

French national report

■ ■ FESAC annual meeting 2024 ■ ■

UFA - Union Française des amateurs d'Armes

Deployment of French firearms information system

Despite the setbacks encountered by Italy, Canada, and more recently Switzerland, France continues to digitize its firearms management system, which currently contains several interconnected components:

- **A listing** describing all firearms models on the French territory, with their characteristics (caliber, dimensions, brand, model...) and their classification (EU category A, B, or C). It contains about 60,000 entries.
- **A portal for firearm owners**, allowing people to list the firearms they have, register new ones (found or inherited), make and track authorization requests for category B firearms and generate a digital version of the European firearms pass.
- **A portal for professionals**, enabling the management of their inventory and movements (deposit, repair, sale) and check if the buyer meets all requirements for the requested firearm, ammunition, parts, or accessories.
- **A portal for the administration** to manage firearm owners' files.
- **A file listing individuals prohibited from possessing firearms**, which contained 120,000 people in 2023. There are approximately 20,000 new individuals added to this file every year.

Interconnections will soon be established with the information systems of shooting and hunting federations, allowing automatic verification of license validity.

The system has been gradually opened for distinct types of firearm owners:

- **To hunters** in February 2022: an account on the system is mandatory to buy, sell or transfer hunting firearms (category C). To date, only 700,000 hunters have opened their accounts out of the 3.5 million French hunters.
- **To individuals who have found or inherited firearms** in December 2022 during the French national firearms surrender operation.
- **To owners of self-defense weapons** (such as rubber-ball revolvers) **or deactivated firearms** in November 2023.
- **To sport shooters** in February 2024: an account is mandatory to buy, sell or transfer category B and C firearms, and for category B ammunition. In less than two months after opening, over 80% of sport shooters have already opened their accounts.

The system is not yet open to holders of the collector card, to biathlon and ball-trap federations, and to former licensees who still own firearms.

During the transition period from the old procedures (mostly paper-based) to the new information system, numerous bugs or unhandled situations occurred. The UFA and prefectures were overwhelmed with questions and calls for help: duplicated firearms on the system, sold firearms still registered to the previous owner, missing or misidentified firearms, missing authorizations preventing any purchase of firearms or ammunition... The correction of errors about firearms listing has been delegated to the owners, who are therefore responsible in case of mistake or fake declaration. They have six months to make corrections. Once the major issues were resolved, the system was well received by sport shooters as it notably facilitated the acquisition of category B firearms and ammunition: there is now a 15 firearms quota to be used whenever needed, whereas previously a new authorization request had to be done for each purchase, complicating transactions. The UFA continues to assist hunters and sport shooters in their procedures.

The Ministry announced that the time saved by their agents thanks to the digitization and automation of procedures will be used to make better and more frequent controls of firearms owners: this includes regularly cross-checking files such as criminal records or psychiatric treatments, but also inspecting shooting clubs and professionals. At the same time, there is an increasing number of insidious reasons to prohibit individuals to own firearms: those reinforce the legal insecurity feeling that French firearm owners already had for years. The latest example is the creation of a new fine for carrying a knife or a pepper spray, replacing the traditional legal proceeding (to alleviate court congestion): the fine is appearing automatically on the criminal record and results in a prohibition to own firearms. Furthermore, French regulations are very vague on knife carrying, and on what type of knife is considered a tool or a weapon. This ambiguity can potentially lead to wrongful fines, as it is left to the discretion of police officers.

Early 2025, the Ministry has planned to make the account on the system mandatory to keep the right to own firearms. Thus, every firearm owner without an account will be banned from firearm possession and must surrender their firearms without any kind of buyback program. A similar measure was scheduled for hunters at the end of 2023 but was postponed due to the considerable number of hunters who had not created their accounts yet. This was either because they do not want to be in the system, or due to lack of knowledge of the digital tool.

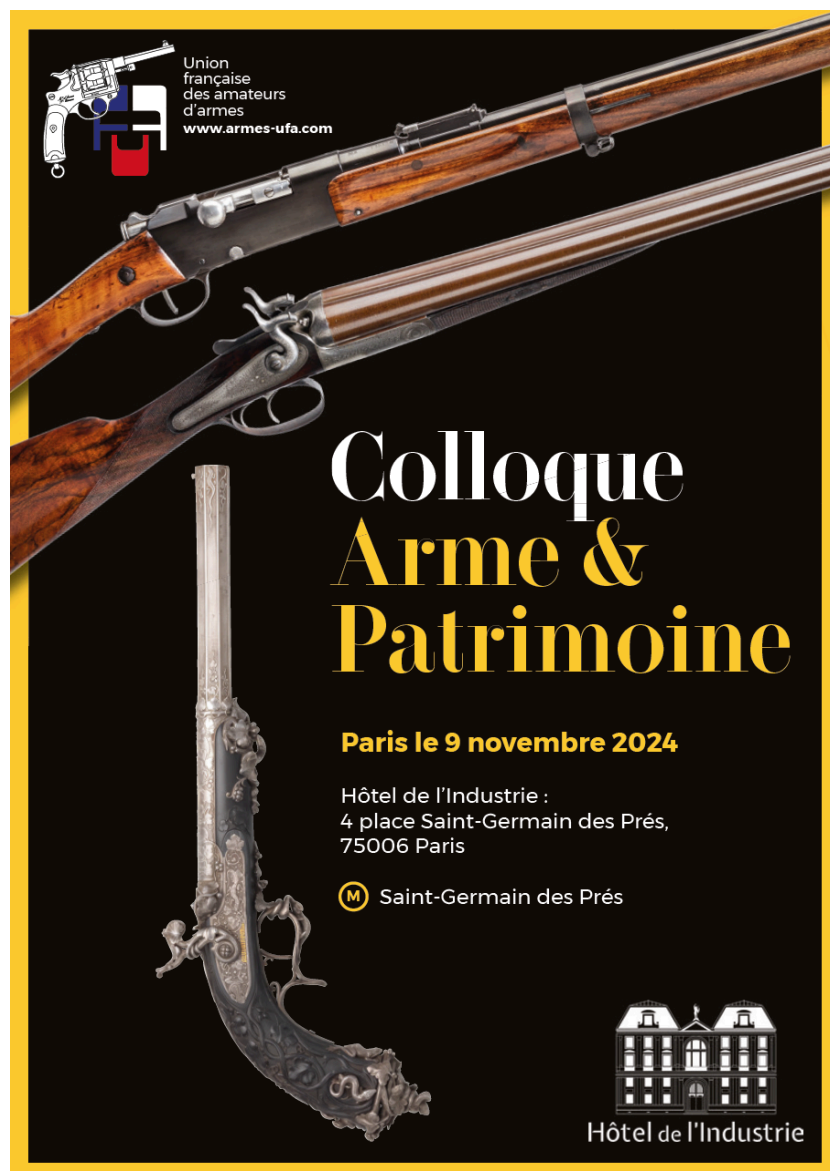
The Ministry has recently highlighted its firearms information system as the most advanced in the world and intends to make it available to other European countries soon.

“Arms and Heritage” colloquium

The UFA is organizing a colloquium titled "Arms and Heritage" in Paris on November 9, 2024.

What role do arms play in present-day society? While they have undeniably influenced our history, what lies ahead for them in the future? To explore these inquiries, the UFA is organizing an unparalleled event in France. This will unite stakeholders from all parts of the arms industry, including institutional, professional, and user representatives.

The goal is to highlight the historical influence of arms in our society. To achieve this, numerous roundtable discussions will take place during the conference, interspersed with brief presentations to maintain a dynamic pace throughout this day of debates.





Union
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Colloque Arme & Patrimoine

Paris le 9 novembre 2024

Hôtel de l'Industrie :
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75006 Paris

 Saint-Germain des Prés


Hôtel de l'Industrie

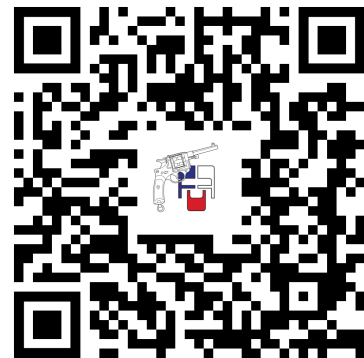
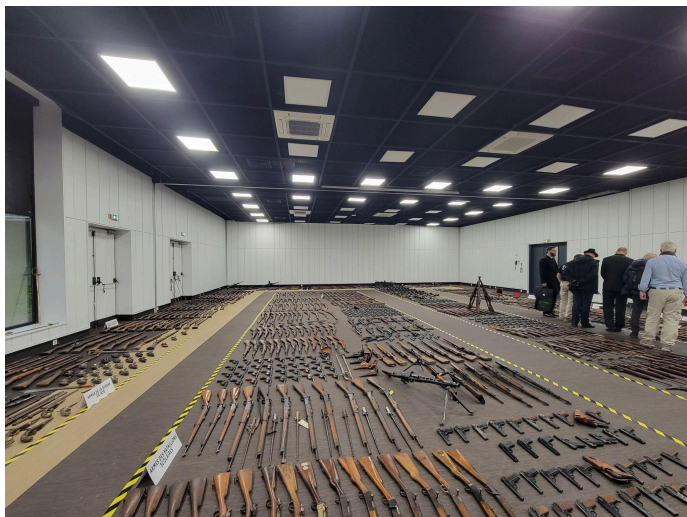
Today, the UFA represents 28,000 people, including active members and members of clubs and associations that have joined. This colloquium will bring together representatives from various communities to exchange ideas anchored in our shared history and driven by the desire to shape a better future.

Firearms saved for museums

At the end of 2022, France organized a national firearm surrender operation: 150,000 weapons were collected, including 140,000 firearms. Among these firearms, 80% were old and inexpensive single shot hunting rifles, which were still legal to possess in France.

The UFA protested against the destruction of these firearms, and the Ministry promised to sort through them to save the most exceptional ones with heritage value. Throughout 2023, Ministry experts sorted through all these firearms.

The presentation of the 1,516 saved firearms took place at the Milipol exhibition in Paris at the end of 2023: the saved weapons were presented to French museums, to which they will be donated for integration into their collections.



Scan the QR-Code to see the complete photo album.



All the photos from the event can also be viewed on the following link:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/e4yxsDQgvhTNcfzH8>

The tremendous amount of work needed for both the firearm surrender operation and the sorting of all collected weapons lead the Ministry to not renew this experience in the future. Instead, a new simplified procedure is being evaluated with armorers to surrender unregistered firearms, or save weapons seized by the courts which were previously systematically destroyed.

Classification doctrine for antique and collectible firearms

In France, firearms from a model patented before 1900 are considered as antique and are unregulated. They can be owned without permit, except for some firearms considered by the Ministry as dangerous or mass produced.

However, significant ambiguity existed regarding the classification of firearms from a model patented before 1900 but that have been modified after 1900, like a barrel change, a modification of sighting instruments, or the adaptation to a new caliber. It was also difficult to date old hunting rifles due to the lack of markings or patents. In practice, most of these firearms were classified and thus inaccessible to many collectors.

Since 2013, the UFA has been requesting clarification of this situation. Since 2019, we have been working with the Ministry on developing a new classification doctrine. We have finally achieved this, with the official publication of this new doctrine by the Ministry at the end of 2023. It is based on simple rules:

- A list of "minor" technical modifications that leave the firearm unregulated, and a list of "major" modifications that result in a classification in category A, B or C.
- Technical criteria to be met for a hunting rifle to be considered as antique.
- A list of exceptions for some firearms patented after 1900 but unregulated due to heritage or historical interest.
- A list of exceptions for some firearms patented before 1900 but still classified.

The Ministry has followed about 60% of the UFA's requests, especially regarding the list of liberated firearms. Over one hundred firearms models have been declassified and thus become accessible to collectors.

The Ministry did not want both firearms and their ammunition to be unclassified. Prior to the doctrine publication, they have thus classified recently remade metallic cartridges loaded with black powder (newly manufactured or reloaded) that were previously unregulated. They are now only accessible to sport shooters and hunters for rifles and only to sport shooters for handguns. Vintage ammunition remains unregulated and accessible to collectors.

Currently, in France, there is no possibility of collecting live classified ammunition, other than being a sport shooter or hunter.

Regulatory evolutions and threats to unclassified Firearms

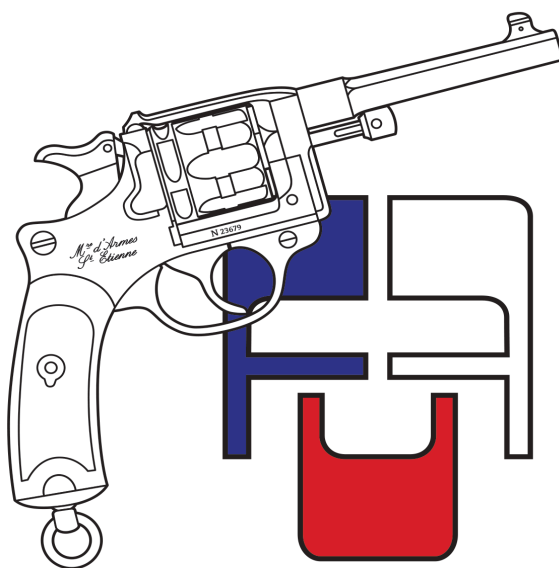
Various regulatory changes are forthcoming or requested by politics:

- Blank firing replicas are currently unclassified in France. The Ministry intends to change the regulation and classify them as category C firearms. This change has significant implications, as there are many collectors and reenactors who own these replicas.
- Following the murder of rugby player Federico Martín Aramburú with an antique firearm, a bill has been introduced to register all owners of black powder firearms. This includes everything from wheel-lock arquebuses to muzzle-loading revolver replicas. Although the firearm used in the incident was indeed an antique revolver, a Colt Positive from 1892, it had been loaded with modern 7.65 Browning ammunition, which is classified as category B and was illegally owned.

France experienced serious riots in June and July 2023, leading to the implementation of numerous temporary measures prohibiting the transport of weapons, including legally used firearms for sport shooting or hunting. More recently, in 2024, even more serious riots occurred in French overseas territories, resulting in the same temporary measures, but sometimes coupled with forced firearm surrender from former shooters and hunters.

While the registration of black powder firearm owners is unlikely to be adopted due to the project's poorly crafted and unrealistic nature, the reclassification of blank firearm replicas into category C is expected to take effect in the summer of 2024. As for the exceptional measures, it is challenging to oppose them until the situation improves in overseas territories.

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