

Committee/Council: Disarmament Committee

Issue: Combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapon in all its aspects

Student Officer: Baris Erhan Ozdinc

Position: Co-Chair

Introduction

Since the 13th century firearms have constituted an issue of dispute for humanity. As their fire power, and their -accordingly to their portability- lethality cannot be compared with any other weapon, they have been the main actors of many clashes in approximately the last six hundred years. Nowadays, they are considered the cause behind the death of eight in a hundred thousand humans; 5.5 of this rate are caused by non-state violent acts. Every minute, one person is killed by a small arm or light weapon and illicitly traded small arms and light weapons (SALW) are involved in sixty percent of all human right violations.

SALWs are cheap, lightweight and easy to use, handle, transport and conceal. Even though the arsenal of SALWs cannot cause a conflict between armed groups itself, it may contribute to the process of making them both last longer and more lethal. Therefore, they are the main choice in non-state, official conflicts, such as but not limited to civil wars, terrorism, organized crime and gang warfare.

The rate of deaths caused by illicitly owned weapons often outnumbered that of battlefield deaths. SALWs have over recent years also been connected with the increasing number of killings of UN employees and peacekeepers, as also workers from humanitarian and other non-governmental organizations. Illicitly traded SALWs fuel and facilitate human right violations such as murder, various manifestations of sexual violence, enforced disappearance, torture and forced recruitment of children by armed groups. They can also have a negative impact on security and economic development especially in developing countries, which are given credits because of high rates of insurgency and instability from the World Bank. SALWs are also one of the main contributing factors leading to the displacement of civilians.

To conclude, in order for us to have a more secure world with less poverty, deaths and human rights abuses, legal transfer of SALWs must be strictly controlled, all illicit small arms and light weapons must be seized.

Definition of Key Terms

Small Arms

“Small arm” is a term which defines many hand-held weapons which can be carried by any infantry. It generally includes revolvers, pistols, carbines, shotguns, rifles, submachine guns, assault rifles and general purpose machine guns. Small arms can also be defined as any firearm which uses a projectile with a diameter less than 50 caliber.

Light Weapon

Light weapons are defined as any mortar which uses up to 120 caliber ammunition, hand held and automatic grenade launchers, heavy machine guns, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile launchers and rocket launchers. These weapons are held by about sixty non-state armed groups.



Image 1: Small Arms and Light Weapons Captured from Iraq by U.S Marine Corps

Illicit Trade

It is the unlawful trade of any sort material such as but not limited to weapons, narcotics and rare earth resources.

Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs)

The term non-state armed groups (NSAGs), includes rebel groups, irregular armed groups, insurgents, dissident armed forces, guerrillas, liberation movements, and de facto territorial governing bodies.

NSAGs vary greatly in ideology, objectives, strategies, form and level of organization, support-base, legitimacy and degree of international recognition. The majority of armed conflicts in the world are caused by these groups who do not act in accordance with the rules set by recognized governments.

Background Information

Consequences of Illicit Trade of SALWs

Illicit trade of SALWs is one of the main causes of instability in hot zones. It prevents economic development of less economically developed countries (LEDCs) as the World Bank refuses to give credits to instable countries and it also impacts on each country's economy, as it causes a loss of 1 billion \$ each year. In addition, instability linked with illicit small arms in hot zones causes the destruction of infrastructure and leads to a vicious cycle of poverty.

Illicitly owned SALWs are mainly used by non-state armed groups in Middle East and in Africa, causing amongst others political instability. They fuel and aggravate civil wars and increase thereby their lethality. In this environment, characterized by violence, where illicit SALWz

proliferate, many human rights abuses occur each year such as murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, enforced disappearance, torture and forced recruitment of children by armed groups. In addition, in areas where illicit SALWs are widely spread both massacres and the abduction of humanitarian, UN and peacekeeping personnel are to be often found.

Consequences of Illicit Trade of SALW in Africa

Illicit trade of small arm is a problem that has existed for a long time in the region of Africa. It has caused thousands of direct deaths and human rights abuses, as well as some great massacres. Armed conflicts facilitated by illicit SALWs trade in Africa not only lead to direct increase of expenses, such as medical costs, army expenditure and care of displaced people, but also to indirect losses in industries, such as the one of tourism ,which is of vital importance to each nation's economy. Between the years 1990-2007 300 billion dollars were lost because of all non-state armed conflicts, which took place in Africa. In attempting to solve the abovementioned problems, the International Community was lead to the adoption of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2004.

Consequences of Illicit Trade of SALW in Latin America

Small arms and gun violence present the most dramatic threat to public safety in Latin America and the Caribbean. As of today an individual or small group is operating at least forty five to eighty million small arms and light weapons. These weapons include handguns, assault rifles, grenades, grenade launchers, and portable surface to air missiles. Gun violence kills between 73,000 and 90,000 people each year in Latin America and guns are the leading cause of death among Latin Americans between the ages of 15 and 44. In addition, the illicit arms-trafficking network is centered on the ongoing conflict in Colombia. The resulting arms race between rebels and paramilitaries has had a heavy impact on the public security in the region. Illicit small arms trafficking in Latin America is also closely linked to drug trafficking.

Major Parties and Organizations Involved

United States of America

United States of America are a global leader in efforts of prohibiting the illicit SALWs flow through diplomacy and the offering of bilateral assistance to countries in need. As its policy, it provides training to export controls, secures its stockpiles and purges its excess weapons, enhances enforcements and controls SALWs proliferation zones for tackling illicit trade of SALWs. Despite being an active member in the inhibition of illicit trade of SALWs, USA has refused to sign the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In addition, many of SALW brokers in the world are American such as, Victor Infante who used sell American product M-16's to Philippines.

Russia

Russia is a major producer and exporter of small arms and light weapons, carries a policy against the illicit trade of SALWs; Russia is undertaking measures at the national level to tighten control over the export, production and supplies of small arms and light weapons and is intensifying the fight against their illicit proliferation. In Russia, there are laws which regulate the internal circulation of weapons, including small arms, and rules for their production, transfer, stockpiling as well as their export to foreign states. Deliveries of Russian weapons abroad, including small arms and light weapons, are conducted through licenses and under strict state control. But after the break-down of Soviet Union many Russian weapons, including SALWs, were smuggled especially into African and Middle Eastern countries by Russian gun brokers, such as Victor Bout. That 's the reason why AK-47 and AK-74u are the most commonly used small arm by the non-state armed groups in the world.

China

China is one of leading SALWs producers and suppliers in the world. The Chinese Government fully understands the humanitarian concerns caused by illicit trade in SALW and attaches great importance to combating illicit trade in SALWs. The Chinese Government has also taken concrete measures in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects (PoA). Last but not least, the Chinese government has adopted strict laws for manufacturing, stockpiling, use, trade and confiscation of SALW.

Eastern European States

Even though, governments of Eastern European states are against the illicit trade of SALWs and have adopted laws against this issue, after the break-down of Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia Republic, weapons including SALWs have been smuggled from their stockpiles by gun traffickers and sold to African and Middle-Eastern Countries.

African States

Because of the political instability and internal conflicts to be found in the region and taking into considering the fact that the necessary facilities for producing weapons are not available in the area, large amount of illicit small arms and light weapons is imported annually.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

UNODA is totally against the illicit trade of SALWs. It's mostly concerned about proliferation zones of SALWs. It encourages all member states to take necessary and strict measures against illicit trade of any sort of weapons including SALW. In this spirit, the UNODA adopted the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects.

Timeline of Events

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1364 | The first recorded use of a firearm. |
| 1835 | Mass production of Colt revolver, which can be considered the first small arm started. |
| 27 April 1978 | Beginning of conflict in Afghanistan, which is the most severe armed conflict caused by non-state armed groups . |
| 15 January 1996 | Adoption of the first resolution concerning the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons (A/RES/50/70B). |
| 19 November 1998 | Adoption of a Security Council Resolution on Illicit Arms Flow to and from Africa. |
| 24 September 1999 | Security Council Meeting on Small Weapons. |
| 9-20 June 2001 | United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held. |
| 2006 | Beginning of Mexican Drug War, which is the greatest, in terms of number of deaths and use of illicit weapons, armed non-state conflict in North America . |
| 2 April 2013 | Adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by UN. |

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

“2. *Gravely concerned* about the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, which have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels”

“7. *Concerned also* about the close link between terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in drugs and precious minerals and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and stressing the urgency of international efforts and cooperation aimed at combating this trade simultaneously from both a supply and demand perspective, “

Arms Trade Treaty

Resolution 54/54V (December 15, 1999)

"Emphasizing the need to advance efforts towards wider cooperation and better coordination in the struggle against accumulation, proliferation and widespread use of small arms"

General Assembly Committee on Disarmament and International Security Resolution (October 12, 2006)

"Recognizing that the absence of common international standards on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms is a contributory factor to conflict, the displacement of people, crime and terrorism...security, stability and sustainable development"

Security Council Resolution on Illicit Arms Flow to and from Africa(November 1998)

"1. Expresses its grave concern at the destabilizing effect of illicit arms flows, in particular of small arms, to and in Africa and at their excessive accumulation and circulation, which threaten national, regional and international security and have serious consequences for development and for the humanitarian situation in the continent"

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Illicit trade of SALWs has been an issue of conflict since the beginning of second half of the 20th century. There have been national attempts to solve this as well as international attempts. These attempts have been important steps to solve the issue, but they couldn't cover up all its points. These attempts started with the adoption of A/RES/50/70B on 15 January 1995. These attempts have continued with adoption of Security Council Resolution on Illicit Arms Flow to and from Africa on 19 November 1998, than on 24 September 1999 Security Council gathered for abolishing the illicit trade of SALW. On 20 June 2001, after United Nations Conference on 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 adopted by member states. Finally, on 2 April 2013 the Arms Trade Treaty was signed by 86 member states. Despite these efforts, there are still points, which cause problems. Further measures must be taken, so as to end the illicit trade of SALWs.

Possible Solutions

Illicit trade of SALWs is an issue which concerns not only countries with conflicts but also economically developed countries. For abolishing the illicit trade of SALW, some measures must

be taken. Firstly, export and import controls must be tightened and custom enforcements must be strengthened. All SALWs producer countries must draft and adopt law, which strictly control manufacture, transfer and trade of these weapons. Stockpiles must be secured against weapon traffickers and excess weapons should be destroyed if their security cannot be furnished. All states may adopt a common and objective for the transparency and the international control of SALWs trade. Arm brokers must be strictly regulated through laws and the trade conducted by them must be transparent. In cooperating with other countries, member states ought to focus on countries "suffering" from political instability. Delegates should also consider the regulation of the use of arms like machetes, swords and daggers, as they have caused great massacres in Rwanda and in Nigeria at the past.

Bibliography

- "A/RES/50/70 D General and Complete Disarmament Transparency in Armaments." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.un.org/depts/ddar/Register/Resolutions/5070.htm>
- "UNODA - Small Arms and Light Weapons." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/SALW/>
- <http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/1119scre.pdf>
- "Combating the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons: Enhancing Controls on Legal Transfers." - *View Resource*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/129>
- "The Arms Trade Treaty - UN Office for Disarmament Affairs." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT/>
- <http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/N0150720.pdf>
- "UNOG - The United Nations Office at Geneva." *The United Nations in the Heart of Europe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, [http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpPages\)/D987C5EFC8A87B41C1257180004B1B31](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/D987C5EFC8A87B41C1257180004B1B31)
- "Illicit Trafficking." *Small Arms Survey* - . N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/transfers/illicit-trafficking.html>
- "The Illicit Arms Trade." *The Illicit Arms Trade*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/IssueBrief3ArmsTrafficking.html>
- "Non-State Armed Groups." *Antipersonnel Landmines – Non-state Armed Groups*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Universal/MBT/Non-State-Armed-Groups>
- http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/ga_resolution54.pdf
- <http://www.poa-iss.org/poa/poahtml.aspx>
- "Combating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons." *Combating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zjg/jks/kjlc/cgjkw/t410760.htm>
- "Background Paper: The U.S. Approach to Combating the Spread of Small Arms." *Combating the Spread of Small Arms: The U.S. Approach*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/Issuebrief3/Combating%20the%20Spread%20of%20Small%20Arms%20The%20U%20S%20Approach.htm>
- <http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/1119scre.pdf>
- http://www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1242:arms-for-arms-africa-and-its-story-of-illicit-trade-in-small-arms&catid=87:african-finance-a-economy&Itemid=294