

АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ПРАВООХОРОННОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО СТАНУ

УДК 342.951:351.82

DOI: 10.32782/2078-3566/2025-5-1



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ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL PRINCIPLES OF CONTROL OVER THE CIRCULATION OF WEAPONS BY THE NATIONAL POLICE UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Андрій Собакарь. АДМІНІСТРАТИВНО-ПРАВОВІ ЗАСАДИ КОНТРОЛЮ ЗА ОБІГОМ ЗБРОЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЮ ПОЛІЦІЄЮ В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО СТАНУ. У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз адміністративно-правових засад контролю за обігом зброї, що реалізується Національною поліцією України в умовах дії правового режиму воєнного стану. Обґрунтовано, що повномасштабна збройна агресія Російської Федерації проти України зумовила суттєву трансформацію механізмів державного контролю у сфері обігу вогнепальної зброї, боєприпасів та вибухових речовин, що потребує переосмислення їх теоретичних і практичних засад. Визначено, що адміністративно-правовий контроль за обігом зброї є системоутворюючим елементом забезпечення публічної безпеки та національної безпеки, який поєднує дозвільну, наглядову та превентивну діяльність органів Національної поліції.

Проаналізовано нормативно-правову базу регулювання обігу зброї в Україні, зокрема положення законодавства про правовий режим воєнного стану, відомчі нормативно-правові акти Міністерства внутрішніх справ України, а також роль Єдиного реєстру зброї як інструменту цифровізації адміністративного контролю. Особливу увагу приділено повноваженням Національної поліції у сфері здійснення дозвільної системи, перевірки умов зберігання зброї, застосування заходів адміністративного примусу та інтеграції контролю за обігом зброї з превентивною діяльністю в умовах воєнного стану.

У статті виявлено основні проблеми реалізації адміністративно-правового контролю, зокрема зростання незаконного обігу зброї внаслідок її витоку із зони бойових дій, неузгодженість нормативно-правового регулювання, обмеженість ресурсів правоохоронних органів та підвищені ризики для безпеки поліцейських. Обґрунтовано необхідність удосконалення адміністративно-правових механізмів контролю за обігом зброї, посилення міжвідомчої та міжнародної співпраці, а також вироблення науково обґрунтованих рекомендацій для забезпечення ефективного контролю в післявоєнний період.

Ключові слова: адміністративно-правовий контроль; обіг зброї; Національна поліція України; воєнний стан; дозвільна система; превентивна діяльність; незаконний обіг зброї; публічна безпека; Єдиний реєстр зброї.

Problem statement. In the modern world, where geopolitical conflicts often escalate into armed confrontations, control over the circulation of weapons is gaining strategic importance for ensuring national security and public order. This problem is especially acute in states experiencing martial law, when mass access of the civilian population to firearms becomes an integral part of the defense strategy. At the same time, the lack of clear administrative and legal mechanisms for regulation can lead to an increase in illegal circulation, abuses and threats to society, which requires a balance between expanding the rights to own weapons and strengthening state supervision. In Ukraine, since the introduction of martial law in February 2022, the situation with the circulation of weapons has changed dramatically, becoming one of

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the key elements of ensuring the country's national security and defense. The National Police, as the main executive body in the field of maintaining public security and order, received expanded powers to issue permits, register, store and use weapons, which allowed for the prompt arming of civilians to repel armed aggression. However, rapid legislative changes due to emergency conditions revealed a number of gaps, including the imperfection of administrative legislation in this area, insufficient control over captured weapons and the risks of corruption in the licensing system, which threatens the stability of law and order and the effectiveness of defense efforts.

Systematizing the experience gained during a full-scale invasion is a necessary condition for preventing potential threats in the post-war period, which makes the study of the administrative and legal principles of control over the circulation of weapons by the National Police under martial law particularly relevant. Without a deep analysis of these principles, it is impossible to ensure transparency of procedures, protection of citizens' rights and integration of international standards, such as the European directives on arms control.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The current state of scientific research in the field of administrative and legal regulation and control over the circulation of weapons indicates the growing attention of scientists to the problems of ensuring public safety in martial law. Scientific works substantiate the issues of the legal nature of the circulation of firearms, the powers of the National Police, the features of the licensing system and preventive activities in this area. A significant contribution to the study of this issue was made by such scientists as O. Bashtova, R. Myronyuk, S. Didenko, O. Serikov, T. Shumeyko, K. Bugaychuk and others. At the same time, the existing scientific developments are mainly focused on general aspects of control over the circulation of weapons or the study of its individual elements, which necessitates the need for further comprehensive analysis of the administrative and legal principles of exercising such control precisely in martial law and the development of practically oriented approaches to their improvement.

Therefore, **the purpose of the article** is to determine the role of the National Police of Ukraine in preventing and combating offenses in the field of firearms trafficking and to analyze the main tools it uses in this activity.

Presentation of the main material. Administrative and legal control over the circulation of weapons occupies a central place in the system of state administration in the field of ensuring public security and law and order. Its functional purpose is to regulate relations related to the manufacture, acquisition, storage, transportation and use of firearms, ammunition and explosives, as well as to prevent their illegal distribution and use. Under normal conditions, such control performs mainly a preventive and regulatory function, however, during the period of special legal regimes, its importance increases significantly.

The introduction of the legal regime of martial law entails the transformation of the theoretical and practical principles of administrative and legal control over the circulation of weapons. Martial law, introduced by Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64/2022 of February 24, 2022, provides for the application of a set of emergency measures aimed at ensuring national security and the defense capability of the state, including by strengthening restrictions on the circulation of weapons [7]. Under such conditions, the control activities of public authorities acquire an enhanced character and are focused not only on compliance with the formal rules of the licensing system, but also on neutralizing increased security threats.

Scientific studies emphasize that during martial law, control over the circulation of firearms by the National Police is aimed primarily at preventing their use for illegal purposes, in particular for committing terrorist acts, sabotage or other actions that pose a threat to public safety and law and order. Thus, R. Myronyuk emphasizes that the strengthening of the control powers of the police in wartime is an objective response of the state to the increase in the risks of uncontrolled spread of weapons among the civilian population [6, pp. 15-16]. A similar position is expressed by K. Bugaychuk, who, analyzing the criminogenic situation in the field of illegal arms trafficking, notes its significant complication in conditions of military operations, which is confirmed by the statistics of the seizure of thousands of illegal weapons and ammunition every year [3, pp. 270-282].

The regulatory and legal regulation of arms trafficking in Ukraine is formed on the basis of a complex of legislative and by-laws, which are adapted in accordance with the requirements of martial law. The basic act in this area is the Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law", which gives the state the right to introduce temporary restrictions on the possession, use and disposal of weapons by civilians in the interests of national security [10]. In this context,

legislative initiatives aimed at streamlining the legal status of civilian firearms are also of particular importance, in particular the draft Law of Ukraine “On the Right to Civilian Firearms”, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as a basis, which provides for strengthening the legal regime and more clearly defining the limits of permissible circulation of weapons [6, p. 15].

During the period of the legal regime of martial law, the National Police of Ukraine exercises control over the circulation of weapons on the basis of special subordinate regulatory legal acts, the central place among which is occupied by the Instruction on the procedure for the manufacture, acquisition, storage, accounting, transportation and use of firearms, pneumatic, cold and cold weapons, approved by order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine dated August 21, 1998 No. 622 [9]. The specified act defines the procedural principles of the permitting and control activities of the police in the field of weapons circulation, establishing requirements for subjects of possession, use and storage of weapons, as well as mechanisms for responding to violations of the established rules.

At the same time, a feature of the modern regulatory model of control over the circulation of weapons is the gradual introduction of digital tools of administrative control, the key of which is the Unified Register of Weapons. Its creation and operation are provided for by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated July 8, 2020 No. 573, which establishes the legal principles of automated accounting, storage and processing of information on the legal circulation of weapons in Ukraine [5, pp. 15–20]. The specified register provides systematic monitoring of the movement of weapons, increases the transparency of permitting procedures and creates conditions for the prompt exchange of information between authorized entities.

In the implementation of the specified administrative and legal control mechanisms, the National Police of Ukraine plays a decisive role as a key subject of public administration in the field of weapons circulation. It is the police that is entrusted with the authority to combine preventive activities, permitting procedures and the application of administrative coercion measures in the event of violations of the established procedure for the circulation of weapons. According to Article 23 of the Law of Ukraine “On the National Police”, the competence of the police includes the implementation of the permitting system, the issuance of permits for the acquisition, storage and carrying of weapons, as well as conducting inspections of compliance with the conditions for their storage by individuals and legal entities [8].

Under martial law, these powers are also implemented in an expanded organizational and legal format, which is due to the increased level of security threats. As A. Bashtova emphasizes, control over the circulation of weapons in the activities of the National Police units during this period is integrated with other areas of preventive activity, in particular measures to ensure compliance with the curfew, patrolling territories and checking persons and vehicles [1, pp. 50–60]. Such integration leads to the transformation of control over the circulation of weapons from a highly specialized permitting function into a complex administrative and legal instrument for ensuring public safety.

The scientific literature also substantiates the fact that administrative and legal control over the circulation of weapons is a multi-level phenomenon that combines elements of permitting activities, administrative supervision and the implementation of jurisdictional powers of public authorities. In particular, O. Serikov emphasizes that control over the circulation of non-military firearms should be considered as an independent object of administrative and legal research, since it has a specific subject of regulation, a special range of subjects and an increased level of public danger in case of violation of the established rules. The control activities of the National Police in this area are implemented by specialized units and are formalized in the form of individual administrative acts, which indicates its procedural nature [11]. In turn, O. Bashtova emphasizes that the control activities of the National Police in the area of circulation of civilian firearms are a component of the administrative and legal mechanism of the functioning of the police as the central executive body in the field of public security. Moreover, control in this area is not limited to checking compliance with formal requirements, but includes an assessment of the legality of the behavior of weapon owners, the conditions of its storage, technical condition and intended use. This approach is especially relevant in conditions of martial law, when the risks of illegal use of weapons increase significantly [2].

In conditions of full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the administrative and legal principles of control over the circulation of weapons have undergone significant transformations. As noted by D. Kaznacheev and D. Bodyrev, the legalization of the participation of civilians in the defense of Ukraine with the use of firearms was of an

extraordinary, forced nature and was aimed at ensuring the defense capability of the state. At the same time, scientists point to the problem of the gap between the normatively defined procedure for issuing weapons and the real practice of the first months of martial law, which objectively complicated the implementation of proper administrative control by the National Police [4].

From the standpoint of administrative law, it is advisable to consider control over the circulation of weapons as a component of the preventive activities of the National Police of Ukraine, aimed at preventing offenses and minimizing security risks in society. R. Myronyuk justifies that under the legal regime of martial law, the preventive function of the police acquires a complex character, and the control powers over the circulation of weapons are implemented in close connection with other measures of administrative coercion and supervision, in particular, checks on compliance with the curfew, conducting surface checks of persons and vehicles, as well as control over the legality of storing and carrying firearms. These measures are not only reactive, but primarily preventive in nature, since they are aimed at the early detection of potential threats to public safety associated with the illegal or unscrupulous use of weapons by civilians in conditions of increased crime. R. Myronyuk also emphasizes that it is during martial law that the traditional distinction between the control and preventive powers of the police loses clarity, since ensuring public order and the state's defense capability requires the use of integrated administrative and legal instruments. In addition, the researcher emphasizes that control over the circulation of weapons within the framework of preventive police activities should be carried out taking into account the principle of proportionality of interference with human rights and freedoms, which is especially relevant in the context of temporary restrictions on certain constitutional rights in connection with martial law. In this context, control measures to verify the legality of possession, transportation and storage of weapons are considered not as an end in themselves, but as a means of ensuring a balance between the interests of national security and the need to comply with the legal guarantees of citizens [6].

In this context, administrative and legal control is reasonably considered as the primary and system-forming link in the mechanism for combating the illicit trafficking of weapons in Ukraine. It is through the tools of administrative supervision, the permit system and the preventive activities of the National Police that conditions are created for the timely detection, localization and minimization of risks associated with the uncontrolled spread of firearms, ammunition and explosives. At the same time, the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation has significantly complicated the implementation of these functions, causing a sharp increase in the volume of illicit trafficking of weapons. One of the key problems is the leakage of firearms from the combat zone, which has become systemic after 2022. A significant number of weapons have entered the civilian environment as trophies, lost or temporarily transferred for defense needs, which significantly complicates the implementation of state control and creates the prerequisites for its further illicit spread. Under such conditions, the issue of the effectiveness of the application of criminal and administrative legal response measures is relevant, in particular in terms of bringing guilty persons to justice for illegal handling of weapons in accordance with Article 263 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Uncontrolled circulation of weapons in conditions of martial law creates real threats to national security, contributing to an increase in the level of violent crime and an increase in the risks of terrorist and sabotage manifestations. At the same time, armed aggression against Ukraine has objectively affected the state's ability to exercise effective control in this area. This is manifested, in particular, in the difficulties of promptly detecting and properly investigating the facts of illegal trafficking of weapons, as well as in the increased risks to the personal safety of National Police officers while performing their official tasks in areas close to the combat zone or in de-occupied territories. These circumstances reduce the effectiveness of control measures and require the adaptation of administrative and legal mechanisms to the conditions of war.

Another significant problem remains the inconsistency of the regulatory framework in the field of weapons circulation, which leads to gaps in the mechanisms for their declaration and registration. In particular, despite the introduction of legislative provisions on the declaration of firearms, which allow citizens to temporarily store captured weapons during martial law with the obligation to subsequently surrender them after its termination, the lack of effective tools for constant monitoring contributes to the leakage of such weapons into the illegal market. An additional complicating factor is the limited material, technical and human resources of the National Police, which negatively affects the possibilities of stabilizing the situation in the field of illegal weapons circulation.

Summarizing the above, it should be stated that overcoming these problems requires a comprehensive approach that combines the improvement of national administrative and legal

control mechanisms with the activation of international cooperation. In this context, Ukraine's cooperation with international organizations and institutions, in particular the OSCE and the European Union, in the field of combating the illicit trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives is of particular importance. Despite the significant efforts made by the state in wartime conditions, the effectiveness of such cooperation largely depends on the ability of the national administrative control system to adapt to new security challenges and ensure the stability of law and order in the post-war period.

Conclusion. Thus, to overcome the identified problems, it is recommended to implement comprehensive measures aimed at improving the regulatory framework for the control activities of the National Police, namely: first, improving the procedures for declaring firearms, including the mandatory surrender of captured weapons after the end of martial law, with an outline of the terms and mechanisms for controlling their storage; second, strengthening joint measures to combat illegal trafficking, including improving the legal framework for not being held liable for storing weapons without a permit subject to declaration, as well as developing recommendations for identifying and investigating cases of illegal trafficking under martial law; third, implementing scientific and practical recommendations on the forms and methods of controlling the circulation of firearms by civilians under martial law, as well as conducting expert discussions to assess the experience of declaration and expected results.

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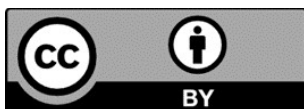
ABSTRACT

The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the administrative and legal foundations of arms circulation control exercised by the National Police of Ukraine under the legal regime of martial law. It substantiates that the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has caused a profound transformation of state control mechanisms in the field of firearms, ammunition, and explosive materials circulation, which necessitates a reassessment of their theoretical and practical principles. The study determines that administrative and legal control over arms circulation constitutes a system-forming element of ensuring public safety and national security, combining permissive, supervisory, and preventive activities of the National Police.

The author analyzes the current regulatory framework governing arms circulation in Ukraine, including legislation on the legal regime of martial law, subordinate normative acts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, as well as the role of the Unified Weapons Register as a key instrument of digitalization of administrative control. Particular attention is paid to the powers of the National Police in implementing the permit system, inspecting compliance with firearms storage requirements, applying administrative coercive measures, and integrating arms control with preventive policing activities under martial law.

The article identifies the main problems affecting the effectiveness of administrative and legal control, including the increase in illegal arms trafficking due to the leakage of weapons from combat zones, inconsistencies in regulatory provisions, limited material and human resources of law enforcement agencies, and heightened risks to the personal safety of police officers. The author substantiates the need to improve administrative and legal mechanisms for arms circulation control, strengthen interagency and international cooperation, and develop scientifically grounded recommendations aimed at ensuring effective control both during martial law and in the post-war period.

Key words: *administrative and legal control; arms trafficking; National Police of Ukraine; martial law; permit system; preventive activities; illegal arms trafficking; public safety; Unified Arms Register.*



Надійшла до редакції: 19.12.2025

Прийнято до друку після рецензування: 26.12.2025

Оубліковано: 31.12.2025