DISEC
BACKGROUND GUIDE

Illegal Arms Trade

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INTRODUCTION

The First Committee is involved with issues associated with disarmament and armed conflicts that disrupt the peace within international communities. The committee seeks to resolve the challenges faced by the international regime regarding these matters.

The committee acknowledges all subject areas pertaining to disarmament and international security personnel or the relation to the powers and functions of any other sector apart of the United Nations. This includes the general principles that include cooperation of international peace and security along with governing disarmament and regulation of weaponry. It advocates measures taken to lessen armaments and strengthening stability.

The Committee works closely in association with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament. It is the only Committee known to have access to verbatim records coverage.
The illegal small arms trade is a hazardous issue that impacts every nation in the world. Whether developing or developed, every country is subjected to harm as the market for illicit arms is prominent and thriving. The United Nations Office for Disarmament claims the problem is a “worldwide scourge”. The illegal armament trade is prevalent in neighborhoods that are periled by mobsters and gangs, where rebels assault civilians and peacemakers. Drug lords label their territories and take full authority of their surroundings killing those who try to disrupt their illegal business.

Although there is no official definition for small arms, they are generally considered to include weapons ranging from small revolvers and pistols to assault rifles and submachine guns. Small arms can also be discussed alongside “light weapons” (sometimes abbreviated together as SALW), which include individually wielded anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. The unauthorized action of obtaining small arms is a universal concern due to the low cost and lightweight nature of these weapons, making them easier to smuggle. The broad introduction of these weapons contribute to making peaceful areas and conflict zones far more dangerous, and the resulting instability creates a cycle of high demand for weapons from both sides of the party. The total value of the global market for arms is estimated to be $60 billion per year, with 10-20% of that being illicit trade.

Various regions of the world face different impacts of the illicit arms trade:

- In Africa, the illicit trade of small arms is a staggering issue for many developing nation governments. In Somalia, Ethiopian cortèges deliver illegally obtained weapons which in turn violate the UN embargo. Charles Taylor, the president of Liberia during the Liberian civil war, ordered weapons across the border into Sierra Leone supplying the rebel group called the Revolutionary United Front. For these and other crimes, Taylor was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to 50 years in prison.
In Latin America, controlling large accumulations of weapons proves to be a major concern. In the year 2007, Venezuela had purchased 100,000 AK-103 (a newer model of the AK-47) 39mm assault rifles from Russia in order to replace the weapons that had been brought from Belgium in the 1950s. The particular weapon is favored by the notorious Colombian guerrilla group, FARC. There is suspicion that any leftover weaponry may be smuggled into Columbia.

Just an hour outside the city of Peshawar, Pakistan, is Darra Adamkhel, the largest arms market in the world. The weapons there sold are handmade and cheap. An AK-47 in this market costs $50 dollars in US currency whereas Iranian and Russian weapons cost $300 dollars in US currency and above that amount. The guns are imitations of those weapons supplied by the US to the Mujahedeen during the 1980s when the USSR invaded Afghanistan. This infamous market is a major choke point for the illicit arms trade globally. After the war had ended, the Pashtuns aided the Taliban through supplying the terrorist group with illegal arm weaponry; they also had covertly supplied the Irish Republican Army, the Middle East, and the Muslims in Kashmir.

It should be noted that not all trade of small arms is illegal. Although individual countries may be subject to embargos that include small arms, the vast majority of countries are free to openly trade weapons with each other. Furthermore, each country will have its own laws related to which weapons civilians may legally purchase. The purpose of this committee is not to address the legitimate trade and possession of small arms, but to limit the illicit sale of these weapons, which fuel conflicts around the globe.
Past Actions

Since the 1990s, many countries have worked hard to develop an international convention on the arms trade. In 2006, over a hundred nations in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) had brought forth their views on creating a possible Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The negotiations for the treaty took several years, but in 2013, the UNGA passed an ATT, which made it difficult “for human rights abusers, criminals and arms traffickers to obtain weapons.” The resolution passed with 154 nations in favor, 3 against and 23 abstentions. The only three nations to vote against the treaty were the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iran, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The ATT works to create a “uniform framework for the international trade in conventional arms.” It also seeks to encourage transparency and accountability to make it easier to track and catch smugglers. It also places some responsibility on the sellers of small arms to know their customers – states cannot transfer conventional weapons to parties they know would take advantage of such weapons in order to create a genocide, crimes against humanity or attacks on civilians such as the grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Other UN organizations such as The United Nations Development Programme help nations and civilizations deal with the effects of illegal arms trade through its Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. The UNDP helps over 80 countries, including many nations that are on the verge of an armed crisis. The UNDP implements new and innovative approaches to help and rebuild nations, and end to conflict.

One recent example of their work was the Uwiano Peace Platform, consisting of a toll free SMS service which allowed the people around Kenya to report threats. Before its constitutional referendum in 2010, Kenya was considered an extremely high risk for outbursts of violence, particularly after their political crisis in 2007. However, thanks to the Uwiano Platform, over 200,000
SMS messages were received, analyzed and verified causing the referendum to be passed without violence. This system will soon be implemented on a permanent basis in upcoming elections.

One NGO that helped combat illicit small arms trade is the United Kingdom-based Campaign against Arms Trade. This nongovernmental organization is not only against the illicit trade of small arms but is a strong advocate of peace wanting to reduce and eradicate conflict. The organization has a commitment to nonviolence and educates the public through campaigns focusing on different methods to propagandize security around the world, abandoning the sale of arms. For example, the Campaign against Arms Trade advises governments to not support arms trade through funds but instead search to create jobs in other areas such as green technology which would increase security and help people stay out of an illegal arms trade.

Possible Solutions

Unauthorized small arms trade is an issue that impacts many nations globally. Illicit trade can interfere with infrastructure and governmental development, security and even education. This committee considers addressing the illicit arms trade as its own issue by carefully assessing whether the current ATT has had an effective result of reducing the number of arms trafficked and whether the negative impacts of trade upon communities have decreased.

Three aspects all delegates should focus in regard to prohibited arms trade itself are production, marking and tracing, and ammunition:

- **Production**: Although addressing the sale and trade of arms, the ATT makes no mention of combatting the illegal production of small arms. In many parts of the world, bullets and weapons are built using spare materials that are available, and these weapons are among the hardest to track and stop, since they pass through no legally recognized state or business.
Delegates should be able to examine and find out how to implement private workshops like those used in Peshawar and Pakistan in order to create a system of control which ensures that manufacturers are held accountable and monitored.

- **Marking and Tracing:** “If national law enforcement officials were able to trace small arms back to their last legitimate owner, who might then be held accountable, this would form an effective measure against illicit trade and diversion.” Delegates should seek an effective way to mark and trace weapons upon production as well as encourage other nations to keep appropriate and accurate records.

- **Ammunition:** Over 80 percent of ammunition trade is done outside of reliable export data. However it is the key to tracking illegal small arms trade. “Preventing [ammunition stockpile] resupply in unlawful situations should be a matter of prime concern.” Ammunition stockpiles in heavily populated areas are easily sold as legitimate sales and are the cause of thousands of casualties each year.

Unlicensed small arms trade is a concern that the world can no longer put to the side. Millions of people are affected daily due to such dangerous business. Along with armed conflict, citizens involved directly in an arms trade are often unlikely to access essential infrastructure such as an education. This committee has been called upon to find solutions in order to stop the illegal arms trade and achieve targets such as the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The committee hopes to find a solution nations can agree on globally to help stop and prohibit immoral arms trade.
GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Are small arms a problem in your country? What are your country’s gun laws? What is your government doing about illegal guns?

2. What are some secondary effects of the illegal arms trade? What can be done to help the people impacted by these effects?

3. What are some global choke points in the illegal arms trade? What can the UN and member nations do to better control those areas?

4. What can nations that supply (legally and illegally) arms to the global market do to make sure they are properly marking and keeping records of weapons?
WORKS CITED


