



Committee: Disarmament and International Security

Question of: The small arms trade and proliferation

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Introduction:

The illicit trade in small arms fuels armed conflict and criminal violence, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths across the globe each year. The Small Arms Survey estimates that nearly half of all violent deaths between 2010 and 2015 were caused by firearms. Small arms prolong conflict and increase its severity, undermine the rule of law and contribute to grave human rights abuse. They aggravate poverty and obstruct economic development. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon concluded in 2017 that more human rights violations and abuses are committed with small arms than with any other weapon.

According to the Small Arms Survey, there are an estimated 1 billion small arms in worldwide circulation. Only 15% of these arms are held by armed forces or law enforcement, with the remainder owned by other actors. Poor control of stockpiles, production and transfers of small arms can often mean that they are easily acquired by criminal organisations, pirates, terrorists and insurgents.

The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (known as the UN ITI), which was adopted by the General Assembly in October 2005, defines “small arms” as weapons designed for personal use. These include revolvers, pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns. Although small arms are often considered together with “light weapons”, these are distinguished from small arms in the fact that they are designed to be operated by a crew and not by a single person.

The Issue:

The main issue of the small arms trade and proliferation is the lack of regulation, tracking and security of these arms and the market. However, there are a number of specific problems to be aware of.

Humanitarian Impacts:

Small arms have become more readily available and this has caused a large negative humanitarian impact, especially during conflict and in conflict zones. If these arms are unregulated, parties who do not respect or have knowledge about international humanitarian law, which protect those who are not participating in the conflict, are a major threat to civilians, as they have the means to cause harm to them. This makes conflict much more lethal to civilians than previous to the proliferation of these arms, as shown by the increase of civilian deaths since World War One, when these weapons became more easily accessible.

This ease of access doesn't only cause problems during conflict, but also after, as the reconciliation and stabilisation of post-conflict zones occurs. Due to the increasing availability of these small arms, humanitarian and relief workers are endangered. These workers are forced to leave the post-conflict area if there are major security risks and this departure increases the risk of disease, abuse and famine. These security risks are more likely to occur due to the abundance of small arms in these post-

conflict areas, meaning that the vital humanitarian aid is being interrupted and threatened, preventing post-conflict areas from recovering.

In addition, some characteristics of small arms mean that the general humanitarian risks are high, external to conflict. For example, many of these weapons do not require proper training to operate, meaning that if someone has access to a weapon like this, they can cause a major threat to life. Other threatening characteristics are that these arms are relatively cheap, meaning most parties can afford them, easily available, durable, so that even if they are stored for many years, they still function, and easy to conceal due to their small size allowing them to be smuggled across borders and into conflict areas. These features make the problem of the small arms trade and proliferation very hard to tackle as it is seemingly very hard to regulate.

Government Shortcomings:

There are a number of problems caused by shortcomings in government regulations. Many governments lack proper control over export and import of small arms, and as a consequence, many diversions of small arms deliveries occur. When terrorists, criminal organisations or other threatening parties gain access to large quantities of small arms, they pose a much larger threat, as they now have the power to cause harm. There are a variety of reasons why these diversions occur: theft from poorly secured stockpiles, corruption, unauthorised retransfer or transfers without proper regulations or controls.

Another problem is the lack of weapons management of these small arms. Many states have insufficient security measures in place on their stock piles and do not take care with the safe storage, handling, transportation or disposal of such arms. In addition, poor national inventory practices mean excess weaponry cannot be identified, causing unnecessary build-up of stockpiles. Due to this lax security, it makes it much easier for unauthorised groups to acquire these weapons.

Terrorist Access to Small Arms:

Due to the easy access, operation and concealment of small arms, they are a popular weapon of choice for terrorists and criminal organisations. This poses a massive danger to society, as these illegally armed groups now have the power to harm civilians. Without these arms, these groups have much less power and, though still a threat, pose a much smaller risk of civilian harm.

In addition to the problems outlined in 'Government Shortcomings', there are issues specific to terrorist organisations. A clear problem many states face is tracing how the terrorists acquired these arms, as tracing remains a challenge for many states. Tracing very rarely discovers the source of the small arms and, although investigations are sometime successful in determining persons responsible, the origin of the arms is not found. In addition, as many investigations into terrorism are confidential, there is a lack of information sharing between governments, which hinders international tracing investigations.

The Proliferation of the Illicit Small Arms Market:

The majority of illicit small arms start out in legal market, however, there are no consistent set of controls on arms transfers, and the effectiveness of these control vary greatly from state to state, meaning many of them transfer into the illicit small arms trade.

This increase has a number of causes, namely the lack of proper national inventory practises and lack of stockpile destruction. These weapons also enter the market as they have not been marked

and cannot be properly traced, a problem which must be swiftly rectified to ensure that no more small arms enter the illicit market. Improve of stockpile management and destruction is also imperative.

Arms Embargo Failures:

The implementation of arms embargoes serves as an effective way to tackle arms and ammunition trafficking routes and the illicit trade of small of arms. However, these embargoes are frequently violated without punishment, making the situation of the small arms trade and proliferation worse. Parties deliver small arms into states currently facing an arms embargo, but are not punished, meaning that the embargo is defunct, and the illicit small arms trade internal to the country is made worse.

Key Events

Event/Date	Explanation
1996 UN Panel of Governmental Experts to develop an agenda for addressing the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of small arms	They developed an agenda for addressing the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of small arms
The Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Material, 1998	The Convention was the first legally binding multilateral instrument on small arms and light weapons.
Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted in Bamako on 1 December 2000	Develops an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, 2001
The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, United Nations, 2001	The Protocol was the first global, legally binding instrument on small arms control. It seeks to combat illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components.
United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York, 2001	Conference to discuss the questions of the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons which resulted in the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, 2001	In this, governments agreed improve on small arms laws, import and export controls, stockpile management and to engage in cooperation and

	assistance.
Biennial Meetings of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York (United States), the first of which was in 2003	In these meetings, national reports are submitted to update on the progress made on the implementation of the Programme of Action.
International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, United Nations, 2005	This is a politically binding Instrument which outlines the requirements on record-keeping, marking and international cooperation and assistance which will enable the tracing of illicit small arms and light arms.
Resolution 69/33 of 2 December 2014 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them	Reiterates the continuation of support to curb the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and requests members states to continue to follow past conventions and resolutions on this topic.
National Security Presidential Memorandum Regarding U.S. Conventional Arms Transfers Policy, 2018	The United States government aligned their policy with their economic and national security interests, helping them maintain updated with technology and enhance their defence capabilities.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALM and their ammunition

This strategy builds on The United Nations Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. It pulls together EU countries capabilities and highlights how a multilateral response is essential to be effective.

At an international level, it tries to implement the United Nations Plan of Action and tries to trace SALW through a global reporting mechanism. It also aims to ensure member countries ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms. At a regional level, the EU provides financial aid to support stable and effective programmes which aim to tackle security threats related to small arms and light weapons in Libya, South Eastern Europe and the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe area.

The Council of the EU continually monitors this strategy and every 6 months, the European External Action Service presents a progress report to the Council for its endorsement.

Arms Treaty Trade



The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), 2013 establishes common standards and regulates the international trade in conventional arms, ranging from fighter aircrafts and warships to small arms and light weapons. It aims to reduce human suffering and reduce the illicit arms trades. There is much human suffering caused by illegal and irresponsible arms transfers, and this treaty intends to improve regional security and stability, as well as promoting accountability and transparency by states involved in the transferring of conventional arms.

The ATT does not replace restrictions on the quantities or types of arms that may be bought, sold or possessed by states, and it also does not impact or alter a state's domestic gun control laws or other firearms policies. The ATT currently has 130 signatories with 94 ratifications.

[International Traffic in Arms Regulation and Export Administration Regulations \(United States of America\)](#)

The International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) are United States arms regulation which controls the import and export of defence articles and services. Their primary purpose is to ensure defence related technology does not get into the wrong hands. The United States government issues export licenses for ITAR and EAR controlled items to give permission for the transportation or sale of potentially dangerous items to foreign countries or parties.

[2003 Andean Plan for the Prevention, Combat and Eradication of the Illicit Traffic of Small Arms and Light Weapons](#)

This treaty aims to tackle illicit small arms and light weapons trafficking, highlighting its links to terrorism, corruption and the worldwide drug problem. Its primary goal aims to increase Andean Member Countries' capabilities to control the small arms trade to an effective extent. This is through controlling the manufacture, trade, transportation, possession, concealment, usurpation, carrying and use of such weapons, as well as to identifying, confiscating and possibly destroying them. It also creates points of national contact and national coordination committees to enable a more effective response, and provides specific mechanisms for national, sub-regional and international levels.

Possible Solutions

- Increase transparency between states to enable more efficient tracking
- States should improve their abilities to control exports and diversion at a manufacturing level
- States should increase engagement with developing tracing technologies
- Postal agencies should be trained and encouraged to recognise and flag suspicious packages

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