

People hand in unlicensed arms and ammunition to police in France

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Police officers look at undeclared firearms owned by residents at a police station in Nice [Eric Gaillard/Reuters]

Paris, December 2 (RHC)-- French gun owners are handing over their weapons at police collection points across the country this week as part of a campaign to round up unlicensed firearms, often heirlooms lying

in attics or forgotten at the back of cupboards.

Gun ownership in France is nowhere near as prevalent as in the United States, for instance, and gun crimes are relatively rare, but France is keen to limit the number of illegally owned firearms – as many as six million, authorities estimate.

“They were my dad’s and I didn’t know what to do with them,” Lionel said at a police station in Nice in southern France where he handed over his weapons. “I don’t really like guns, and since there’s a way to get rid of them cleanly, there’s a moment you have to get rid of such souvenirs.”

Those who bring in the weapons face no penalties. They can either have them registered or leave them with the police. By Wednesday, 65,000 firearms had been turned in, along with 1.6 million bullets and other projectiles.

“This campaign is here to help French people surrender these objects that are rather cumbersome for most,” police commandant Florence Gavello said at the collection point in Nice. “When we talk to them, they’re quite happy about ... getting rid of them.”

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