particular, the lack of a unified approach to the organisation of information and analytical activities, the lack of regulation of interdepartmental information exchange, and the need to improve the legal mechanisms for using analytical materials in criminal proceedings. In turn, research by A.P. Mistiuk (2024) addressed the issue of combating illegal arms trafficking by organised groups and criminal organisations characterised by a high level of organisation, armament, secrecy, and the use of advanced concealment methods. Special attention

was paid to the role of the National Police of Ukraine in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies, improving information exchange, and applying analytical and operational search measures to effectively counter such crimes.

The foreign experience of using innovative technologies in countering illegal arms trafficking is also important. In particular, J. Cani *et al.* (2024) proved the feasibility of using artificial intelligence systems to analyse data from the darknet, social networks, cryptocurrency transactions, postal items, and international information databases. The proposed approach demonstrated that the integration of digital technologies into the activities of law enforcement agencies contributes to more effective detection, analysis, and suppression of illicit trafficking in firearms. The purpose of the study was to determine the role and place of interdepartmental interaction in the mechanism of countering illegal arms trafficking carried out by organised groups and criminal organisations, and to identify factors that affect its effectiveness.

■ Materials and Methods

The materials of the study were the provisions of laws and regulations of Ukraine and international documents that define the legal basis for countering illegal arms trafficking and regulate the powers of subjects of interaction with the National Police of Ukraine. As part of the study, the Constitution of Ukraine[1], Criminal Code of Ukraine[2], and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine[3] were analysed. Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII[4], Law of Ukraine No. 2229-XII[5] and Law of Ukraine No. 661-IV[6] were also considered. Customs Code of Ukraine[7], Law of Ukraine No. 1697-VII[8], Law of Ukraine No. 794-VIII[9] were analysed. In addition, the regulatory framework of the study included Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII[10], Law of Ukraine No. 1934-XII[11].

During the analysis of the aforementioned regulatory acts, provisions were examined that determine: the legal status and competence of the National Police of Ukraine and other actors within the security and law enforcement sector; the procedure for interaction between law enforcement agencies; powers to detect, document, and investigate criminal offences related to the illicit trafficking of arms; the specific features of procedural supervision and coordination of pre-trial investigation bodies; legal mechanisms for controlling the movement of arms across the state border; and international standards for combating the illicit trafficking of firearms. Part 1 of Article 263 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine[12] concerning liability for the unlawful handling of arms was examined separately, as were the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine concerning the organisation of pre-trial investigations and procedural supervision, and the provisions of special laws defining the powers of the SSU, SBGS, SCS, prosecution service, SBI, National Guard, and AFU in the field of combating illegal arms trafficking. International documents such as Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 258/2012[13]were also used, defining the legal mechanisms for controlling the international movement of firearms, their parts and ammunition, and the provisions of international practices of cooperation between law enforcement agencies within the framework of Europol and Interpol's activities to counteract illegal arms trafficking.

The methodological basis of the study was general scientific and special legal methods. To determine the theoretical foundations of the problem, a dialectical method was used, which allowed us to consider the illegal circulation of firearms as a complex socio-legal phenomenon that changes under the influence of martial law, organised crime and new

[1] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[2] Criminal Code of Ukraine. (2001, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text.
[3] Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine. (2012, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4651-17#Text.
[4] Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII "On the National Police". (2015, July). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/580-19#Text.
[5] Law of Ukraine No. 2229-XII "On the Security Service of Ukraine". (1992, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2229-12#Text.
[6] Law of Ukraine No. 661-IV "On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine". (2003, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/661-15#Text.
[7] Customs Code of Ukraine. (2012, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4495-17#Text
[8] Law of Ukraine No. 1697-VII "On the Prosecutor's Office". (2014, October). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1697-18#Text.
[9] Law of Ukraine No. 794-VIII "On the State Bureau of Investigation". (2015, November). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/794-19#Text.
[10] Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII "On the National Guard of Ukraine". (2014, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/876-18#Text.
[11] Law of Ukraine No. 1934-XII "On the Armed Forces of Ukraine". (1991, December). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1934-12#Text.
[12] Criminal Code of Ukraine. (2001, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text.
[13] Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 258/2012 "On the Implementation of Article 10 of the United Nations Protocol Against the Illegal Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (the UN Firearms Protocol), and on the Establishment of Export Authorisations and Measures Concerning the Import and Transit of Firearms, Their Parts and Components, and Ammunition Therefor". (2012, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_005-12/ed20120314#n61.

methods of illegal supply of firearms. The formal legal method was used to analyse the legal regulation of the activities of the National Police of Ukraine and other bodies in the field of countering illegal arms trafficking. It allowed investigating the main laws and regulations defining the powers of these bodies and the procedure for their interaction. This method also helped to identify the shortcomings of the legislation and the problems of dividing competence between the subjects of combating illegal arms trafficking.

The system and structural method was used to analyse the subjects of countering illegal arms trafficking and determine the role of the National Police of Ukraine in this system. It allowed considering law enforcement, military, and regulatory bodies as a single system, determining their powers and areas of interaction. The main ones are information exchange, coordination of joint activities, operational work, analytics, and international cooperation. The method was applied in studying the activities of the National Police, SSU, SBGS, SCS, prosecution service, SBI, National Guard, and AFU. The generalisation was used to systematise certain international practices of countering illegal arms trafficking, in particular, regarding information exchange, joint events, and international cooperation of law enforcement agencies. Its application allowed identifying separate approaches that can be considered in the further improvement of interdepartmental cooperation in Ukraine. At the final stage of the study, using the logical and analytical method, the results were summarised and the main problems in the interaction of subjects of countering illegal arms trafficking were identified.

Results and Discussion

The concept of illegal arms trafficking in legal science is considered as a set of illegal actions related to the manufacture, acquisition, storage, carrying, transportation, shipment, transfer, sale, repair, processing, movement across the state border, and other operations with firearms, ammunition, explosives, or explosive devices carried out in violation of the requirements of the legislation. It is one of the most dangerous forms of criminal activity, as it creates conditions for the commission of violent crimes, terrorist acts, activities of organised criminal groups, and other encroachments on public safety. Illegal arms trafficking covers a set of illegal actions that, depending on the degree of public danger, may violate both administrative and criminal prohibitions. There are two main types: the first includes acts that entail administrative responsibility and are related to violation of the established rules for the circulation of firearms; the second covers socially dangerous actions provided for by criminal legislation, for which criminal liability occurs (Andreyev, 2017). Thus, illegal arms trafficking is a complex phenomenon, the structure of which consists of administrative offences and criminal offences, which together form a single system of illegal arms trafficking.

Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 258/2012[1], Illicit Trafficking in firearms is understood as the import, export, sale, delivery, movement or transfer of firearms, their components, principal components, and ammunition between member states of the European Union and third countries in violation of established legal requirements. Such trafficking is considered illegal in cases where there is no appropriate permission from the competent authority to carry out these operations, and in the absence of the marking of firearms provided for by law, which helps to properly identify and control their movement. Thus, in the international legal sense, illegal arms trafficking covers any operations on their cross-border movement that are carried out outside the established system of state control, licensing procedures, and requirements for marking firearms and ammunition.

Discussions continue on the content of the concepts of "illegal handling of firearms" and "without a legal permit", which are used in Part 1 of Article 263 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine[2]. The basis for such discussions is that the disposition of this norm is of a blank nature, that is, to find out its content, it is necessary to refer to other laws and regulations. The legal literature expresses the position that the lack of a legislative definition of these concepts complicates their unambiguous interpretation and practical application. Such a legislative structure does not fully meet the requirements of legal certainty and quality of criminal law, since it does not provide a clear understanding of the features of a criminally punishable act (Benitskyi, 2024).

The National Police of Ukraine is the main body that directly counteracts illegal arms trafficking. It identifies, stops, and investigates criminal offences related to the illegal manufacture, acquisition, storage, transportation, sale, and use of firearms. Criminal police units, investigative and operational services identify individuals and groups engaged in illegal arms trafficking, withdraw them from circulation, and carry out preventive measures to prevent such

[1] Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 258/2012 "On the Implementation of Article 10 of the United Nations Protocol Against the Illegal Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (the UN Firearms Protocol), and on the Establishment of Export Authorisations and Measures Concerning the Import and Transit of Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition Therefor". (2012, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_005-12/ed20120314#n61.
[2] Criminal Code of Ukraine. (2001, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text

offences. The police also monitor the legal circulation of firearms through the Unified Register of Firearms, which ensures their accounting and monitoring. Special attention is paid to identifying channels for the supply of firearms, in particular, those related to the activities of organised criminal groups and international criminal networks. It plays a leading role in ensuring public safety and combating illegal arms trafficking in Ukraine. Creation of an electronic cabinet is one of the opportunities provided for in the Unified Register of Firearms. As a result, citizens of Ukraine will be able to apply for the necessary services remotely, without personally contacting the National Police units, by submitting documents through the Unified Window (n.d.) or directly in the store that sells firearms.

The leading role of the National Police of Ukraine is exercised in close cooperation with other actors within the security and law enforcement sector. The effectiveness of detecting, suppressing, and investigating crimes related to illegal arms trafficking largely depends on the level of coordination between law enforcement, military, and regulatory authorities. The main actors interacting with the National Police include the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (MIA), SSU, SBGS, SCS, the Office of the Prosecutor General (OPG), SBI, the National Guard of Ukraine, and the AFU. Each of these bodies has its own powers and performs specific tasks, but their joint activities are aimed at achieving a single goal – preventing illegal arms trafficking, blocking its supply channels, identifying organised criminal groups, and ensuring an appropriate level of public and state security. In this regard, it is advisable to analyse in detail the role and features of interaction between each of these entities and the National Police of Ukraine in the field under study: the MIA is a key subject in countering illegal arms trafficking. It provides general coordination of the activities of law enforcement agencies, in particular the National Police, the National Guard, and the State Border Guard Service, which jointly identify, prevent, and stop firearm-related crimes. The activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are based on the norms of the current legislation of Ukraine, in particular, the Constitution of Ukraine[1], Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII[2], and the Criminal Code of Ukraine[3]. Within the limits of its powers, the Ministry forms the main areas of state policy, organises interaction between law enforcement agencies, and monitors compliance with the rules of arms trafficking. The main activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine to counteract illegal arms trafficking cover a set of interrelated measures, which are systematised and shown in Figure 1.

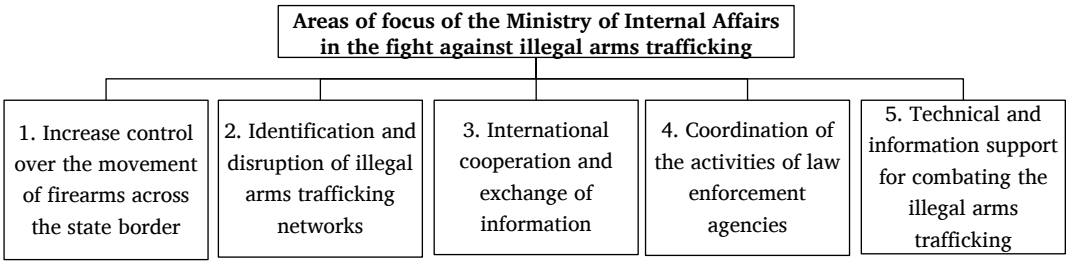


Figure 1. Main activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to counteract illegal arms trafficking
Source: developed by the author based on A. Tkach (2025), Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2025), Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2026)

The practical implementation of these areas allows the Ministry of Internal Affairs to increase the effectiveness of responding to threats related to illegal arms trafficking, and ensure more coordinated work of all involved structures. The SSU acts as one of the key actors in preventing illegal arms trafficking, especially in cases where such offences are associated with organised criminal groups or structures that pose a threat to state security. Within its competence, the SSU identifies channels for illegal supply of firearms, identifies persons involved in their sale or use, and documents their illegal activities. Its activities in this area are based on the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine[4], Law of Ukraine No. 2229-XII[5], and the Criminal Code of Ukraine[6].

[1] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[2] Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII "On the National Police". (2015, July). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/580-19#Text.
[3] Criminal Code of Ukraine. (2001, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text.
[4] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[5] Law of Ukraine No. 2229-XII "On the Security Service of Ukraine". (1992, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2229-12#Text.
[6] Criminal Code of Ukraine. (2001, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text.

The main areas of work of the SSU include: legal support: activities based on the Constitution of Ukraine and relevant legislation; detection of threats: establishing channels for illegal supply of firearms and persons involved; interdepartmental interaction: cooperation with the National Police and other law enforcement agencies, exchange of operational information; operational activities: participation in investigations, special operations, and detentions of participants in illegal arms trafficking; counterintelligence direction: combating the use of firearms by foreign special services, terrorist and other threatening structures, blocking the channels of its movement across the border; operational and preventive work: application of secret measures, surveillance, collection of evidence, and prevention of crimes.

The SBGS is a body that prevents illegal arms trafficking, primarily in terms of their unauthorised movement across the state border. Its main tasks are to protect the border and control the movement of firearms, ammunition, and explosives. Under martial law, this activity becomes particularly important, since firearms directly threaten national security and public order. The activity of the state border service is based on the Law of Ukraine No. 661-IV[1]. Effective prevention requires close cooperation between the SBGS and the National Police, which is carried out based on the legislation of Ukraine and includes various forms of cooperation. For clarity, the main areas of their interaction in the field of preventing illegal arms trafficking are shown in Figure 2.

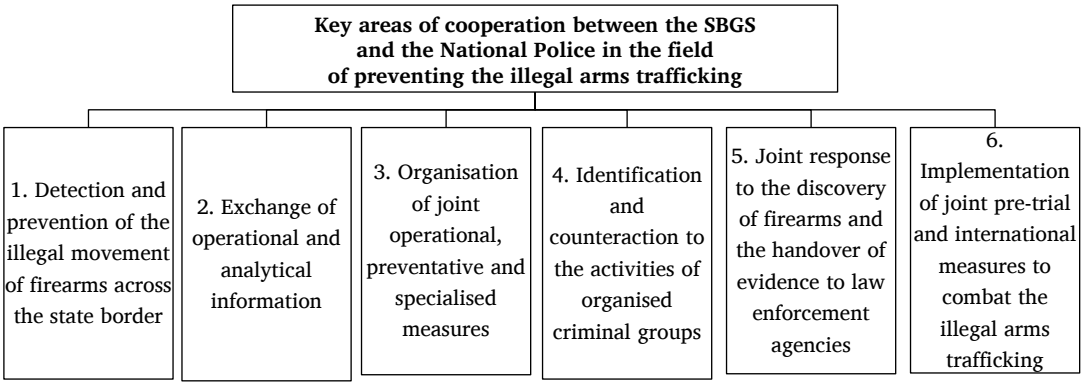


Figure 2. Main areas of interaction of the SBGS of Ukraine with the National Police and other law enforcement agencies
Source: developed by the author based on the Law of Ukraine No. 661-IV[2], K.H. Nabilska (2025)

One of the key forms of cooperation is information exchange on individuals, transportation routes, and possible smuggling channels, which makes allows identifying threats and preventing crimes in a timely manner. Joint analytical work aimed at assessing risks and identifying organised criminal groups also plays an important role. As part of operational cooperation, border guards, and police officers conduct joint activities to identify firearms supply channels, document illegal activities and collect evidence. In case of receiving operational information, special operations are organised to check vehicles and cargo, detain offenders, and seize illegal firearms. Preventive measures include joint patrolling of border areas, increased control at checkpoints, and constant monitoring of the situation, which generally reduces the risks of illegal arms trafficking and complicates the activities of criminal groups.

The SBGS plays a key role in the fight against illegal arms trafficking, because it controls the movement of goods across the state border. Its main task is to identify and prevent the import or export of firearms, ammunition, and their components. It is the customs authorities that are often the first to record attempts to smuggle firearms that can be organised by criminal groups. The activity of the Customs Service is based on the Constitution of Ukraine[3] and Customs Code of Ukraine[4]. Within the limits of its competence, it provides interaction with the National Police and other law enforcement agencies, transferring information about detected offences to them for further investigation. International cooperation with the customs authorities of other states is important. In order to summarise the main areas of cooperation between the Customs Service and the National Police in countering illegal arms trafficking, they are systematised and presented in Figure 3.

[1] Law of Ukraine No. 661-IV "On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine". (2003, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/661-15#Text.
[2] Ibidem, 2003.
[3] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[4] Customs Code of Ukraine. (2012, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4495-17#Text.

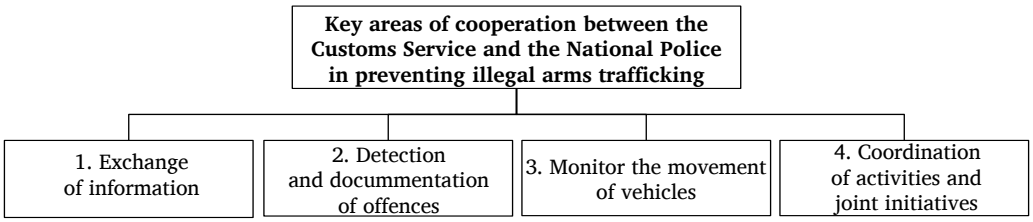


Figure 3. Main areas of interaction between the Customs Service and the National Police
Source: developed by the author based on O.O. Krytenko & V.H. Kovalov (2025)

To increase the effectiveness of preventing illegal arms trafficking, the Customs Service and the police use risk analysis, innovative information systems and databases, which allows identifying suspicious traffic and connections between participants in criminal schemes. In general, the effectiveness of these activities largely depends on constant interagency and international interaction. The Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine is the central prosecution authority that ensures compliance with the rule of law in the investigation of crimes. Its special role is shown in cases committed by organised groups, as it coordinates the activities of law enforcement agencies and monitors the progress of pre-trial investigations. The Prosecutor General's activity is based on the Constitution of Ukraine [1], the Law of Ukraine No. 1697-VII[2], and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine[3]. Within the limits of their powers, prosecutors: carry out procedural management of pre-trial investigations; control the legality of investigators' actions; coordinate key procedural decisions; support the state prosecution in court.

In the field of countering illegal arms trafficking, prosecutors work closely with the National Police. They oversee the legality of investigative actions, approve notices of suspicion, and ensure the rights of participants in criminal proceedings are respected, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of criminal investigations, particularly those involving organised criminal groups. An important area is the coordination of law enforcement activities, which is implemented through: holding joint meetings; creating working groups; coordinating joint action plans. After the pre-trial investigation is completed, prosecutors present the charges in court, prove the guilt of those involved in illegal handling of firearms, and ensure the proper use of evidence. The Prosecutor General also cooperates with international law enforcement organisations, in particular with Interpol, which facilitates the search for suspects, obtaining evidence from abroad, and preventing international channels of illegal supply of firearms through the exchange of information, the creation of joint investigative teams, and the use of advanced electronic systems.

The State Bureau of Investigation is a law enforcement agency that investigates serious crimes committed by law enforcement officers, military personnel, officials, and other employees. In the field of countering illegal arms trafficking, the State Bureau of Investigation focuses primarily on cases related to corruption, abuse of office, and the activities of organised criminal groups, including those that may be related to state structures. The Bureau's activities are based on the Law of Ukraine No. 794-VIII[4]. Interaction between the State Bureau of Investigation and the National Police is carried out in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine and is aimed at improving the effectiveness of detecting and investigating crimes related to illegal arms trafficking. Considering the provisions of the current legislation, the main areas of interaction between the State Bureau of Investigation and the National Police in detecting and investigating crimes related to illegal arms trafficking are summarised in Figure 4. The creation of joint investigation teams, workshops, exchange of analytical materials, and coordination of investigations are also important forms of interaction. This helps to quickly identify channels of unauthorised supply of firearms and effectively stop their activities. A separate area of cooperation is preventive work, which is aimed at preventing firearms from entering illegal circulation. In this context, the following activities are carried out: analysis of the causes of firearms leakage from storage facilities; identification of gaps in the control system; development of proposals for improving legislation. The National Police of Ukraine also cooperates with the National Guard of Ukraine and the AFU in the field of preventing illegal arms trafficking organised by criminal groups. Such cooperation

[1] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[2] Law of Ukraine No. 1697-VII "On the Prosecutor's Office". (2014, October). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1697-18#Text.
[3] Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine. (2012, April). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4651-17#Text.
[4] Law of Ukraine No. 794-VIII "On the State Bureau of Investigation". (2015, November). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/794-19#Text.

is based on the Constitution of Ukraine[1] and the Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII[2], Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII[3], and Law of Ukraine No. 1934-XII[4], which determine the powers of each body and the mechanisms of their interaction. The analysis of the powers and practical activities of the relevant entities allows systematising the main areas of their participation in countering illegal arms trafficking, which is shown in Table 1.

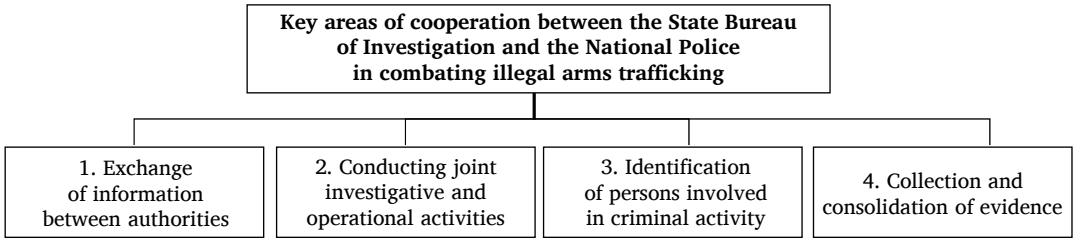


Figure 4. Forms of cooperation between the State Bureau of Investigation and the National Police in the field of countering illegal arms trafficking
Source: developed by the author based on A.M. Babenko *et al.* (2023)

Table 1. Areas of participation of bodies in countering illegal arms trafficking

Organisation	Key areas of participation
National Guard of Ukraine (NGU)	▪ participation in special operations to detain armed criminals; ▪ patrolling territories and blocking areas; ▪ forceful support for law enforcement activities; ▪ exchange of information on illicit trafficking, possession, and movement of firearms
Joint activities of the National Police and NGU	▪ planning and coordinating operations through headquarters; ▪ coordination of tactical actions for rapid response; ▪ increased interaction under martial law due to increased risks of illegal arms trafficking
Armed Forces of Ukraine	▪ detection of firearms supply channels; ▪ countering sabotage groups; ▪ ensuring security in dangerous regions, especially under martial law

Source: developed by the author based on the Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII5, Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine No.773[6], Law of Ukraine No. 389-VIII[7]

The system of combating illegal arms trafficking in Ukraine is complex and includes many bodies, in particular, the National Police, the SSU, the SBGS, and the Prosecutor's Office. Its effectiveness depends on how well these bodies coordinate their actions, but in practice such interaction often works with difficulties (Babenko *et al.*, 2023). First of all, there is poor coordination between departments: sometimes bodies duplicate work or, conversely, do not cover individual areas. Because of this, important information is lost, and the investigation of crimes committed by organised groups slows down and becomes more complex. Another problem is the imperfect exchange of information. Although there are formal mechanisms, data is not always transmitted quickly, and the systems of different organs are poorly connected to each other. This is especially difficult in cases where criminals act covertly and have international connections. The legislative and organisational regulation of interaction remains insufficiently clear. It is not always evident who exactly is responsible for what during joint operations. This can cause delays or disputes between bodies (Buhaichuk, 2024). Problems also arise from the lack of unified leadership, insufficient planning, and inconsistent actions of various services during joint operations. In

[1] Constitution of Ukraine. (1996, June). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text.
[2] Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII "On the National Police". (2015, July). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/580-19#Text.
[3] Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII "On the National Guard of Ukraine". (2014, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/876-18#Text.
[4] Law of Ukraine No. 1934-XII "On the Armed Forces of Ukraine". (1991, December). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1934-12#Text.
[5] Law of Ukraine No. 876-VII "On the National Guard of Ukraine". (2014, March). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/876-18#Text.
[6] Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine No. 773 "On Approval of the Procedure for Organizing Interaction Between the National Guard of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine During Ensuring (Protecting) Public Safety and Order". (2016, August). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1223-16.
[7] Law of Ukraine No. 389-VIII "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law". (2015, May). Retrieved from https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/389-19#Text.

addition, individual units do not have sufficient technical support, analytical capabilities, and an adequate level of training of employees, which negatively affects the effectiveness of investigating complex schemes of illegal arms trafficking, especially those of an international nature.

The analysis showed that the effectiveness of countering illegal arms trafficking depends on the coordination of actions of the National Police and other actors in the security sector. The main challenges remain lack of coordination, untimely exchange of information, unclear distribution of tasks and responsibilities, insufficient joint planning, and uneven resource provision. This makes it difficult to identify, document, and investigate the activities of organised criminal groups, especially with the use of digital channels and international connections. The results of the study identified areas for improving interdepartmental interaction: clearer definition of powers, and procedures for joint actions, integration of information systems, and ensuring rapid data exchange. It is also important to increase the use of digital technologies, analytical platforms, and shared databases to identify links between participants in criminal schemes, routes of movement of firearms, and new channels of their illegal supply.

Foreign experience shows that the most effective way to prevent illegal arms trafficking is when different services work together and exchange information. In the EU countries, Europol plays an important role in this, helping the police investigate crimes, find criminal groups and coordinate their elimination. In Europe, joint police operations are often carried out in several countries at once. During such operations, the services exchange information in real time and together block the channels of arms smuggling across borders. This helps to quickly expose criminal networks operating in multiple states (Europol, 2020). An important role is also played by Interpol (n.d.), that maintains international databases on stolen or illegal firearms and helps to track their movement between countries. This allows quickly finding firearms and linking crimes committed in different countries. In addition, countries actively cooperate constantly, and not just during individual operations. They create joint communication channels, exchange experience, and conduct training for police officers. This makes the work more coordinated and increases the effectiveness of gun control. In the case of Benjamin James Kans, it was established that he sold firearms to foreign buyers via the darknet, using Bitcoin to pay for and conceal financial transactions. After his arrest, he began to cooperate with the investigation and provided information about his clients. This helped law enforcement officers to detain 15 people and seize 27 illegal firearms, grenades, and improvised explosive devices. Kans subsequently pleaded guilty to illegal international arms trafficking and money laundering. The court sentenced him to four years in prison, two years of probation and a fine of USD 3,000. The charge of illegal possession of a machine gun was dropped due to his cooperation with the investigation under a plea agreement (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016).

Successful counteraction to illegal arms trafficking largely depends on the well-coordinated interaction of law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office. An example is a joint special operation of the SSU, the State Bureau of Investigation, and the National Police, which eliminated four channels of illegal sale of captured firearms, ammunition, and explosives in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Donetsk oblasts. During the operation, 11 individuals involved in criminal activity were apprehended, including a military service member, a former chemistry student, an IT specialist, and two law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officers seized more than 45 kg of explosives, 15 Kalashnikov assault rifles, two grenade launchers, RGD-5 and F-1 hand grenades, and nearly 10,000 rounds of various calibres. In addition, an underground laboratory for the manufacture of improvised explosives in Kharkiv was liquidated and the operation of the scheme for selling explosives via the darknet was stopped. Procedural supervision was carried out by the Central District Prosecutor's Office of the City of Dnipro, the Kyiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, and the Kharkiv and Donetsk Specialised Prosecutor's Offices in the field of defence (My Kyiv Region, 2026). This case demonstrates that cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the prosecution service helps to more rapidly detect, document, and suppress the activities of criminal groups engaged in illicit arms trafficking, thereby contributing to the strengthening of state security.

A.M. Kulish & A.I. Shvets (2026) noted that the subject of control over the circulation of firearms under martial law is a system of public relations, which covers not only compliance with the requirements for the manufacture, storage, purchase, transportation, accounting, and use of firearms, but also the activities of authorised bodies aimed at ensuring the legality, integrity, and trust of society. Contemporary state control should be based not only on formal performance indicators, but also on a service approach, transparency, accountability of government bodies, and their ability to adapt to security challenges. According to I.V. Olishevskyi (2026), effective counteraction to illegal arms trafficking carried out by organised groups and criminal organisations is impossible in modern conditions without moving from a narrowly departmental approach to a comprehensive

model of interaction between the National Police and other subjects of the security and defence sector. Only through an established interagency exchange of information, coordination of operational activities, clear delineation of powers, and integration of common resources is it possible to identify and stop the channels of illegal arms trafficking controlled by organised criminal groups in a timely manner. In turn, V.T. Petryk (2026) suggested that this aspect requires considering this phenomenon not as a set of individual crimes, but as an integral multi-stage process involving the receipt, movement, sale, manufacture, and concealment of firearms. Improving the effectiveness of the activities of the National Police and other subjects of counteraction is possible through the use of a comprehensive operational and search characteristic of illegal arms trafficking, which allows determining the roles of participants in criminal schemes, methods of their activities, and ensuring proper coordination of joint measures to identify and stop such offences.

V.P. Ustymchuk (2026) considered that effective counteraction to illegal arms trafficking carried out by organised groups and criminal organisations is possible only if the National Police systematically interacts with other law enforcement agencies, which is based on clear legal regulation, consistency of procedural actions, and proper information exchange. The effectiveness of such interaction is determined not by the number of joint events, but by the quality of their organisation, timely use of analytical resources, coordination of interdepartmental actions, and ensuring proper documentation of criminal activities to obtain acceptable and sufficient evidence. S. Holovkin (2026) noted that under martial law, illegal arms trafficking organised by criminal groups has taken on new forms due to the active use of digital technologies, cryptocurrencies, and extensive supply channels, which significantly increases threats to national security. Effective investigation of such crimes requires a comprehensive application of secret investigative actions, collection of digital evidence, conducting specialised examinations, and close interdepartmental cooperation.

■ Conclusions

The problem of illegal arms trafficking, especially in the activities of organised criminal groups and criminal organisations, requires an integrated approach and consolidation of efforts by all actors in the security and law enforcement sector. The analysis of the powers and practices of the relevant bodies has shown that the effectiveness of preventing such offences is determined not only by the effectiveness of individual departments, but primarily by the level of their interaction. The National Police of Ukraine serves as the central link in the system for combating illegal arms trafficking; however, achieving proper results is possible only through effective cooperation with security, border, and customs control authorities, the prosecution service, the SBI, the National Guard, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Such interaction is particularly important in the context of martial law and the growing risks of the proliferation of illegal firearms. It was established that the main deterrent factors remain insufficient coordination between the subjects of counteraction, imperfect information exchange, certain gaps in legal regulation, and uneven level of resource provision. Elimination of these shortcomings is a necessary prerequisite for improving the effectiveness of law enforcement activities. The effectiveness of interaction between the National Police and other subjects of countering illegal arms trafficking largely depends on the functioning of a unified system of information exchange and operational coordination between all involved bodies. The use of innovative digital technologies, analytical platforms, and shared databases has contributed to the timely identification of channels for illegal arms shipments, documenting the activities of organised criminal groups, and improving the effectiveness of special operations. The generalisation of certain international practices allowed noting the expediency of developing interstate cooperation, in particular, through interaction with international law enforcement organisations, conducting joint operations, and exchanging operational information. The results obtained helped to identify the refinement of the regulatory framework for interagency cooperation, clarification of the division of powers among the actors involved in countering illicit trafficking, and the gradual strengthening of their staffing, technical, and organisational support as promising areas for further improvement. Promising areas are the analysis of interaction systems for the development of a single information space, the creation of permanent interdepartmental analytical, and coordination mechanisms, the active use of digital technologies, and the expansion of international cooperation. The implementation of these measures will help to increase the state's ability to identify, document, and suppress the activities of organised criminal groups involved in illegal arms trafficking.

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■ Conflict of Interest

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Взаємодія Національної поліції з іншими суб'єктами протидії незаконному обігу зброї, що вчиняють організовані групи та злочинні організації

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■ **Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлена серйозною загрозою незаконного обігу зброї, здійснюваного організованими групами та злочинними організаціями, для громадської й національної безпеки в умовах воєнного стану та необхідністю скоординованої міжвідомчої та міжнародної протидії цьому явищу. Метою дослідження був аналіз особливостей взаємодії Національної поліції України з іншими суб'єктами боротьби з незаконним обігом зброї та визначення шляхів підвищення ефективності такої співпраці. Методологічну основу становили системний, формально-юридичний, узагальнювальний, логіко-аналітичний і системно-структурний методи. Дослідження надало можливість визначити місце Національної поліції України в системі суб'єктів перешкоджання незаконному обігу зброї та схарактеризувати основні форми співпраці з іншими органами. Встановлено, що ключове значення мають інформаційний обмін, координація спільних заходів, аналітична діяльність і міжнародне співробітництво. Виявлено проблеми, пов'язані з недостатньою координацією, недосконалістю інформаційного забезпечення, окремими прогалинами правового регулювання та ресурсними обмеженнями. Результати дослідження засвідчили, що протидія незаконному обігу зброї потребує не лише ефективної діяльності Національної поліції, а й належно організованої системи взаємодії з іншими компетентними органами. Важливим чинником підвищення результативності такої співпраці стало створення узгодженого механізму обміну інформацією, оперативного реагування та координації дій між усіма учасниками протидії. Узагальнення окремих міжнародних практик свідчить про доцільність подальшого розвитку міжнародного партнерства, зокрема через спільні операції, обмін інформацією та співпрацю з правоохоронними структурами інших країн. Практична значущість результатів полягає в можливості їх використання для вдосконалення законодавства, організації взаємодії правоохоронних органів і підвищення ефективності перешкоджання незаконному обігу зброї

■ **Ключові слова:** міжвідомча взаємодія; координація діяльності; правоохоронна діяльність; інформаційно-аналітичне забезпечення; кримінальне провадження; воєнний стан; громадська безпека