

PROCEDURE TO ACQUIRE FIREARMS/SMALL ARMS

The person must be:

- **18 years and above**
- **Mentally sound, physically fit and must be of good character**
- **Without criminal traits or records**

That person, upon meeting the conditions above, shall first go to the nearest Police Station, specifically the Firearm Licensing Office, to apply for a specified firearm and also for forensic and physical background vetting.

The police will then begin the process of documentation [including filling of application forms] after the applicant has been cleared and has been found not to have any criminal traits, leading to the issuance of a permit to acquire the firearm.

The permit when issued gives the applicant the right to purchase the firearm, only from a licensed arms and ammunition dealer, for licensing by the police. The validity of the permit is six (6) months and not renewable but can be re-applied for. This implies that when a permit is issued, the applicant must purchase/acquire the firearm stated in the permit within six months for licensing, otherwise it becomes invalid and must be surrendered to the office of issue and then re-applied for.

It should be noted that permit to purchase firearm does not replace the prescribed license to bear firearm. It is illegal to handle any firearm without license. Whilst the permit gives the applicant the authority to purchase the firearm within a period of six months or lose its validity, the license to bear a firearm gives the applicant the right to own and handle a firearm for a period of one year; renewable every year. The said applicant forfeits the right if he/she does not renew the license after expiration. This makes such firearm an illicit one and its use illegal; a situation that should be avoided.

TRANSFER OF FIREARMS (CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP)

An individual who possesses license to bear a firearm may decide at any point in his/her life time to transfer the firearm to anyone of his/her choice as a gift or upon death as inheritance. However, such a transfer should take place at the police station with the beneficiary going through a procedure to satisfy the requirements as stipulated in the law.

IMPORTATION OF FIREARMS/SMALL ARMS

There are licensed arms and ammunition dealers in the country. These dealers submit applications for permit to import firearms and cartridges to the Minister responsible for the Interior for his approval or otherwise. It must be stated clearly that they are the only ones who are permitted to sell firearms, excluding arms of precision, to the general public upon presentation of a police permit. Also, the law permits the Minister of the Interior to grant permit to individuals upon receipt of an application to import arms of precision such as pistols and revolvers [which the dealers are not allowed to import for sale] into the country.

GHANAIANS LIVING ABROAD

Ghanaians living outside the country would have to apply to the Honourable Minister of the Interior in Ghana for permission to bring in a firearm. It is illegal for anybody to bring in a firearm without taking permission from the Honourable Minister. Any other process or source of acquisition apart from the abovementioned is against the law, and offenders when caught will have to face the full rigors of the law.

AQCUIRING LOCALLY-MADE FIREARMS

Arms and Ammunition Act 118 of 1962 prohibited the local manufacture of arms and ammunition, whilst NRCD 9 of 1972 which amended certain portions of Act 118 of 1962 stated among other things that no person shall, except with the written consent of the National Redemption Council and subject to such conditions and restrictions as the council may determine, manufacture any arms and ammunition including explosives. Irrespective of this amendment, nobody as at now has applied to that effect.

The law however gives blacksmiths the license to repair imported firearms. As a result, some blacksmiths take advantage of the situation to illegally manufacture some making them easily accessible. Though the NRCD 9, 1972 does not completely prohibit anyone from manufacturing, once they are manufacturing without approval from the appropriate authorities, it becomes illegal. The implication of this is that anyone who acquires such firearm falls foul of the laws of the land and would have himself/herself to blame when the long arms of the law catch up with him/her.