

Forum: Disarmament Commission

Issue: Preventing the illegal trade in small arms

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Introduction

The illegal trade in small arms annually accounts for an estimated 60 to 90% of the 100,000+ conflicts casualties and 90% of civilian casualties. It helps fund civil wars, contribute to increasing crime rates, and supply some terrorists with weapons. It's very difficult to trace, seeing as small arms have legitimate law enforcement, military, and recreational or sporting uses – unlike weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, small arms are long lasting, easy to maintain, cheap, available, highly portable, and concealable. They can be smuggled across borders in many different ways. And so, while there are at least 639 million small arms in the world, only 59% are legally owned.

Definition of Key Terms

Small arms

Weapons designed for individual use. They include: rifles and carbines, assault rifles, revolvers, self-loading pistols, and sub-machine guns.

Illegal black market transfers

Transfers of goods that are “in clear violation of national and/or international laws and without official government consent or control, these transfers may involve corrupt government officials acting on their own for personal gain.”

Illicit grey market transfers

Transfers of goods that include “governments, their agents, or individuals exploiting loopholes or intentionally circumventing national and/or international laws or policies.”

General Overview

Small arms sales

Authorized small arms sales around the world, according to information gathered in the year 2004, generated up to \$4 billion. It is estimated that illegal small arms sales are about 10 to 20 percent of the total trade in small arms.

Known small arms producers

Countries

There are ninety-two nations worldwide that are known to produce small arms. The top four small-arms exporters are: the United States, the Russian Federation, France, and the United Kingdom.

Companies

The number of small arms-producing companies is estimated to be about 1,249.

Examples of different ways small arms can enter illicit trade

The violation of international, regional, or national embargoes and/or sanctions

A common form of the illicit small arm trade is to violate embargoes and sanctions. Individuals, companies, and states do so by allowing their countries to be used as trans-shipment points, in order to ship weapons to barred parties or countries.

Corrupt government officials

All around the world, corrupt government officials allow weapons exports through or from a country where it would be illegal or difficult to do so. Some officials may accept payoffs or bribes to either provide export licenses or to “look the other way” as weapons are shipped through or from ports.

Inadequate weapons stockpile management and/or security

Badly managed or secured small arms are susceptible to loss and theft. Thus, they are relatively easy to take from government or corporate arsenals and enter into the illicit small arms trade.

Weak policies and laws

Vague or ineffective laws pertaining to the purchase of small arms can also be factors of the increasing number of illicit small arms. For example, if there is no limit to how many guns a person may own at any one time, people can buy several weapons and then illegally resell them.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
November 15, 2000	The <i>United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</i> was adopted by the GA.
July 9 – 20, 2001	The first UN Conference on the <i>Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Their Aspects</i> is held.
July 20, 2001	<i>Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA)</i> is established, after the above conference.
September 29, 2003	The <i>United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</i> entered into force.
June 3, 2005	The <i>UN Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition</i> (aka Firearms Protocol) was adopted by the GA.
2006	The GA requested that the Security Council establish a group of experts to look in to the “feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.”
2008	The GA starts discussion focused on a possible arms trade treaty, which is open to all Member States. It is predicted that there will be two one-week meetings from 2009 to 2011.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN established *The Firearms Protocol*, which constitutes the only global, legally-binding instrument pertaining to illegal small arms, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), which enables states to trace and identify illegal small arms. Shortly after, the UN formed policy framework to address such a matter in its establishment and implementation of the *PoA*, which has led to other agreements at regional and international scales Both *PoA* and *The Firearms Protocol* aim to facilitate cooperation among states through a series of control measures and provisions that cover multiple aspects of the small arms issue, such as: maintaining records on firearms; the lending of in the tracing of firearms, training, and exchange of knowledge.

To strengthen the level of cooperation between states, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) formed the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism (CASA). CASA is currently developing the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACs), which will help identify validated

and internationally recognized principles for the control of small arms. Additionally, the UN designs, implements, and monitors weapons destruction and collection programmes.

- United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 15 November 2000 **(A/RES/55/25)**
- Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 8 June 2001 **(A/RES/55/255)**
- Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, 20 July 2001 **(A/CONF.192/15)**
- International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, 8 December 2005 **(A/CONF.192/15)**

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