

CLEIMUN 20

“Diplomacy in a challenging global environment”

Research Report

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

The Question of Illegal Arms Trading Across International Borders.

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Introduction

According to the Small Arms Survey of 2017, over one billion small arms are in circulation. 857 million (85 percent) are in civilian hands, 133 million (13 percent) are in military arsenals, and 23 million (2 percent) are owned by law enforcement agencies ¹. As the number of arms in the world grows, issues arise within certain regions due to the concentration of these illicit weapons.

In the post Cold War era, West Africa received a large influx of weapons from fallen regimes, such as Gaddafi in Libya, and terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda. Corrupt security forces often sell arms to other militant groups as well. While the number of revolutions in the area has fallen, the arms still continue to circulate the region causing unrest.

Most arms in Asia are concentrated in the southeast. The largest exporter to the region is Russia, accounting for billions of dollars worth of arms trades despite the United States of America’s sanctions. South East Asia is considered to be a crossroads for arms trafficking due to the large concentration of arms in the area.

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Within Europe, most illegal arms are circulated through organized criminal groups and gangs. These illegal arms largely originate from the Western Balkans due to past conflicts and former Soviet connections. The European market for illegal arms is considered to be “modest” in size, but recent terrorism threats have led to a crackdown on arms trafficking.

The largest hotspot for arms trafficking within the Americas is Central America. Estimates show millions of legal and illegal arms in circulation in the region. Many of these arms were left after civil wars, notably in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Additional arms are often trafficked across the United States - Mexico border due to their availability and price within the United States of America.

Regions

Africa

Within Africa, arms deals are a major source of income for militant groups. These groups include splinter groups of Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and several nationalist movements. Areas of concern regarding these groups include Mauritania, Guinea, Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Liberia, and Côte d’Ivoire. United Nation peacekeepers are currently active in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire.

Many arms are of the Cold War era. Most seized arms are Kalashnikov-style rifles from the former Soviet Union and the Chinese manufactured Type 56 rifle. The most common handguns are the French manufactured MAB PA-15.

Arms are sourced in several ways. Weapons from past regional conflicts are resold in the area. In a similar fashion, weapons are imported from neighboring regions that are experiencing conflict. Arms are bought or rented from security officials illegally. Foreign governments supply

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weapons to militant groups as support. Lastly, weapons have been imported from outside Africa by air and sea.

Asia

Cambodia has been a hotspot for arms trafficking since the conflicts throughout the 1980s. Between 1992-1993, officials seized over 320,000 small arms and 80,000,000 items of ammunition within Cambodia. These arms have been sourced from China, Thailand, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union. Many of these arms were seized from large stockpiles remaining from regional wars.

Thailand is a major crossroads within Asia for arms trafficking. Many arms trafficked through Thailand, as high as 80% of them, will be sold within Cambodia due to a porous border. “Shipping agents” are hired to facilitate trade deals across both Cambodia and Myanmar’s borders. When arms arrive in their desired location, they are either used or resold.

Within China, 15 factories currently produce legal arms. However, due to a recent lack of demand, illicit markets have grown. Illegal arms bazaars operate regularly in cities such as Baigou. The largest recipients of these arms are militant groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf.

Europe

According to Europol, Europe’s weapon stockpiles are modest in size, but trafficking occurs on a small scale. Most arms deals are used as supplementary income. Illicit arms deals are most prominent in the Western Balkans due to a higher concentration of weapons and organized crime.

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Throughout Europe, arms are most commonly acquired in several ways. Neutralized weapons are reactivated for use. Legal weapons are stolen and resold illegally. Legal arms are embezzled from legal organizations. Illegal arms are sold on the internet. Gas pistols are converted into lethal weapons. Europol estimates that 500,000 small arms are currently in Europe.

Americas

Within Central America, 77% of murders are committed with firearms. Large numbers of firearms were imported during regional wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Many of these weapons were spread across the countries to insurgency groups, so small numbers have been recollected since their importation. For example, it is estimated that 360,000 rifles were unaccounted for at the end of the El Salvador civil war.

Despite the lack of civil wars within Central America, the demand from criminal groups remains high. Rural crime groups buy more rifles to assert regional control, while urban crime groups buy more handguns for close quarter purposes.

Many weapons are trafficked through Panama due to its duty-free arms trade. Weapons are purchased legally and shipped across Central and South America illegally. The most common weapons are assault rifles and 9mm pistols.

Corrupt security forces have become a main source of firearms, especially in developing nations. Underpaid police and military sell their weapons to militants to supplement their income. Adding to this is the surplus of arms within nations. Some police and military forces have a disproportionate number of firearms to people, making leaks unnoticeable.

Past Efforts and Possible Solutions

Regulation

- The Arms Trade Treaty
 - Regulate trading of conventional arms.
 - Eradicate illicit arms trade.
 - Maintain a national control system on ammunition.
 - Maintain a national control system on parts and components of conventional weapons.
 - Nations must consider the impact that an arms deal may have on another nation.
 - Nations must regulate the transportation of arms.
 - Records of deals must be kept to ensure authenticity.

Confiscation

- Firearms Protocol
 - Criminalize the illicitly manufacturing and trafficking of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, and falsifying or illicitly obliterating, removing or altering the markings on firearms.
 - Mark firearms for purposes of their effective tracing and identification.
 - Keep systematic records of information on firearms and international transactions in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition for tracing purposes.
 - Mandate by law the confiscation of illicitly manufactured or trafficked firearms, their parts and components and ammunition after which the

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firearms should be ideally destroyed unless another disposal has been officially authorized.

- Keep documentation and licensing of all international transactions and brokers and marking of all imported firearms and government firearms turned to civilian use.
- Brokers in firearms trafficking: In the context of firearms trafficking, the person or entity acting as an intermediary, bringing together relevant parties and arranging or facilitating a potential transaction in return for financial or other benefit is referred to as a "broker". Some brokers have even been known to do business and sell weapons to both sides of the same conflict.
- Render permanently inoperable all deactivated firearms.
- Share information such as organized criminal groups suspected of involvement in firearms trafficking.
- Identify a national body or a single point of contact to act as liaison between the country and other States Parties on matters relating to the Protocol.

Definitions

1. "Small arms" includes handguns (revolvers and pistols), machine pistols, shotguns, rifles, carbines, submachine guns, personal defense weapons, assault rifles, battle rifles, designated marksman rifles, sniper rifles, squad automatic weapons, and light machine guns.

Sources

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