



Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Topic: Discussing measures to prevent the illicit trade and trafficking of conventional weapons

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Position: Co-chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Nepheli Makridi, and I attend the 10th Grade at HAEF - Athens College. It is my utmost honor and pleasure to be serving as a Co-Chair of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1) in the upcoming ST CAT'S MUN Conference 2024.

A few words about me: I first became acquainted with the unique world of MUN in 8th Grade and since then my fondness for this club has only blossomed. I decided to join it due to my passion for debating, international relationships and above all my concerns about current global affairs and interest in any endeavor that strives to tackle global problems. Undoubtedly, I believe that MUN is a valuable platform which has given me the opportunity of working, collaborating, and communicating with a group of diverse people and making unforgettable memories. So, in turn I wish to contribute to this memory-making in your respective MUN journey and generate an exciting and safe space for fruitful debate.

This year the theme of the conference discusses the interval following the end of a war, a time period in which peacebuilding is of high importance. It is a time of reflection for humanity when societies face and realize the dire repercussions of violent acts and the use of weapons.

Through this study guide, I hope to introduce you to the topic of "Discussing measures to prevent the illicit trade and trafficking of conventional weapons" and offer you critical information on the issue that will help draft resolutions and come up with solutions. The topic at hand closely correlates to this year's conference's theme: "Post



War Societies” and is especially relevant to our reality today. Should you have any questions about the topic at hand while preparing, do not hesitate to contact me through my personal email: maknefeli@gmail.com.

I am looking forward to meeting you all!

Kindest regards,

Nepheli Makridi

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

On the global scale 90 percent of civilian casualties are caused by small arms. Nearly 50 per cent of all violent deaths each year, involve light weapons ¹. Since the ancient and medieval periods, conventional weapons are the most commonly and widely used weapons in conflict and crime, and their unregulated trade has a devastating human cost.

Specifically, the most prevalent form of armament globally and historically, are conventional weapons. However, there are few international regulations or legally binding agreements governing the trade in conventional weapons. The absence of international standards, which would render the process more licit and sheltered, for the transfer of weaponries has long been a source of worry globally.

Throughout history, the types of weapons used ranged from wooden sticks, knives and swords to firearms and mass target weapons. These weapons were used as a defensive or offensive mechanism in a variety of conflicts starting from the ancient times up until the first World War in 1914. Today, nonetheless, the category of weapons which bring battleships into our daily lives and are frequently used by terrorists are conventional weapons. Unfortunately, during the last decades there have been reports of thousands of attacks and incidents occurring in places like supermarkets, malls, schools, streets, airports, and holly grounds. In most of these cases civilians, mainly young people and students, have either been threatened or even injured and murdered by unlicensed and illegally trafficked weapons. More than 600 people die every day as a

¹ <https://www.globalissues.org/article/78/small-arms-they-cause-90-of-civilian-casualties>



result of firearms violence, which is driven in part by easy access to firearms ². Therefore, we ought to strive towards the termination of illicit trade and trafficking of conventional weapons.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Conventional Weapons

“Conventional weapons include a wide range of equipment such as but not limited to; armoured combat vehicles, combat helicopters, combat aircraft, warships, small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ammunition, and artillery. They are the principal tools used in all wars up to the present day. However, while they inflict dramatic damage, they are not frequently covered on news outlets compared to weapons of mass destruction. ³”

Small Arms

“Small arms are weapons designed for personal use, including: light machine guns, sub-machine guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles, and semi-automatic rifles. ⁴”

Chinese fire lance

“A bamboo tube (or metal tube) that used gunpowder to fire a spear and was invented in the 10th century. ⁵”

Protocol

“The system of rules and acceptable behaviour used at official ceremonies and occasions. ⁶”

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/>

³ <https://www.ipb.org/conventional-weapons/>

⁴ <https://www.safeworld.org.uk>

⁵ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/inventions/who-invented-the-first-gun.htm>

⁶ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/protocol>



“*Protocol* is most often used when talking about the rules of government or official agencies. It is derived from the French and refers to the correct rules of etiquette for diplomats.”⁷”

UN Charter

“The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document of the United Nations. It was signed on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and came into force on 24 October 1945. The UN Charter codifies the major principles of international relations, from sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force in international relations.”⁸”

International regulatory frameworks

“Regulatory frameworks are legal mechanisms that exist on national and international levels. They can be mandatory and coercive (national laws and regulations, contractual obligations) or voluntary (integrity pacts, codes of conduct, arms control agreements).”⁹”

Legally binding agreements

“A legally binding written contract is an agreement that is valid and, therefore, enforceable. When parties sign a legally binding contract, they must fulfil their obligations. If they do not, they may be penalised, for example, by the other party having the contract enforced or seeking damages.”¹⁰”

International Standards

“An international standard is a document that has been developed through the consensus of experts from many countries and is approved and published by a globally recognized body. It comprises rules, guidelines, processes, or characteristics that allow users to achieve the same outcome time and time again.”¹¹”

⁷ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/protocol>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

⁹

<https://securitysectorintegrity.com/standards-and-regulations/procurement-monitoring-evaluation/>

¹⁰ <https://legalvision.com.au/legally-binding-written-agreement/>

¹¹ <https://www.iec.ch/publications/international-standards>



Arms Control

“Arms control agreements are a specialized subset of diplomacy that limit developing, testing, producing, deploying, or using certain types of weapons. They can also create transparency and predictability around the world’s most dangerous weapons and decrease the likelihood and potential costs of conflict. Such agreements can occur between two countries (bilaterally) or many countries (multilaterally) and can take different forms. ¹²”

Arms Limitations

“An agreement between two or more countries to reduce the number of weapons owned, with the aim of preventing war. ¹³”

Non State Actors

“Non-state actors include organizations and individuals that are not affiliated with, directed by, or funded through the government. These include corporations, private financial institutions, and NGOs, as well as paramilitary and armed resistance groups. ¹⁴”

Licensed Collectors

“The term “collector” means any person who acquires, holds, or disposes of firearms as curios or relics, as the Attorney General shall by regulation define, and the term “licensed collector” means any such person licensed under provisions. ¹⁵”

R&D Investment

“Research and development (R&D) expenses are direct expenditures relating to a company's efforts to develop, design, and enhance its products, services, technologies, or processes. The industrial, technological, health care, and pharmaceutical sectors typically incur the highest degree of R&D expenses. ¹⁶”

Incendiary Device

“A bomb that is designed to start fires. The term “explosive or incendiary device” means (A) dynamite and all other forms of high explosives, (B) any explosive bomb, grenade, missile, or similar device, and (C) any incendiary bomb or grenade, fire bomb,

¹² <https://world101.cfr.org/foreign-policy/tools-foreign-policy/what-arms-control>

¹³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/arms-limitation>

¹⁴ <https://www.escri-net.org/resources/non-state-actors>

¹⁵ https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=18-USC-272088304-816587314&term_occur=20&term_src=

¹⁶ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/research-and-development-expenses.asp>



or similar device, including any device which (i) consists of or includes a breakable container including a flammable liquid or compound, and a wick composed of any material which, when ignited, is capable of igniting such flammable liquid or compound, and (ii) can be carried or thrown by one individual acting alone.¹⁷

Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime

“Ba'athism advocates socialist economic policies such as state ownership of natural resources, protectionism, distribution of lands to peasants, and favour planned economies.¹⁸”

Terrorism

“Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government or its citizens to further certain political or social objectives.¹⁹”

Mass Shooting

“A mass shooting is defined as an occurrence in which four or more individuals are injured or killed.”

Extremism

“Belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.²⁰”

Trench Warfare

“Warfare in which opposing armed forces attack, counterattack, and defend from relatively permanent systems of trenches dug into the ground.. Trench warfare is resorted to when the superior firepower of the defense compels the opposing forces to “dig in” so extensively as to sacrifice their mobility in order to gain protection.²¹”

Infantry Warfare

¹⁷ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/incendiary-device>

¹⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Baath-Party>

¹⁹ <https://www.austintexas.gov/faq/what-terrorism>

²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/extremism>

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/trench-warfare>



“Troops who fight on foot, even though transported to the battlefield by horses, ships, aircraft, tanks and other motorized vehicles, skis, or other means. The term applies equally to troops armed with such hand weapons as the spear and sword in ancient times and with automatic rifles and rocket launchers in modern times.”²²

Whistleblower

“A Whistleblower is any individual who provides the right information to the right people. Stated differently, lawful whistleblowing occurs when an individual provides information that they reasonably believe evidences wrongdoing to an authorized recipient.”²³

Dive Bombers

“In early military aircraft, a plane that is designed to dive directly at a target, release bombs at low altitude, level off abruptly, and depart. It was the subject of considerable exploration in the 1920s by the U.S. Naval and Marine Corps fliers, who developed it into a standard tactic to be used against the lightly armoured upper decks of warships.”²⁴

Deadlock

“A situation in which agreement in an argument cannot be reached because neither side will change its demands or accept any of the demands of the other side.”²⁵

Domino Effect

“A cumulative effect produced when one event initiates a succession of similar events.”²⁶

Black Market

“A black market is an economic activity that takes place outside government-sanctioned channels. Illegal market transactions usually occur “under the table” to let participants avoid government price controls or taxes. The goods and

²² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/infantry>

²³ <https://www.dni.gov/ICIG-Whistleblower/what-is.html>

²⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/dive-bomber>

²⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deadlock>

²⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domino%20effect>



services offered in a black market can be illegal, meaning their purchase and sale are prohibited by law, or they can be legal but transacted to avoid taxes. Illegal markets are also known as illegal markets, shadow markets, or underground markets.²⁷

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Use of Conventional Weapons throughout history

Introduction

The use of conventional weapons and their uncontrolled trade have a frightful toll on human life. In fact, during armed war, tens of thousands of people are hurt, killed, raped, and forced to flee their homes²⁸. The rise in crime locally and the escalation of weapon races regionally serve to exacerbate the sense of unease. By demolishing homes, businesses, highways, and other infrastructure, heavy conventional weapons cause significant harm to societal systems. By eroding economic and political stability, harming the environment, and increasing reliance on foreign aid, they also have an impact on future generations. States deposit a significant amount of financial resources on conventional weapons, which serves to further the industry's interests while diverting funds away from necessities connected to fundamental human rights of the people. These substantial amounts, which are now dedicated to the military, would have greater return if invested in diplomacy, humanitarian aid, global public health, sustainability initiatives, and basic research.

The threat posed by these developing industries --which look to have yet to reach their full potential--is multidimensional. In More Economically Developed countries, organized crime undermines economic sovereignty and stability while offering a variety of unlawful "services" ranging from the flesh trade to money laundering. Most of these offenses are not unfamiliar, and commodities smuggling, for example, has occurred from the beginning of the nation-state, which taxed its people and attempted to enforce its laws. Nevertheless, the danger posed from organized

²⁷ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blackmarket.asp>

²⁸ <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14904.doc.htm>



crime is considered as being severe and sophisticated enough to the point where it effectively replicates the state at some levels--with its own rules, capital, and economic institutions--and can no longer be "controlled" by any single state. Highly developed nations are becoming increasingly conscious that organized crime activities necessitate collaboration not only with one another, but additionally with nations that are developing, which may offer the ingredients for organized crime to operate. Such items could include narcotics on the one hand and services from ruptured banking systems on the other.

Yet more important is that the introduction of firearms into any conflict--whether ethnic, criminal, religious, or political--immediately raises the level of violence to a level that the majority of law enforcement agencies throughout the world cannot handle. Increase may persist until it becomes a serious national security risk for a country, resulting in massive loss of life before it can be mitigated at all. Thus, the main issue is the fact that light weapons trafficking has major immediate and long-term repercussions for the security and stability of states, particularly smaller and weaker ones.

The UN Charter does not prohibit its members from owning and using conventional weapons if done in accordance with international law. This is why the terms "arms control" and "arms limitations" are more commonly used than "disarmament" when discussing conventional weapons. However, some conventional weapons may create humanitarian concern due to the manner they are or may be deployed, or because of their design, which renders them incompatible with international humanitarian law. Early attempts to address such concerns were made in the nineteenth century.

Evolution of Conventional Weapons

Historians consider the Chinese fire lance, a bamboo tube (or metal tube) that used gunpowder to fire a spear and was invented in the 10th century, to be the first gun ever made.

They've been around for over 1,000 years and have had an impact on warfare — and society in general — in ways that no other innovation can match. Around 850 C.E., Chinese alchemists accidentally developed gunpowder while attempting to construct a "fountain of youth" potion. The resulting black powder, known as "huo yao," was made



from a combination of charcoal, saltpeter, and sulfur. The then-reigning Song Dynasty was the first to employ gunpowder in warfare, employing it against the Mongols, whose frequent invasions into China troubled the Chinese throughout the period. The Chinese used fire lances or "flying fire" to assault the Mongols, which were arrows attached to tubes of gunpowder that, when ignited, would propel beyond enemy lines. More gunpowder-based weaponry were developed during the next decades as the Chinese refined a range of weapons against the Mongols, including the first cannons and grenades.

Gunpowder arrived in Europe around the 13th century, most likely via the Silk Road trade route through Central Asia. Rival nations developed gunpowder formulations over the years until they arrived at the perfect combination: around 75% saltpeter, 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur²⁹. Hand cannons made firing by a single soldier straightforward, so there were very likely the first personal handgun. Rudimentary gunpowder cannons were prevalent in the English and French forces by 1350, when they utilized the explosive technology against each other during the Hundred Years' War. As time passed, new and improved cannons were developed, many of which were compact and portable.

Given that weapons, like other tangible objects, obey natural laws, advances in chemistry, physics, quantum mechanics, and other fields of science and technology aided in the acceleration of both the industrial revolution and the enormous rise of weaponry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today weapons are utilized to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of activities such as; hunting, criminal activities, law enforcement, self-defense, combat, and suicide.

²⁹ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/inventions/who-invented-the-first-gun.htm>



Figure 1: Chinese Fire Lance ³⁰

Nuclear vs Conventional Explosion

One of the primary distinctions between nuclear and conventional explosions is that nuclear explosions can be thousands -or even millions- of times more powerful than the most powerful conventional detonations ³¹. The destructive force of the blast -or shock wave- is used by both types of weaponry. The temperatures achieved in a nuclear explosion, on the other hand, are much higher than in a conventional explosion, and a considerable amount of the energy in a nuclear explosion is emitted as light and heat, which is referred to as thermal energy. This energy has the ability to cause skin burns and to spark fires from great distances. Nuclear explosions are also accompanied by numerous types of radiation, which can endure from a few seconds to a prolonged time.

³⁰ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/inventions/who-invented-the-first-gun.htm>

³¹ <https://www.atomicarchive.com/science/effects/energy.html>

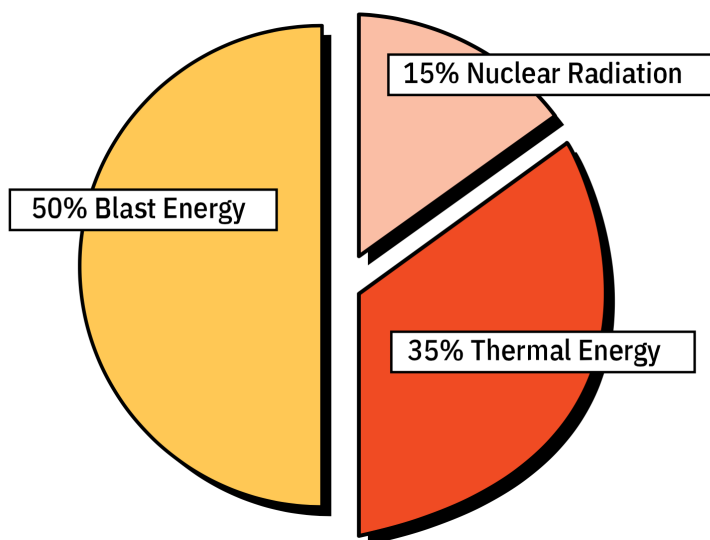


Figure II: The energy breakdown from a nuclear explosion ³²

First World War

During World War I (1914-18) armies were faced with the task of having to modify strategies and explore new technologies in order to overcome the deadlock. Specifically, weapons played a significant role in creating the difficult and unusual conditions of trench warfare. The catastrophic impact of modern artillery and machine guns prompted soldiers to seek cover on the battlefield for protection. This system was reinforced with defenses, underground shelters, and thick belts of barbed wire. While modern weapons had contributed to the crisis, generals anticipated that they would also help them battle its way out of it.

Infantry warfare had hitherto relied on hand-to-hand fighting. The machine gun, capable of taking out row after row of men from a distance on the battlefield, became ubiquitous during World War I. This weapon, together with barbed wire and mines, made traversing open terrain difficult and deadly. Trench warfare was therefore born. In 1916 tanks were introduced by the British, and they were employed in conjunction with aviation and artillery to push the front. Shooting from a distance was also made more effective by sea and airborne weaponry. Guns installed on ships could hit targets up to twenty miles inland. German submarines' stealth and speed offered Germany a

³² <https://www.atomicarchive.com/science/effects/energy.html>



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significant advantage in its North Sea domination. Despite their technological shortcomings, airplanes provided a psychological edge.

Newspapers documented the public's reaction to these technological developments, which included terror and retribution toward the repercussions of this evolution. Undoubtedly, WWI scarred an entire generation with its unprecedented brutality.



Figure III: French, British and German Types of Battle Tanks





Figure IV: Huge Siege Guns ³³

Second World War

World War II, which claimed the lives of 40 to 50 million people ³⁴, was by far the most ferocious and vicious conflict in human history. This historical period is notable for its evolution of weapons.

During World War II, aircraft reached their full capability. Dive bombers supported the army, while additional aircrafts bombed cities and destroyed enemy facilities. Despite the fact that aircraft carriers debuted too late to play a significant role in World War I, they played a critical role in naval combat during World War II. When jet engines were premiered in 1944, planes were even quicker. For the first time, a plane flew faster than sound in 1947 ³⁵.

Despite the introduction of anti-tank guns during the Second World War, tanks remained dominant. Two important advancements occurred during World War II. The first one was that the Germans started employing rockets. They fired the first V-1 flying bomb on June 13, 1944 ³⁶. The V-2 missile was even more hazardous, since it could travel 200-220 miles and it reached a height of 50 miles and traveled at speeds of almost 2,000 miles per hour .

The atomic bomb was the second breakthrough. One exploded over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Another bomb exploded over Nagasaki on August 9. Tens of thousands of people were slaughtered in each. In 1949, the Soviet Union detonated an atomic weapon ³⁷.

“Fast and Furious”

³³

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/world-war-i-rotogravures/articles-and-essays/military-technology-in-world-war-i/>

³⁴ <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/World-War-II/353934>

³⁵ <https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/breaking-sound-barrier-75th>

³⁶

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-terrifying-german-revenge-weapons-of-the-second-world-war>

³⁷ <https://thebulletin.org/2020/08/counting-the-dead-at-hiroshima-and-nagasaki/>



Operation *Fast and Furious* was a high-profile controversy involving the United States of America and Mexico and more specifically the Justice Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and former Attorney General Eric Holder. During the controversy, federal officials allowed over 2,000 weapons to be sold illicitly to known or suspected straw purchasers. From 2009 to 2011, the ATF ³⁸, in collaboration with other partners, approved illicit gun purchases in order to follow the vendors, who were thought to be linked to Mexican drug cartels. According to a Department of Justice (DOJ) inspector General report, over 2,000 weapons were illegally purchased for \$1.5 million during the Fast and Furious investigation. ³⁹

Mexican authorities were not informed that thousands of semi-automatic rifles were being sold to Arizona residents suspected of having ties to Mexican criminal organizations. According to ATF whistleblowers, the US government began urging gun store owners in 2009 to violate the law by selling firearms to suspected criminals. According to testimony from ATF agents turned whistleblowers, ATF officers were then told not to intercept the smugglers and instead to let the guns pass the US-Mexico border and result in the hands of Mexican drug-trafficking organizations.

Hundreds of weapons were eventually found in the United States and Mexico, which would continue having implications. Fast and Furious was part of Project Gunrunner, which was part of the Department of Justice's larger National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, aimed at helping combat firearms trafficking into Mexico. The ATF's "gun walking" probe was not the first. Operation Wide Receiver, which began in 2006, came before it. Allegations appeared that ATF personnel purposefully failed to detect weapons purchased by straw buyers before they reached the hands of drug cartels ⁴⁰. Critics claim that the purported technique allowed weaponry to end up in the hands of the killers of the US border agent.

38

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2011/09/28/fast-and-furious-just-might-be-president-obamas-watergate/>

39

<https://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/americas/operation-fast-and-furious-fast-facts/index.html>

40

<https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ATF-06-14-11-Joint-Issa-Grassley-report-on-agent-findings.pdf>



2023 Israel– Hamas Conflict

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, and 750,000 Palestinians⁴¹ being displaced, and the territory being divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

Now, 74 years later a war has broken out in the region, since October 7. On October 10 and 11, of 2023, images and videos circulated showing multiple airbursts of artillery-fired white phosphorus over the Gaza City port and two rural locations along the Israel-Lebanon border according to the Palestinian Foreign Ministry⁴². While not banned outright in war zones under international law, its use near civilians is prohibited under Protocol III of the United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons - although Israel has not signed the convention. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), white phosphorus is not a chemical weapon because it functions as an incendiary agent rather than through its "chemical action on life processes" (Article II.2 of the CWC).

The use of white phosphorus by Israel in military operations in Gaza and Lebanon exposes civilians to serious and long-term harm. White phosphorus, which can be used for marking, signaling, and concealing as well as as a weapon to start fires since it has a substantial incendiary effect that can severely burn humans as well as set structures, fields, and other civilian items on fire in the vicinity. The use of white phosphorus in Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated locations, increases the risk to people and violates international humanitarian law's prohibition on placing civilians in danger and in risk of lifelong suffering.

⁴¹ <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>

⁴² <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/human-rights-watch-says-israel-used-white-phosphorus-gaza-lebanon-2023-10-12/>



Figure V: White Phosphorus used in Gaza and Lebanon ⁴³

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of the Event	Event
10th Century	Appearance of 1st firearm in China, the <i>fire lance</i>
13th Century	Gunpowder arrives in Europe
14 May 1948	The creation of the State of Israel
28 July 1914 - 11 November 1918	First World War (WWI)
1 September 1939 - 2 September 1945	Second World War (WWII)
1980	Formation of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

⁴³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/12/israel-white-phosphorus-used-gaza-lebanon>



1 January 1998	Formation of the United States Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
1999	The Security Council first addresses the issue of small arms as a standalone agenda item
2009	Gunrunning scandal codenamed "Fast and Furious," a program run secretly by the U.S. government sends thousands of firearms over an international border and directly into the hands of criminals
2003 - 2011	Iraq War
7 October 2023	Hamas launches attack against Israel

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

China

The Soviet Union supplied the majority of China's early armaments ⁴⁴. Later, China attempted to design its own weaponry in addition to the imitations. The majority of the weapons being used by the Chinese army are of Chinese design, due to China's level of industrial production, thus China has been transformed into a major weaponry producer.. It has made significant investments in Research and Development (R&D) to improve its military capabilities. China's total R&D investment has surpassed the 3-trillion-yuan milestone, reaching nearly 3.09 trillion yuan (US\$456 billion) in 2022, up 10.4% year on year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics ⁴⁵. Beijing announced its intention to join the United Nations guns Trade Treaty (ATT) in June 2020, with the goal of halting the distribution of guns into conflict-prone regions throughout the world. However, Beijing's decision contradicted China's track record of selling weapons to unapproved parties in Africa and Southeast Asia. Specifically, in 1996-2000, Beijing was

⁴⁴ <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/jbwg-2022-0020/html>

⁴⁵ http://english.scio.gov.cn/pressroom/2023-01/30/content_85080177.htm



the fourth largest arms exporter to Africa, rising to second place by 2013-2017, with 17 percent of Africa's total market, only behind Russia⁴⁶. Despite human rights allegations, the provision of weapons and defense equipment has been a foundation of Chinese diplomatic outreach to nations such as South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar. Given this, Beijing's renewed desire to join the ATT may work against its former attitude.

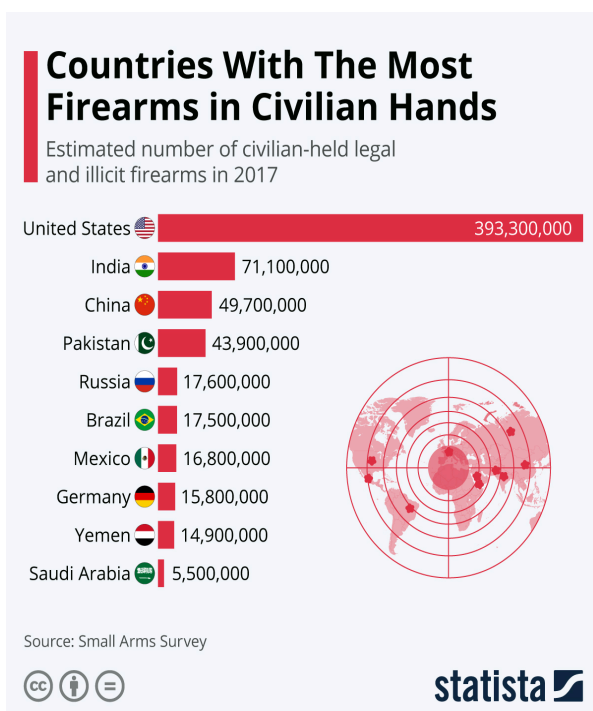


Figure VIII: Relevant Statistics⁴⁷

France

Individuals in France, with the exception of licensed collectors, are not permitted to own military-grade weapons. Those wishing to own a pistol or hunting rifle in France must first pass a background check and a mental health evaluation, as well as get a license. While semi-automatic and fully automatic rifles are outlawed in France, they have grown in popularity in recent years. According to the Paris-based National Observatory for Delinquency, a government entity established in 2003, the number of

46

<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2743926/to-honor-its-commitment-to-un-arms-trade-treaty-china-must-sacrifice/>

47

<https://www.statista.com/chart/23192/estimated-number-of-civilian-held-legal-and-illicit-firearms/>



illegal firearms in France has been continuously increasing by double digit percentages in recent years ⁴⁸.

Iraq

In terms of weapon trafficking Iraq comes second in ranking among the countries ⁴⁹. The Iraq War, which was a long-running armed conflict in Iraq that lasted from 2003 to 2011, starting with the invasion of Iraq by a coalition led by the United States, which ousted Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. The struggle raged on for the next decade, with an insurgency forming to challenge coalition forces and the post-invasion Iraqi government. In 2011, US forces were officially removed. The United States re-entered the battle in 2014 as the leader of a new coalition, and the insurgency and many aspects of the violent struggle continue. The invasion took place as part of the George W. Bush administration's war on terror in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. During the initial invasion phase, from March 19 to May 1, 2003, the US-led coalition committed 160,000 troops into Iraq. In total, the Pentagon supplied about 1.45 million firearms to various security forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, including over 978,000 assault rifles, 266,000 handguns, and over 112,000 machine guns ⁵⁰. The Pentagon currently has only an imprecise and unreliable understanding of how many weapons it issued, let alone where these weapons are. Meanwhile, one of the reasons Iraq will not recover from its post-invasion troubles anytime soon is the essentially limitless supply of black-market weaponry from American suppliers.

Syria

Syria is full to capacity with weaponry. The high number of incidents concerning conventional weapons, is driven by the ready availability of weapons taken from caches in Iraq; provided directly to specific parties by other countries; or misdirected from those transfers to unexpected receivers, which include small guns, anti-aircraft missiles, and air-dropped bombs. The majority of Syria's military equipment originated from the Soviet Union or the former Yugoslavia. Russia and Iran are now the primary suppliers of

⁴⁸ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/9/guns-france-armstraffickig.html>

⁴⁹ <https://ocindex.net/country/iraq>

⁵⁰

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/23/magazine/how-many-guns-did-the-us-lose-track-of-in-iraq-and-afghanistan-hundreds-of-thousands.html>



arms to the government. It funds its arms imports through the state budget, which means that the government is utilizing the tax money of the very people it is targeting to buy the weapons it deploys against them. Syria is the highest ranked country in arms trafficking.

United States of America

Guns are strongly embedded in American society and political issues. Namely, the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution ensures the freedom to keep and bear arms unconnected with service in a militia, and to use that arm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home, and over one-third of American adults say they possess a gun⁵¹. At the same time, President Joe Biden has suggested gun policy legislation that would build on the Bipartisan Gun Safety Law (and school security initiatives, the legislation expands criminal background checks for some gun buyers, prohibits a broader group of domestic-violence offenders from purchasing firearms, and funds programs that would allow authorities to seize guns from troubled individuals⁵²) passed by Congress last year in response to concerns such as rising gun death rates and mass shootings. USA ranks as the country first in gun ownership, specifically, the US has 120.5 firearms per 100 residents, report finds and it is the only country with more civilian-owned firearms than people.⁵³ While there are many gun manufacturers in the United States, total gun production is dominated by a few large corporations. The United States of America is the world's greatest weapons exporter, with ten billion dollars in weapon exports⁵⁴. Furthermore, American gun makers and service companies continue to push the technical limit. According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been around 470 mass shootings in the United States so far this

⁵¹ https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment

⁵² <https://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/in-the-news/senate-passes-bipartisan-gun-violence-bill-marking-breakthrough>

⁵³ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-25/how-many-guns-in-the-us-buying-spree-bolsters-lead-as-most-armed-country#xj4y7vzkg>

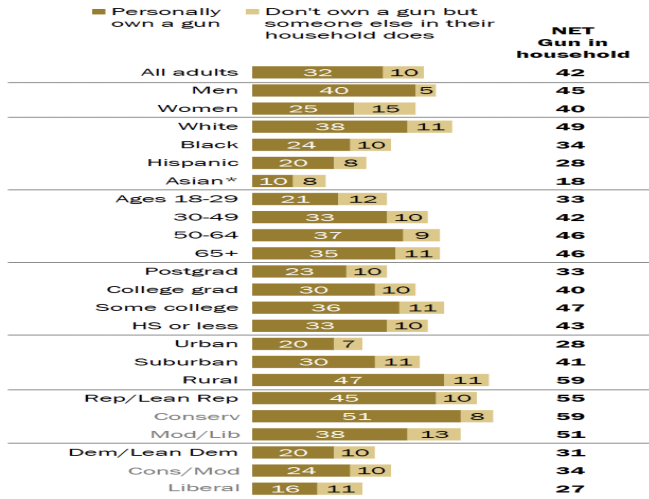
⁵⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267131/market-share-of-the-leading-exporters-of-conventional-weapons/>



year (2023)⁵⁵. Their statistics cover shootings in both private residences and public areas. In the past three years, there have been at least two such occurrences every day on average. The deadliest such incident, which occurred in Las Vegas in 2017, killed more than 50 people and injured 500 more.

Nearly a third of U.S. adults say they personally own a gun

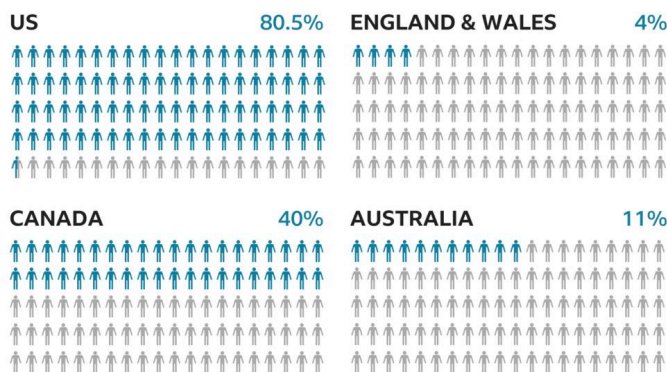
% who say they ...



* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.
 Note: White, Black and Asian adults include only those who report being one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 5-11, 2023.
 PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure VI: Differences in gun ownership rates by political affiliation, gender, community type and other factors in the US⁵⁶

An international comparison of gun-related killings as a % of all homicides



Source: Statistics Canada and CDC (US) 2021, ONS (England & Wales) Apr 2021 - Mar 2022, Australian Institute of Criminology Jul 2020 - Jun 2021

⁵⁵ <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

⁵⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/13/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/>



Figure VII: Statistics connecting guns and homicides ⁵⁷

Yemen

Firearm ownership is regarded as a right rather than a privilege in Yemen, and hence is permitted without a license or permit ⁵⁸. Yemen is the world's second most militarized country ⁵⁹, trailing only the United States. In March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition backed by the US intervened militarily in Yemen to fight the Houthis, restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's administration ⁶⁰, and counter what they claimed was an expanding Iranian influence in the area. Today Yemen is still in a state of war and in a state of abundance of weapons, due to the conflict and smuggling of them which occurred. The smuggling of guns from Iran to the Houthis is a flagrant violation of the UN targeted arms embargo, and it is yet another evidence of how malicious Iranian conduct is prolonging Yemen's war. Iran's backing for armed organizations throughout the region endangers international and regional security, as well as soldiers, diplomatic workers, and people in the region. US officials have accused Iran of violating United Nations resolutions by supplying the Houthis with drones and missiles for cross-border assaults on Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that no such attacks have occurred in more than a year. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the war, and millions more have become dependent on humanitarian help ⁶¹. Despite its decision to reestablish diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia, Iran has continued to send weapons and narcotics that help fuel the Yemen war, which erupted in 2014 and has resulted in one of the world's greatest humanitarian emergencies.

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing effective, evidence-based policies against

⁵⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>

⁵⁸ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Gun_law_in_Yemen

⁵⁹ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Gun_law_in_Yemen

⁶⁰ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26390311>

⁶¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-2019-humanitarian-needs-overview-enar>



terrorism and violent extremism that are founded on human rights and the rule of law. It is based in The Hague, the Netherlands and provides research, policy advice, training, and other solutions to help countries around the world improve their counter-terrorism policies and procedures. The international community has increasingly recognized and expressed worry about the link between terrorism and various forms of organized crime, particularly the trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW), as a severe threat to peace and security, as well as an impediment to long-term development. On a national, regional, and worldwide scale, illicitly trafficked and obtained SALW, their parts and components, and ammunition play a significant role as an enabler of armed conflict, as well as a revenue source and danger multiplier for terrorist groups working alone or in coordination. The terrorism-armscrime nexus will be addressed by improving criminal justice responses to prevent and combat SALW trafficking and to disrupt the unlawful supply of such weapons to terrorist groups. It will specifically contribute to the improvement of Central Asian countries' national legislative, strategic, and operational capacities. Missions will be conducted as part of the project to map the regional situation, assess relevant legislation, and identify response capacity to the threat posed by guns trafficking, terrorism, and related crimes.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research is an autonomous disarmament and international security-oriented institution. Its primary role in the conventional weapon scene is to research on topics and mediate potential conflicts that may arise when it comes to disarmament and arms control. One of the branches of disarmament the organization focuses on is countering the proliferation and misuse of conventional arms and ammunition, called the Conventional Arms and Ammunition Programme which works to curb the impacts of illicit proliferation and misuse of conventional arms.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The UNODA is an office of the UN Secretariat responsible for all disarmament affairs amongst its member states. It was created under Kofi Annan and its goal is to enhance disarmament when it comes to chemical, nuclear and biological weapons as well as landmines and small arms to prevent the outbreak of any local or even international conflict.



RELEVANT UN TREATIES CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The CCW was adopted on 10 October 1980 and entered into force in 1983. The Convention's goal is to prohibit or limit the use of specified types of weapons that are thought to cause needless or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. The CCW had been ratified or acceded to by 126 states as of July 1, 2023. The CCW is one of the few tools of international humanitarian law that tries to govern the conduct of hostilities by all conflict parties, including non-state actors.

[Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects \(PoA\): New York, 9-20 July 2001](#)

Governments agreed to strengthen national small arms legislation, import/export controls, and stockpile management, as well as cooperate and assist, under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA).

International Tracing Instrument 2005

The International Tracing Instrument (ITI) was additionally adopted in 2005, which assists states to guarantee that weapons are correctly marked and that records are maintained. Furthermore, it establishes a framework for international cooperation in weapons tracing, meeting one of the pledges made by states in the Programme of Action. Improving weapon traceability is now part of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Meetings and national reports on PoA and ITI are always held in conjunction.

Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/68/31)

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a multilateral agreement that prohibits governments from selling conventional weapons to states on the grounds that these weapons could be used to commit "genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes." According to UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism Ben Emmerson, "the entry into force of this ATT is a very important step toward peace and security." That being noted, it is the first worldwide treaty to create international principles aimed at preventing conventional weapons from being used in war crimes or human rights violations, or from being diverted for illegal use by criminals. In other words the ATT seeks to prohibit irresponsible arms transfers and prevent the shipment



of arms to conflict zones where they are likely to exacerbate violence and contribute to repressions and human rights abuses. The Treaty contributes to peace and security by preventing the flow of destabilizing weapons to conflict zones. Ambassador Peter Woolcott, President of the Final Conference on the ATT said “We owe it to those millions – often the most vulnerable in society – whose lives have been overshadowed by the irresponsible and illicit international trade in arms.”.

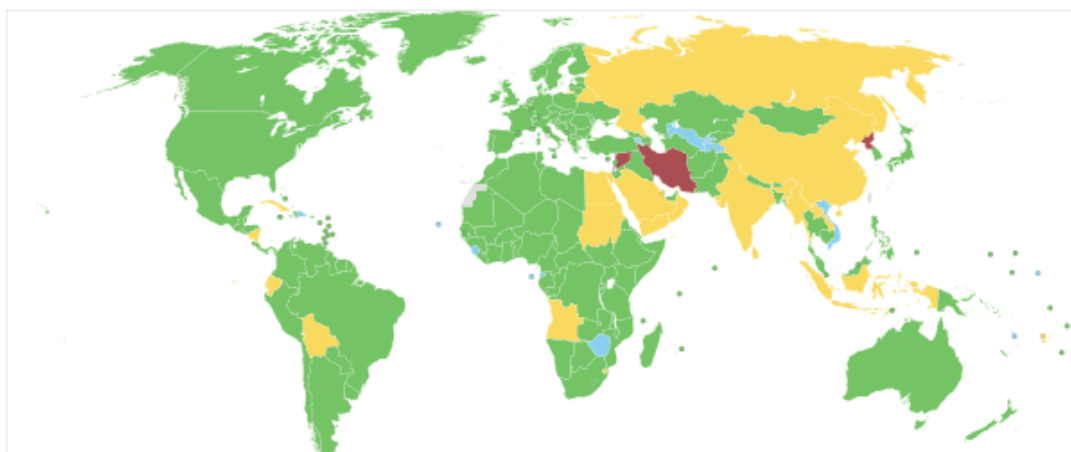


Figure IX: United Nations General Assembly vote on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013 ⁶²

In favour Against Abstentions Absent Non-member

Convention on Cluster Munitions

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is an international convention signed by over 100 countries. The Convention forbids the use, manufacture, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions. It was adopted on May 30, 2008, signed on December 3, 2008, and went into effect on August 1, 2010. The Cluster Munitions Convention (CCM) arose from a shared determination to address the humanitarian repercussions and intolerable harm to people caused by cluster munitions. States Parties are committed to the Convention's full universalization, promotion of its norms, and full implementation. Its implementation helps to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the advancement of international peace and security, human rights, and international humanitarian law. It prohibits all use, stockpiling, production and transfer of cluster munitions.

⁶² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_Trade_Treaty



United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Enacted by General Assembly Resolution 55/25 on November 15, 2000, it is the primary international tool in the battle against transnational organized crime. The Convention is supplemented by three Protocols that address specific areas and manifestations of organized crime, one of the three being the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition. The Convention's adoption is a significant step forward in the battle against organized crime across borders, indicating Member States' recognition of the gravity of the problems it poses, as well as the need to foster and strengthen close worldwide collaboration in order to address those problems. States that ratify this instrument commit to a series of anti-transnational illicit activity measures, including the establishment of domestic criminal offenses, participation in an organized criminal group, money laundering, corruption, and obstruction of justice⁶³; the adoption of innovative and broad frameworks for extradition, mutual representation in court, and law enforcement cooperation; and the promotion of training and technical support for constructing or improving law enforcement capabilities.

The Firearms Protocol: 55/255 of 31 May 2001

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. The goal of this Protocol is to encourage, enable, and improve cooperation among States Parties in order to deter, battle, and eliminate the unlawful manufacture and trafficking of guns, their parts and components, and ammunition.

Register of Conventional Arms (A/RES/46/36 L)

Numerous United Nations instruments, notably the Register of Conventional Arms, have attempted to create trust and reduce the danger of conflict by pushing states towards rendering the quantity and type of armaments transferred more transparent, in order to increase transparency in the armaments industry.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

⁶³ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>



The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation's (Europol) Contribution

The European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC) of Europol assists Member States with information exchange and operational cooperation in the monitoring of illegal firearms movement in the context of anti-terrorism. Furthermore, Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) is attempting to find and analyze ties between the facilitation of illegal migration and other areas of crime, such as firearms trafficking. Over 578 firearms and 776 rounds of ammunition were recovered in April 2017 as part of a cooperative operation to combat the illicit transportation of firearms, explosives, chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear substances across the Ukraine-Moldova border ⁶⁴. As part of this operation, five items of explosives and one box of radioactive material were also seized at the border. This operation, coordinated by the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), included Europol, Frontex, the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC), and law enforcement agencies from Ukraine, Moldova, Greece, Romania, and Spain.

Silencing the Guns in Africa

A resolution related to the African Union's flagship campaign "Silencing the Guns in Africa" was passed in 2019. The resolution refers to the efficient implementation of applicable arms control instruments and regimes, particularly those relating to small arms and light weapons, demonstrating the importance of combating illicit armaments to attaining a conflict-free Africa.

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

INTERPOL launched the INTERPOL illegal Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS) in 2013 with financial support from the European Union (EU). As the sole international database of illicit firearms, iARMS is particularly positioned to assist countries in promoting and implementing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4, that connects development to peace and security. iARMS assists member nations in implementing the following; the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components, and Ammunition; the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms

⁶⁴ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/illicit-firearms-trafficking>



and Light Weapons; and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and Arms Trade Treaty⁶⁵.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Signing and Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty & Participation in the UN Register of Conventional Arms

Up until now, there are 113 State Parties to the ATT, 28 Signatories that have not yet ratified, accepted, or approved the Treaty and 54 UN Member States that have not yet joined the ATT. Namely, given that this is a disarmament issue, it is important to encourage ratification of the treaty as it contributes to international and regional peace, security and stability, reducing human suffering, and promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action among the international community. Furthermore, all Member States are encouraged to participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, by reporting on exports and imports of equipment that fall within its seven categories of major conventional arms, namely battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft including manned and unmanned aerial vehicles, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers. Import and export documentation contain critical information that is required not only by the buyer and seller, but also by customs officials, transporters, and foreign governments. Failure to include the appropriate paperwork with imports and exports may result in penalties and potentially the seizure of products by customs, so as to ensure that the transport of weapons is for just reasons and not for malicious intent and so as to not threaten the sovereignty or citizens of nations.

Tracking System

A useful solution could also be the inclusion of pre-transfer risk assessments and post-shipment controls, such as on-site inspection and end-user verifications on any

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<https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking/Illicit-Arms-Records-and-tracing-Management-System-iARMS>



transfers of arms and ammunition, with the help of Radio Frequency Identification system (RFID). In order to uniquely identify weapons, along with the aid of the RFID, electromagnetic or electrostatic coupling in the radio frequency region of the electromagnetic spectrum could be used. The weapons tracking solution tracks weapons, ammunition, and other precious assets using RFID technology. An audit trail detailing the who, what, when, and where of the weapon inventory is provided by the system. The private sector must develop tight tagging systems for their products in order to eliminate black marketing, so that if certain products are missing from their typical distribution channel, the government can hunt them down more easily. Product tracking and tracing based on low-cost digital systems and open, internationally accepted standards, as well as control and monitoring of free-trade zones would be effective. For that reason, supporting intelligence activities and allowing law enforcement to probe criminal networks are indispensable.

Enhanced International Collaboration

In order to prevent the illicit trafficking and trade of conventional weapons, collaboration and information exchange among importing, transiting, and exporting countries, as well as adequate accounting methods, safekeeping, and customs and border control mechanisms is required.. This will in turn increase levels of transparency, which are vital and contribute to reducing tensions and misperceptions. Specifically, coordination of border management (CBM) is critical to overcoming trade facilitation difficulties. Improving coordination between border services and the business sector can result in commodities being moved and cleared more quickly and affordably. Countries should support transnational legal instruments and methods for enabling effective information exchange between national law enforcement and judicial authorities in order to investigate, punish, and discourage cross-border trafficking. Therefore, exchange of information between national and regional border authorities for the purpose of validating import/export good declarations is needed. As for coordination; coordinating the activity of several national border authorities related to import, export, or transit transactions is important. Lastly in the connectivity sector; Information and communication technology (ICT) systems, such as trade portals and single windows, that provide a one-stop shop for commerce (import/export) can be



implemented. Better coordination, collaboration, and connection are key to trade facilitation initiatives.

Further International Regulations

Seeing as the threat that the illicit trade of conventional weapons poses to the world, and with more incidents plaguing every corner of the world concerning this issue, there are not enough conventions that support the application of additional control on the stockpiling and distribution of conventional weapons, as they are already incorporated into international customary law. While the ATT can be described as the cornerstone of a significant movement against the issue, in order to maintain its current nature, it needs crucial support from more conventions. The claim that the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons and storage constitute a serious threat to the security and sovereignty of UN members, including those nations that have not ratified the ATT, may find support from another convention.

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